

GLYCEMIC INDEX AND PERFORMANCE DIET

By Kenneth Lundgren

Now that the season is winding down, two bad things will happen! We will ride less... and eat more.

Europeans, especially Italians, eat what's called "slow food." Italians eat more than Americans, indulging in delicious foods -- ice cream included -- while maintaining steady energy and remaining thinner. Succinctly, they eat more than us, enjoy their food more, and are in better shape.

The Glycemic Index is a food rating system introduced in the early 1980s that measures the effect of food on blood sugar. Measuring blood sugar is important because it directly affects your energy level -- and weight!

The GI compares food to glucose, which rates at 100. Foods are rated high (70-100), medium (40-70), and low (10-40). Breads and cereals are high, oatmeal and dairy foods are medium, and nuts and meats are low -- to give a few examples.

When you eat something with a high rating, your blood sugar soars, giving you an initial shot of energy. To combat this high blood sugar level, your pancreas releases insulin. However, too much blood sugar is always removed, leaving you tired and lethargic about thirty minutes after eating.

There's another bad side-effect: with too much insulin in your blood, your body cannot metabolize fat. And we know what that means...

Most Americans have always-high insulin levels, and we see the effect of that. But the Atkins Diet (protein, no carbs) is not the way to go. As athletes, we need carbs more than anyone else. The trick is to eat carbs that are low on the GI index, while also consuming high-quality fats and proteins. This is how the world's best athletes eat -- and that's why they look the way they look.

Ideally, you'd like to carb up before a big ride or race. Carb loading can start 2-3 days before the event. Pasta (GI of 40) is #1 way to go because it doesn't spike your energy levels and takes a long time to break down. High-fiber cereal is good, giving you healthy carbs and protein with the milk.

Pre-ride: Carbs, some protein, healthy fats (fats are an excellent source of energy). You'll start the ride with plenty of glucose stored in your muscles... without feeling weak or tentative.

Ride: Everything high on the GI Index. Your body needs sugar and wants it quick. Sports drinks with protein are good because they combat muscle-breakdown. Bars, GUs,

cookies, honey, lotsa water (never too much fluids). You need to stay topped up from all sides.

Post-Ride: You can still eat a high-carb meal to replace the glycogen stores you erased. If you have a sweet tooth, indulge now! A sports drink, lots of water. Also, it's important to eat high-quality protein (eggs, fish, chicken) to help aid in the recovery and muscle-building process.

A quick tip: horses and bears have same daily caloric intakes. A horse eats 8 times a day, a bear twice. So eat like a horse!!! Eating throughout the day shoots your metabolism through the roof. If you eat only twice a day, devouring big portions, your body will cling to every morsel, wondering when it's going to get more food...

A common eating schedule is big breakfast, snacks throughout the day, something before the workout, post-ride "restoration" snack, then a sizeable not-too-late dinner. And water, lots of it. Water water water. Dean Karnazes, the famous ultrarunner who ran 50 marathons in 50 days, tries not to eat processed foods. No refined sugars. He said it took about a month to get over that "sugar crash," but he said he came away with "a constant high level of energy." And last time I checked, he had more energy than anybody on the planet!

A list of foods and their GI rating:

BREAD

Bagel (80!!!)
Croissant (67)
French Baguette (95)
Hamburger Bun (61)
Kaiser Roll (73)
Pita (57)
Pumpnickel Bread (41)
Rye Bread (64)
Sourdough Bread (53)
Taco Shell (68)
Waffles (77)
Wheat (72)
White Bread (72)
Whole Wheat (77)
Stone Ground Whole Wheat (53)

BREAKFAST

Eggs (40)
Muesli (43)
Oatmeal (49)
Pancakes (67)
Waffles (76)

CEREAL

Bran Chex (58)
Cheerios (74)
Corn Chex (83)
Corn Flakes (92!!!)
Frosted Flakes (55)
Grape Nuts (71)
Life (66)
Oat Bran (55)
Raisin Bran (61)
Rice Krispies (82!!!)
Shredded Wheat (75)
Special K (69)
Total (76)

