



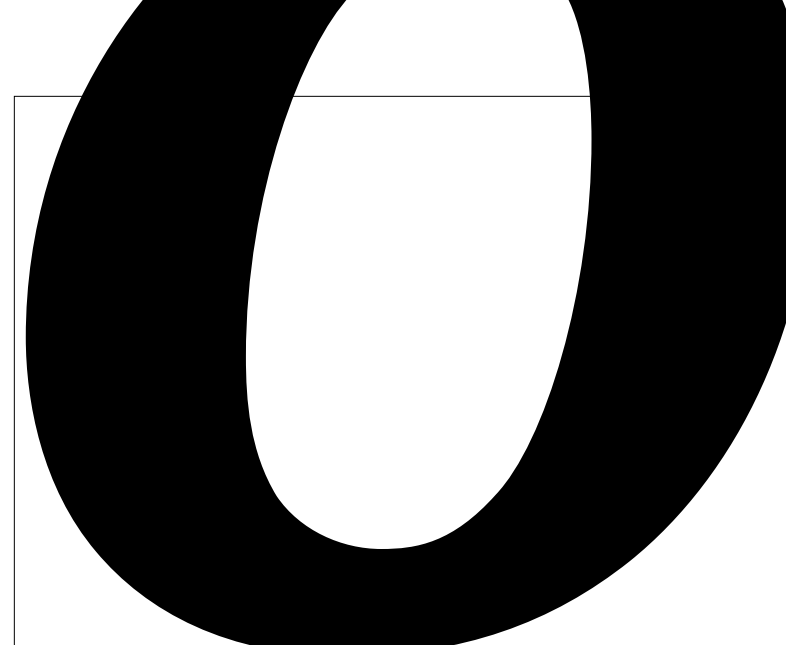
For as long as anyone can remember, cyclists have turned to the same trusty old sources for fuel. (Linguini, anyone?) But the latest research is clear: **Not all carbs and fat are created equal.** Here, we present a surprising new approach to losing weight and keeping it off—and riding longer and stronger than ever.

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by Selene Yeager
photographed by Mitch Mandel
food styling by Melissa Reiss

This guy has no fat on his body—partly because he includes it in his diet.



One of the long-enduring traditions at bike events of all stripes is the pasta dinner the evening before the big ride. After all, who doesn't believe in the hearty, turbo-fueling quality of a whopping plate of spaghetti with tomato sauce? As it turns out, the nonbelievers include a number of highly informed people, including Allen Lim, PhD, the brains behind much of Garmin-Slipstream's training and race preparation. "There's nothing nutritious about that,"

Nutritionist Sass helps her clients lose weight by correcting their balance of carbs, protein and fats, without cutting calories.

Lim says. In fact, he has eliminated all processed wheat from the team's diet, and at races has replaced traditional starchy foods with balanced, whole-food fuel such as rice cakes made with eggs, olive oil, prosciutto and liquid amino acids. ■ If this creates the impression that Lim knows something you don't, well, that's probably true. His job is to make sure that, unlike the rest of us, his team doesn't blithely adhere to old, counterproductive eating habits—habits that can lead to unnecessary weight fluctuation and diminished performance. ■ Here's the good news. We've tapped into this new school of food science led by the likes of Lim to correct popular misconceptions about food, particularly about carbs and fat. Proponents of this new approach believe, for example, that a diet heavy in starch causes your body to burn sugar instead of fat, so you bonk more easily, often eat too much and end up overweight rather than properly fueled. Even Joe Friel, who relentlessly advocated carbohydrates in his *Training Bible* series of books, has done a 180, turning his back on starches and relying instead on vegetables, fruits and lean meats as fuel. ■ Consider this our effort to correct myths and misconceptions you've been exposed to over the years. Follow this advice, and you won't just live lean. You'll also be able to ride longer on less food and never bonk.

FALLACY #1 A calorie is a calorie

This might be the biggest weight-loss misunderstanding in existence. For years we've been told that weight loss is a simple calories-in, calories-out equation, and 3,500 excess calories will put on a pound whether they come from soybeans or banana cream pie. That's simply not true.

