Gazelle Sports

Top Ten Foods for Athletes

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Whether you are training for a marathon, getting dirty riding a muddy single track, or surfing some beautiful waves, the food you feed your body will dictate how well you will perform. While supplements seem like an easy solution, research supports the notion that whole foods are still the best source of the nutrients you will need for optimal health and peak performance. Below I have listen the top ten foods for runners. Eat up!!!

1. Go Red!!! Lycopene, a vitamin-like substance that makes tomatoes and watermelon red, has potent antioxidant qualities that help reduce some of the cellular damage that occurs to activate muscles during exercise. Lycopene has also been shown to reduce the risk for prostate cancer and cardiovascular disease, and other cancers too (particular breast and cervical cancer). The highest does and best absorbed form of lycopene is found in processed tomato products, such as tomato sauce or tomato soup. So the eating of spaghetti and pizza should be encouraged in the name of good health. Extra sauce please!
2. Get into the Swim of Seafood!!! Seafood is high in protein and zinc. Zinc is important for immune function and also helps clear carbon dioxide out of our muscles to help enhance recovery from intense exercise. Cold-water fish, including salmon, herring, mackerel, and sardines are also rich in omega-3 fatty acids which are effective in lowering risk for heart disease and may help boost fat burning. Most health professionals recommend at least 2-3 fish meals each to reap the benefits of seafood! If you don't like seafood, omega-3 fatty acids can also be found in canola, flaxseed, and soybean oils, as well as walnuts.
3. Bring on the Broccoli!!! Is a nagging cold compromising your performance? Rich in vitamin C, broccoli may help boost your immune system, helping to prevent unwanted illness during training. Broccoli is also an excellent source of calcium and potassium, which help to maintain strong bones and contribute to healthy connective tissue and cartilage. Put chopped broccoli on pizza, in spaghetti sauces, in stir fries, and in salads to help maintain peak immune function during season.
4. Energize with Aparagus!!! Asparagus is low in calories, contains no cholesterol or fat, and is an excellent source of thiamin, which aids in the conversion of glucose into energy and also helps synthesize and breakdown amino acids. Add a healthy ration of asparagus spears to your meal or snack as means to help boost performance.

5. Soybeans (edamame)!!! Rich in complex carbohydrates and protein, soybeans have been touted the perfect recovery food. Soy is the only complete plant source of protein, containing all the amino acids necessary for repairing and building muscle. In addition, soy contains disease-fighting phytochemicals and appetite-surpressing unsaturated fats. Soy can also be implemented in the diet in the form of tofu, textured soy protein, tempeh, soymilk, soy flour, soynut butter and soynuts.
6. Sow your Oats!!! Starting your day off with a bowl of oatmeal will help sustain your energy levels as well as maximize your glycogen stores for peak endurance performance. Oatmeal is also an excellent source of B-vitamins (for stress and energy production) and contains a significant amount of zinc for immune function. My favorite oatmeal concoction is as follows: Mix ½ cup old fashioned oats with ¼ cut natural granola. Add 1 handful of favorite fruit and 1 handful of almond or walnuts. Pour over 1 cup of nonfat milk and cook mixture in microwave for 2-3 mintues.
7. Bone Up on Calcium!!! As a good source of both calcium and vitamin D, milk is most commonly marketed as a bone builder. Milk is also an excellent source of low-glycemic carbohydrates and is a complete protein source making it a great pre- or post-workout snack option. In addition, calcium is crucial for proper muscle function; cramping may incur with a deficiency. Blend low-fat milk with yogurt and fruit for a delicious, nutrient-rich smoothie.
8. Boost Endurance with Raw Honey!!! A recent study performed at the University of Memphis Exercise and Sport Nutrition Laboratary showed that the blend of sugars found in raw honey can significantly increase an athlete's average power and endurance. In its natural state, raw honey is an immediate source of energy, full of B-complex vitamins, amino acids, and enzymes. Add honey to toast, cereal, tea for added sweetness and a quick boost of energy.
9. Go Nuts!!! Eaten raw, nuts are a great source of vitamin E. Adequate vitamin E helps with heart health and also helps reduce some of that damage that occurs to our muscles during exercise. Nuts are also filling and satisfying because of their healthy monounsaturated fat content. Try a little raw nut butter on a piece of whole wheat bread with a half of banana sliced up on top. It's delicious!