

mx Sport



Here is what we eat every day!



Luxembourg's Andy Schleck, right, tweets a pic of what's fuelling his Tour de France bid.

GUT RUNNING

Eating like a champ is the first crucial step towards performing like one, as ELIZA SEWELL discovers

Try eating 8000 calories in a day. Actually, forget it, that's feral – let's just imagine it. It means 200g of oats with fruit and yoghurt, 500g of pasta washed down with four bottles of Powerade, a stack of fruit and vegies, a 300g tuna steak – and to get to the magical number quickly, a slab of Coke and a Snickers. That 8000 calories is what it takes to power a Tour de France cyclist up and down those Pyrenees and Alps. Experts reckon women need about 2000 calories a day on average, while for men it's 2500. Alan McCubbin, an expert in nutrition for endurance events including cycling and triathlons, reckons riders can burn between 6000 and 8000 calories on a mountain stage of the Tour. And it needs to be replaced then and there. "With the calories each day, they want to try and replace as much as what they've lost as possible. If they get into a calorie deficit, that's when they

can run into problems after a couple of weeks," McCubbin says. "Basically, calories come from four things in food – carbohydrate, protein, fat and alcohol. "The big one is carbohydrate ... it's also the one your body doesn't store, so these guys will be running out of carbohydrate stores every day. "When you see guys getting spat out the back of the bunch, one of the reasons can be they've used up their carb store and there's nothing left. "You've got to choose foods that deliberately pack a lot of energy into a small amount. It's the exact opposite to when you're trying to lose weight – it's trying to prevent weight loss." But that doesn't mean riders can just tuck into five Snickers bars to top up their calorie count. "A Snickers has a lot of fat and when you eat fat it tends to slow the emptying of your stomach. When you're eating and drinking a lot throughout the day, the last thing you want is a slow-

emptying stomach," McCubbin says. "In terms of bang for your buck, fat will give you a lot more calories for a smaller amount of food – but during exercise, carbohydrate is your main fuel source because it produces energy more quickly and for less oxygen. "You can break fat down quite easily, but it takes more oxygen to do it – and it does it more slowly, so you can't produce the high-intensity bursts of exercise without the carbohydrates. "Over three weeks you need the total calories, because if you lose too much weight, you're probably going to get sick – which isn't good." That's where sweet treats such as jam sandwiches and cakes kick in – and even the odd can of Coke. "Sugar (in Coke) is carbohydrate, it's more concentrated than you get in most sports drinks ... about 11 or 12 per cent carbohydrates," McCubbin says. "And for variety as well, just having a different flavour ... you get sick of drinking the same thing for six hours." Closer to home, nutritionist Simone Austin has been working with the Hawthorn footy club for three years. She says the diet of an AFL player is vastly different to that of a cyclist. The food he eats two days prior to a game is the key – and it's about recovering well after each training session.

Match day isn't about loading up. "Footballers eat less on match day to what they'd normally do because they don't want to be heavy," Austin says. "They just get too nervous on game day to really eat much. "They'd have a larger carbohydrate meal on a Thursday night (before a Saturday game) – pasta, stir-fry with lots of rice. But you don't do that big carbo loading, they have to be careful to recover after every training session." Austin says players have plenty of stored energy to draw on in games. "You have plenty of stored glycogen in your muscles and liver, so they're relying on eating well all week and recovering after training," she says. "If you drink lots of sports drinks through the game, you've got plenty of energy stored. "The main thing is to keep hydrated." Austin, who also works with A-League team Melbourne Heart and the NRL's Storm, says the diet for AFL and soccer players is about keeping them lean, while for rugby league it's about keeping body mass. She says cooking classes and learning about food is crucial. "It's also about getting players to love food and think about what they can eat rather than what they can't," she says.

TYPICAL INTAKES

CYCLIST

(Tour de France hill stage)



Breakfast: Oats, fruit and yoghurt, coffee.
On the bike: Energy bars and gels (carbohydrates, basically sugar) every hour or two. To break things up, they can also eat jam sandwiches, cakes, pikelets – anything low in fat but high in carbs. Lots of fluids, as riders can lose 500ml to 2.5l an hour.
After the ride: Bread, pasta, rice, vegetables, fruit, yoghurt, cold meats, tuna (protein to repair muscles), nuts, cheese.
**Fruit and vegetables are crucial so riders don't get sick. The fibre's also a plus: "The last thing you want on the Tour de France is bowel issues," nutritionist Alan McCubbin says.*

AFL PLAYER

(midfielder, match day – Saturday 2pm)



Breakfast: Bowl of porridge or wheat-based cereal with low-fat milk and fruit (berries, banana, canned peaches). Two pieces of toast with avocado and Vegemite (a favourite, apparently) or a poached egg. Plenty of water to drink.
During the morning: More water, sports drinks, hydrolytes.
Snack time (11.30am): Wholegrain chicken sandwich or chicken and salad wrap. Small low-fat muffin or banana smoothie.
Until the game: Sports drinks, water and maybe a muesli bar.
Half-time: Gel, half a banana, water, sports drink.
After the game: Protein-based milk drink, two slices of low-fat pizza, cup of flavoured milk, more sports drink.
Later: Small meal, maybe pasta or meat and veg.

NRL PLAYER

(match day)



Similar to AFL but more. More toast for brekkie, two sandwiches for snack, larger meal after the game – often a buffet. Nothing to eat after about 11.30am – the contact's too much for a full stomach.

WANGPANTS AND LATTES

You often hear them coming before you see them – cleats clicking on the cafe floor. What is it with cyclists and coffee, you wonder, as half a dozen lycra-clad riders rub their hands together in anticipation of their fix. Nothing, it turns out – they just love the stuff. "I know from experience (cyclists on the Tour) will probably have coffee – most of them are pretty big on it, so potentially three or four a day," McCubbin says. "It's just a cycling culture thing more than anything." So now you know.