"There are three key types of calories: carbohydrate, protein and fat," says sports nutritionist Cynthia Sass, MPH, RD, CSSD, creator and coauthor of the *Flat Belly Diet* (published by Rodale, BICYCLING's parent company). "They're as different as gasoline, motor oil and brake fluid in terms of the roles they play in keeping your body operating optimally." Sass says that many of her clients might eat the perfect number of calories, but they have cut their fat intake too much. So the jobs that fat does, such as repairing cell membranes and optimizing hormones, go undone, and the surplus carbs are stored as fat. By correcting her clients' balance of carbs, protein and fat without changing their calorie intake, she says, she has helped them lose weight, improve their immune systems, gain muscle and boost energy.



THE GET-LEAN FIX

Eat a representative of each macronutrient group at every meal. Sass recommends getting 50 to 55 percent of your calories from carbs (fill half your plate with vegetables, fruits and some whole grains), 25 to 30 percent from fats (olive oil, avocado and so on), and 15 to 20 percent from protein (lean meats, fish, eggs and poultry). “Just be sure to skew your preworkout meals or snacks to be heavier in carbs and lower in fat and protein to fuel up properly and avoid cramps,” says Sass.



ONE OF SASS'S RECOMMENDED MEALS, FROM HER BOOK:

GRILLED PORK WITH GARLIC
oil: Marinate a pork tenderloin in a mixture of 2 tablespoons lemon juice, 1/2 teaspoon each oregano, salt and pepper and 1/2 cup garlic-infused oil; grill for 20 minutes. Serve with a salad of sliced red bell pepper, cucumber and scallions, with parsley.

FALLACY #2 Starches are sensible fuel

At some point, starch became synonymous with carbohydrate. While pasta and bagels are carbohydrates, and you do need carbs for fuel, they're often not the best sources, especially if you're trying to keep weight off. Starchy carbs are easy to overeat, and any surplus goes to your fat stores. “Your brain operates on sugar, and when you eat bagels or potatoes, your body turns them into sugar and delivers them to your cells quickly, which makes your brain happy and leaves you wanting more,” says Friel. So in this case, you shouldn't listen to your body.

Fruits and vegetables, by contrast, are rich in carbs but often lower in calories and also digest more slowly. You're less likely to plow through so many berries and carrots that you end up with more fuel than you need. As a bonus, plant foods are loaded with vitamins, minerals and immunity-boosting phytonutrients that make you healthier and stronger, so you can ride better and burn more calories.

THE GET-LEAN FIX
Choose carbs wisely. Eat starchy, quick-digesting carbs only during and right before and after training rides or races, when it's important to get food that can be quickly digested and converted to fuel. Otherwise, get your carbs from fruits and vegetables.

How much is enough? If you're eating considerably more than Sass's recommended 50 to 55 percent, especially from starchy sources, then you risk changing your metabolism, says Friel. “When I see someone who has started eating lots of starch,” he says, “they not only have gained fat, they've also changed their metabolism from fat-burning to sugar-burning.” It doesn't happen over one plate of pasta, but the body is adaptable. “Over the course of a few of months,” Friel says, “it will switch over to burn whatever you're feeding it most.”

When possible, pair your carbs with some protein. Lean meats, nut butters, fish and eggs slow digestion, so you feel full sooner, get more even energy from your meals and stay full longer. The amino acids in protein also help repair, build and maintain muscle tissue.

FALLACY #3 All fat makes you fat

It's no coincidence that Americans got heavier as fat consumption went down. For years, the government preached low-fat, carb-heavy

diets. “This wasn't only misguided; it was flat-out wrong,” Friel says.

As your body becomes more conditioned, you become a better fat burner. You need ample amounts of healthy fat, which, contrary to widely held belief, won't make you fat. In fact, starchy foods turn to stored fat far more quickly. What's more, evidence is stacking up that healthy unsaturated fats are essential for firing up your fat-burning metabolism. In a study of 101 men and women, Harvard researchers put half the group on a low-fat diet and half on a diet that included about 20 percent of calories from monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFAs). After 18 months, the MUFA-eating group had dropped 11 pounds; its low-fat-eating peers had shed only six. Fat is also slower to digest than carbs, so it helps you stay hunger-free longer.

Fat will help you ride longer so you can burn more calories, says Friel. Research shows that athletes who get about 50-plus percent of their diet from fat produce better average times to exhaustion in exercise tests than those eating typical low-fat, high-carb diets.

