

Nutrition Tips for Chefs Cycle 3-Day, 300-Mile Ride

By Sarah Gold, MS, RDN, LDN, Nutrition Project Manager, Bon Appétit Management Company

All of the following recommendations are general guidelines written for athletes participating in a 3-day, 300 mile bike ride (100 miles per day). Each individual athlete may have different needs depending on gender, age, height, weight, fitness level, activity type, duration of activity, and other environmental conditions. Test out different fueling and hydration methods during training, so that nothing is a surprise on competition day. A registered dietitian can work with you to develop an individualized plan to meet your specific needs.

General recommendations:

1. To consume the number of calories that you are burning and maintain energy, eat continually throughout the day.
2. Nutritional value does matter during the days of competition. There is a time and a place for “treats.” Think about enjoying a small treat in the evenings (dessert), and then after the 3 day ride. Eating too much “junk” can hinder performance and energy levels. In addition, the nutrients in whole foods play a big role in recovery!
3. Proper hydration is essential. Make sure you have a plan before getting on the bike.
4. Choose a mix of foods and flavors to bring with you. Eating the same flavors (i.e. only sweet) can get tiring very quickly, and reduce your ability to eat enough.

Hydration is essential to any endurance sport. Use the following guidelines to develop a plan:

- Aim for about 15-25 oz per hour during the ride. The lower end will be for smaller women who sweat less, and upper end for men who sweat more.
- Pay attention to your sweat rate, thirst level, and how you feel (do you feel more fatigued than expected? Are you getting a headache?). These will be signs that you aren't drinking enough.
- On very warm days, drink cold water to keep internal body temperature in control.
- Use a mix of water & sports drinks. Sports drinks are helpful for electrolyte balance (to avoid over hydration & hyponatremia) as well as to provide some calories. If you would like to make your own use a ratio of 1:1 100% juice: water + 2-3 pinches of salt. Most sports drinks don't have enough sodium to replace losses from sweat on warm days, so you should also include some food with sodium (see below).

Eating on the ride provides your muscles with the fuel they need to make it the long distance.

Emphasize easily digestible carbohydrates; however, a little protein and fat will help you maintain energy levels. Whole foods work just as well as pre-made sports foods.

- Consume between 30-60g of carbohydrates (120-300 calories) per hour of exercise. The amount you need depends on rate of exertion and your body's ability to tap into fat stores for energy.
- A few recommended foods:
 - Picky bars: whole foods bars made by a professional ironman and his wife, a professional runner. They are specifically designed for during and after exercise.
 - Other good premade whole food bars: Larabars, Kit's organic bars, Purebars.
 - Homemade energy bars. Use a basic ratio of: 1:1:1 dates, other dried fruit, and salted nuts. Blend in a food processor until smooth and then form into bars or balls. Dates are a good source of potassium, which can reduce cramping.

- Salted trail mix – cereal, pretzels, salted nuts, dried fruit. Tart cherries are a good add-in for boosting recovery.
- Peanutbutter & Jelly sandwiches. This is one case where white bread trumps whole wheat!
- Variety is key – choose sweet and savory as it's easy to get “sugared out” and get tired of eating the same thing throughout the day.

Meals outside of the ride

Breakfast: eat a mix of easily digestible carbs and some protein. Some examples are:

- Bagel with nut butter and a hardboiled egg
- Cottage cheese or Greek yogurt with fruit and toast with jam
- Pancakes with fruit and a yogurt
- Oatmeal with fruit and nuts and a side of cottage cheese or a hardboiled egg.
- Drinks: juice and water. Limit coffee to 1 cup (and don't drink if you're not normally a coffee drinker).

Lunch: do your best to get a balanced meal of protein, carbohydrates, and a little fat. Two examples are:

- A turkey (or other meat/vegetarian protein) and cheese sandwich (if you can stomach it, have 2 or 3 sandwiches depending on size!) with fruit.
- Wrap with rice, beans, and guacamole plus fruit.
- A few notes:
 - Avoid any greasy sides like heavily oiled potato chips or mayonnaise laden salads as they can sit in your stomach.
 - Eat familiar foods to avoid stomach upset.
 - Hydrate with water. Sports drinks are more useful while you're riding, and not necessary during meals.

Dinner: balance your plate for recovery. Protein will help repair your muscles, while carbohydrates provide necessary fuel for the next day. Fruits and vegetables provide antioxidants that can aid recovery. This is a time to eat as much as you can and properly refuel. That said, don't overstuff yourself, or you could feel lethargic on the next ride.

Some suggestions:

- Chicken, fish, beef, or tofu with baked sweet potato and vegetables of any kind
- Spaghetti with meat balls (or vegetarian version) and a salad
- Pasta with beans, vegetables, and tomato sauce
- Drink water! Limit beer/other alcohol. While it can be tempting, alcohol is dehydrating and will slow recovery. Save the celebratory drink for day 3, when you're done!

Post ride refueling: If dinner is not immediately after the end of the ride, eat a mix of carbohydrates and protein within 30-60 minutes of completing your ride to aid recovery and improve performance the next day. A few suggestions:

- Apple/banana with peanut butter
- Nut butter and jelly sandwich
- String cheese and crackers or fruit
- Chocolate milk
- Energy bar that includes protein