

Nutrition for the Competitive Sailor

Hannah Feinberg, Cornell University Dietetic Intern

As a sailor, your success is derived from both your physical and mental prowess to navigate a boat through water using the power of the wind. To perform your best during training and competition, nutrition is an imperative factor during your training and regattas. There is no one size fits all nutrition plan, but the following will provide insight into key components of your training and competition. Working with a dietitian to fine tune your nutrition may allow you to obtain a competitive edge on your competitors.

Given that you spend many hours every week on the water or in the gym, it is crucial that you plan and incorporate nutrition into your training program. You should be eating a balanced meal 2-3 hours before a training session or regatta that is high in easy to digest carbohydrate foods and drinks. A balanced meal contains at least 3 of the 5 food groups which are dairy, fruits, vegetables, grains, and protein. It is important that you experiment with different foods and drinks to find what works best for you. Meals and snacks that will set you up for success are high in carbohydrates, moderate in protein and low in fat. Some ideas for pre-activity meals include oatmeal with fruit and nuts, cereal with milk and a banana, smoothies, and sandwiches. Good snacks include trail mix, granola bars, fruit and sport gels or chews.

Hydration is another key component to your nutrition plan. Unless you have a planned approach to maintain hydration, your risk of dehydration is high. When dehydrated, you may experience cognitive impairment which could reduce your skill ability and impair your endurance, which will significantly hinder your performance. To help prevent dehydration you should be frequently drinking small amounts of water and sports drink throughout the day, but especially before, during, and after activity. A simple way to evaluate your hydration status is to monitor the color and amount of urine you are producing- you should be aiming for a clear/light yellow color. As the athlete, you need to plan ahead and bring sufficient fluid on your boat or in the coaches boat for training sessions and regattas. I recommend filling your water bottles with sports drink to provide carbohydrates, electrolytes and fluids.

During training or competition, you should be aiming to consume 30-60 grams of carbohydrate per hour to maintain your energy stores. If you reach a point of hunger or thirst, it is too late. You must be preemptive about your fluid and nutrient needs to have a strong sailing session. During activity, foods might include sport gels, sport drink, bananas, and granola bars. It is recommended to consume about 1 bottle of sports drink per every 1 hour of exercise.

Recovery is probably the most important facet of your nutrition plan. It is recommended to consume a 4:1 carbohydrate to protein snack within 30 minutes of completion of activity and a full meal within 2-3 hours. This will aid in rebuilding your muscles and replete all nutrient stores that were depleted during activity. Ideas for post workout snacks include yogurt, string cheese, chocolate milk, and sandwiches. During this time, you should make sure you are consuming adequate fluids, too.

The purpose of eating for a sailor is to guarantee the consumption of adequate nutrients in the form of lean proteins, healthy fats, and a blend of simple and complex carbohydrates. This

combination will properly fuel training and racing, which will promote your health and well-being so you are ready to be competitive. Proper nutrition can help prevent injuries and promote success.

Timing	Nutrition	Food and Drink Ideas
Pre-Training/Regatta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consume adequate, easy to digest carbohydrates to maximize the amount of glucose (energy) in your muscles and liver. • Aim to eat no sooner than 30 minutes but no more than 3-hours' pre-workout. • Try to drink 2 cups of water or sports drink 2-3 hours before exercise and 1 cup within 10-20 minutes of activity. During activity aim to drink about 1 bottles worth of fluids every hour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Smoothie, granola bar, fruit, oatmeal, Greek yogurt, rice cake and peanut butter, or toast. • Drink: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Water ○ Sports Drink
During Training/Regatta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consume fluids and simple carbohydrates. You need about 100-250 calories per hour, which is about 16-32 ounces of sports drink. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sport gels ○ Sport chews ○ Banana ○ Bars • Drink: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sports Drink:
Post-Training/Regatta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refuel with a carbohydrate and protein rich snack within 30 minutes of activity. • Consume a balanced meal within 3-4 hours of completion. • Rehydrate! Drink 16 ounces of fluid for every 1 pound lost during exercise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snacks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chocolate milk ○ String Cheese ○ Whole wheat toast with peanut butter and banana • Meals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Buddha bowl with quinoa and veggies ○ Toast, eggs, and veggies