THE GET-LEAN FIX
Add healthy fats to every meal. Sass recommends getting about 20 percent of your calories from MUFAs, or about 55 grams per day at 2,500

Most cyclists consume more sugar and sodium than they realize: “Most grocery-store foods are packaged junk.”

calories, which is what most cyclists eat as training ramps up. “Because most athletes don't have time to count fat grams, the simpler message is: Include small portions of good fats, like almonds, avocado and olive oil, with all meals and snacks,” she says. Try nuts and seeds, olive-based tapenades and even the occasional chunk of dark chocolate. Some healthy portions to shoot for:

- **Nuts and seeds** Everything from pecans to pine nuts, almond butter to tahini. A serving size is 2 tablespoons.
- **Olives** Black, green, mixed or blended in a spreadable tapenade. A serving is 10 large olives or 2 tablespoons of spread.
- **Oils** Canola, flaxseed, peanut, safflower, walnut, sunflower, sesame or olive. Cook with them; drizzle them; eat them in pesto. One serving is 1 tablespoon.
- **Avocado** As guacamole or just slice and serve. One-quarter cup equals one serving.
- **Dark chocolate** Go for one-quarter cup of dark or semi-sweet, or about 2 ounces.

FALLACY #4 Food comes from a box

Many cyclists who think they're eating healthfully often consume far more sugar and sodium than they realize because they eat so much pasta, cereals, energy bars and other processed foods. “The vast majority of grocery-store foods are packaged junk,” says sports nutritionist and exercise physiologist Tavis Piattoly, RD, LD, of Elmwood Fitness

Center, in New Orleans. Some items also contain trans fats—the kinds of fats you want to avoid. The sugar is also troublesome for weight loss because it causes the body to step up its production of insulin, which in turn blocks hormones that control appetite. As a result, the food you eat is quickly stored as fat—and still, you're always hungry.

If you don't get most of your carbs from fruits and vegetables, you could lose muscle mass as well as calcium from your bones.

THE GET-LEAN FIX

Eat mostly whole foods that are part of an animal or plant, Piattoly says. Fill most of your cart with foods from the grocery store's perimeter first; that's where the fresh produce, meats, fish and other whole foods are found. Then go down the center aisles to fill in the rest. That should reflect the proportion of processed foods you include in your diet.

FALLACY #5

Skipping breakfast is fine if you need to drop a few pounds

Eat breakfast. That bit of essential advice is food gospel. Still, according to a survey by the International Food Information Council Foundation, fewer than half of us eat a morning meal.

Breakfast is the key that starts your fat-burning metabolism. Without it, you go into an energy deficit that not only leaves you ravenous (and more likely to overeat) later, but also suppresses your calorie-burning furnace, so what you do eat is more likely to go into storage. Research shows that people who skip breakfast are 4½ times more likely to be overweight than those who don't. "It's one of the biggest fueling mistakes almost everyone makes," says Piattoly.

THE GET-LEAN FIX

Because you have a whole day of activity—usually including a ride—ahead of you, try to eat about 25 percent of your daily calories at your morning meal.

Smart Swaps

INSTEAD OF THIS → GO FOR THIS

Cream cheese → Avocado spread

Pasta → Sweet potato

Salmon salad on bread → Salmon salad in a romaine lettuce wrap

Mayo → Pesto

Doughnut → Dark chocolate

Chips and pretzels → Mixed nuts and dried fruit

Risotto → Mixed sauteed vegetables

That meal should include protein, healthy fat and fiber-rich carbs like fruit. A British study found that exercisers who ate a breakfast high in fiber burned twice as much fat during workouts later in the day than those who ate less fibrous foods.

For a power breakfast that'll sustain you well into the day, try two eggs any style; ½ cup whole oats, cooked; 1 cup yogurt; a cup of mixed berries; coffee; and orange juice.

FALLACY #6

You can eat the same at age 40 as age 20

Muscle is the engine that powers your pedals, but it also drives your calorie-burning metabolism. The more lean tissue you have, the more calories you burn and the leaner you stay. As we age, we naturally lose muscle and thus gain fat. Cycling and strength training help stem that loss, but the right foods are more important for muscle maintenance than most people realize. Because of age-related kidney changes, our blood becomes more acidic and we excrete nitrogen, an essential component of muscle protein, faster than we take it in, Friel says. "Essentially we end up peeing away our muscles," he says. And with a net loss of nitrogen, you can't form new muscle.

THE GET-LEAN FIX

Turn the tide on nitrogen loss and preserve muscle mass by increasing the alkalinity of your blood to neutralize the acidity, says Friel. One way is with supplements like Acid Zapper, but you can also eat foods that enhance alkaline. Fruits and veggies are the only foods that offer a net increase, says Friel. Fats and oils are neutral. All other foods, including grains, legumes and meats, have an acid-producing effect. If you don't get most of your carbs from fruits and vegetables, Friel says, you're losing muscle mass as well as calcium from your bones, which also gets leached away in an acidic environment as you age.