CRACKERS

Graham Crackers (74)
Rice Cakes (82)
Ryvita Crispbread (69)
Soda Crackers (74)
Water Crackers (78)
Wheat Thins (67)

DAIRY

Chocolate Milk (34 an terrific alternate/emergency recovery shake)
Ice Cream (38)
Ice Cream, low-fat (43)
Milk (34)
Protein Shake (31)
Pudding (43)
Skim Milk (32)
Soy Milk (31)
Sports Drink (88)
Yogurt (14)
Yogurt, sweetened (33)
Whole Milk (31)

FRUIT

Apple (38)
Apricots, dried (30)
Banana (55-62)
Canteloupe (65)
Cherries (22)
Dates (103)
Figs, dried (61)

Fruit Cocktail (58)
Grapefruit (25)
Grapes (46)
Kiwi (58)
Mango (51)
Orange (43)
Peach (42)
Peach, canned (38)
Pear (36)
Pear, canned (43)
Pineapple (66)
Plum (39)
Prunes (29)
Raisins (56)
Strawberries (40)
Strawberry Jam (51)
Watermelon (72)

GRAINS

Aborio (69)
Barley (25)
Basmati (58)
Brown Rice (55)
Buckwheat (54)
Cornmeal (68)
Couscous (65)
Instant Rice (91)
White Rice (88)
Whole Wheat (41)

JUICES

Apple Juice (41)
Cocoa (53)
Cranberry Juice (68)
Grapefruit Juice (48)
Orange Juice (55)
Pineapple Juice (46)
Tomato Juice (38)

MEATS

Chicken (45)

OLIVE OIL (45)

PACKAGED DINNERS

Cheese Tortellini (50)

Fish Sticks (38)
Macaroni and Cheese (64)
Meat Ravioli (39)
Pizza (60)

PASTA

Capellini (45)
Fettuccini (32)
Gnocchi (68)
Linguini (46)
Macaroni (47)
Spaghetti (37)
Spiral Pasta (43)
Star Pastina (38)
Vermicelli (58)

SOUPS

Black Bean Soup (64)
Lentil Soup (44)
Minestrone Soup (39)
Pea Soup (66)
Tomato Soup (38)

SWEETS, CAKES, SNACKS, and SWEETENERS

Angel Food Cake (67)
Banana Bread (47)
Blueberry Muffin (59)
Bran Muffin (60)
Butter Cookies (47)
Carrot Muffin (62)
Cashews (22)
Chocolate Chip Cookies (44)
Corn Chips (63)
Doughnut (76)
Fudge Cookies (57)
Graham Crackers (74)
Honey (58)
Hummus (6)
Ice Cream (52)
Jams (65)
Jelly Beans (80)
Kudos (62)
Life Savers (70)
Marmalade (48)
Milk Chocolate (43)
Nilla Wafers (77)

Oatmeal Cookies (55)
Pancake Syrup (76)
Pastry Pie Crust (59)
Peanuts (15)
Pound Cake (54)
Rice Cakes (82)
Shortbread Cookies (64)
Vanilla Creme Filled Waters (50)
Peanut M&Ms (33)
Popcorn (72)
Potato Chips (57)
Pretzels (83)
Saltines (72)
Scones (92)
Skittles (70)
Snickers (41!!!)
Sponge Cake (46)
Walnuts (15)
Wheat Thins (67)

VEGGIES

Beets (64)
Broccoli (10)
Cabbage (10)
Carrots (49)
Corn (60)
Green Peas (48)
Lettuce (10)
Mushrooms (10)
Onions (10)
Pumpkin (75)
Red Peppers (10)

BEANS and PEAS

Baked Beans (48)
Black-eyed Peas, canned (42)
Chana Dal (8)
Chickpeas, dried (28)
Chickpeas, canned (42)
Kidney Beans, dried (28)
Kidney Beans (52)
Lentils (29)
Lima Beans (32)
Yellow Split Peas (32)

POTATOES

Baked Potato (85)
Canned Potato (65)
French Fries (75)
Instant Mashed Potato (86)
Red Skinned, Boiled (88)
Sweet Potato (44)
White Skinned Mashed Potato (70)
Yam (37)

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