

RACING NUTRITION & ON-THE-BIKE FUELING

By Kenneth Lundgren

While training hard or racing, a rider will burn through his glycogen stores within 60 minutes, plus lose plenty of fluids. So pack the bars and bottles when you head out. As you sweat through a hard workout or race, you must constantly replace the fluids you're losing. Because we're not allowed to stop at delis for pit-stops while racing, bring plenty of bottles with you or plan for a feed.

I spoke to a professional cyclist, and he said for his endurance rides or races lasting more than three hours, he tries to eat every hour, while also taking a squirt of GU from his flask every twenty minutes or so. If he's on the bike for less than three hours, Accelerade is all he'll need.

I also recommend drinking Accelerade or other sports drinks during recovery rides to prevent fluid depletion and any muscle breakdown. The carbs found in most sports drinks also keep your immune system in check. It's not rare for a cyclist to get sick once he reaches peak form...

After completing a hard race or workout, what's the first thing to reach for in the fridge? The pro I spoke with likes to take a recovery shake or smoothie, calorie heavy and packed with carbs and protein. The glycogen in your muscles is replenished at a faster rate immediately after your ride, so carb up! Other good recovery foods are cereal, fruit, juice, or bagels (high glycemic!). And water. After the ride, it's time to rehydrate.

After this 30-minute window post-ride, look to eat a meal or snack less than three hours later. Eat a combination of complex carbs and protein. While the carbs are essential to re-packing the glycogen stores, eating protein helps repair the muscles you've broken down.

As we approach our A-priority races (and even some of the more strenuous B-priority races), look to load up your muscles with glycogen by consuming plenty of carbs. This is especially important as a rider begins to taper for his/her event. Look to start carb-loading 48-72 hours before the race. Keep the fat intake low with medium levels of protein. A higher amount of complex carbs is what you want. The pro told me that after his taper rides, it's almost all carbs, plenty of whole foods.

So when should you eat before for your race? Most likely the race is going off before noon, so I recommend eating a large dinner before seven o'clock. I read somewhere that you want to wake up race-day feeling hungry, and I feel that's key. This way you can still eat a filling carb-rich breakfast. Reach for complex carbs, boosting your liver glycogen stores and energy levels.

However, eating habits are different for everyone. What works for me may not work for you. With experience, you'll find out what works best. Typically, a medium-sized

breakfast should be consumed about three hours before the race. A lot of riders I speak with like to have some protein with their meal – like eggs.

After breakfast, however, you're not done. Continue to hydrate right up to start time. I don't race with sports drinks, but I use them before and after the race. It's common to see racers consuming bottles of sports drinks while warming up in the parking lots. Again, see what works. Try eating a gel as you roll up to the line. Try eating an energy bar and half a bottle of Accelerade an hour before you race. Everyone's different...

Preparing for afternoon races is a little more difficult. I feel best eating a big breakfast, then snacking throughout the day. Other racers I spoke with like to wait, then eat a bigger lunch. Either way, drink water throughout the day and eat a sizable snack an hour before you go off.

Some races are crazy, fast, and treacherous, hard to maneuver in the peloton, twisty roads, lots of climbing. With experience, you'll learn to overcome these hurdles and continue to stay topped-up while racing. Do a reconnaissance of the course and look to see where you can eat half a bar or down a GU. A tip for drinking? ALWAYS be taking sips. Once you're thirsty, it's too late. If it's hot, look to bring more fluids than you usually do because you're going to need them!

Some riders only begin to eat and hydrate an hour, two hours into a race, and this is a mistake. You're eating and drinking before the race, so there is no reason to stop once you've started racing. Eat bars first because as you get more tired, your digestive system becomes less efficient at breaking good down. Bars first, then GUs or flasks later on.

Success in cycling is about doing all the little things correctly. The difference between winning and losing in a lot of cases is very, very small. So take advantage of all the aspects of the sport that you can control.

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