FALLACY #7

You're never hungry... or you're always hungry

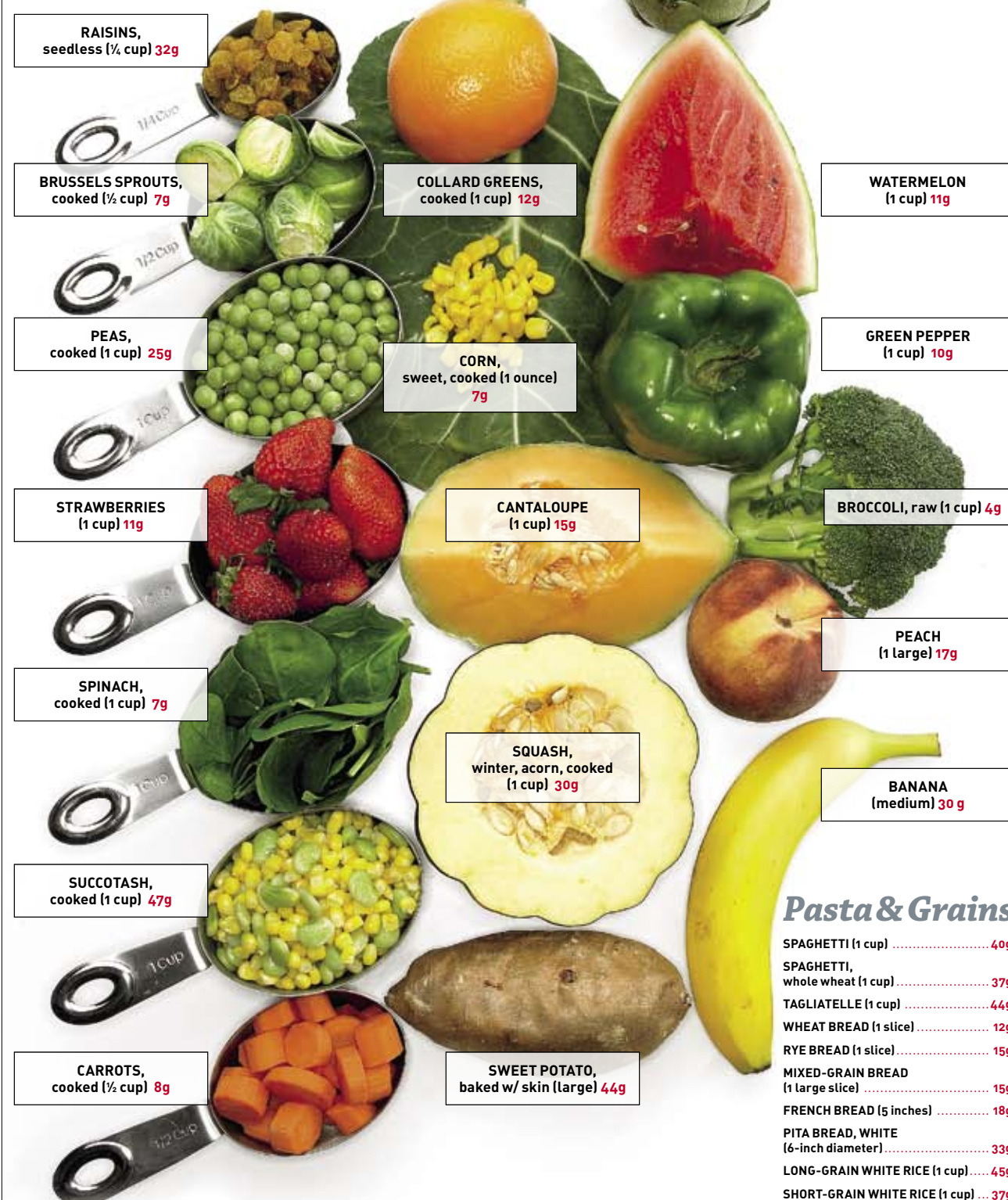
Most diets treat hunger as the enemy. But it's actually your closest ally, says Piattoly. "Once you start the fat-reduction process, you'll be a little hungry, but not starving," he says. "The trick is balancing the two, so you're losing weight, but not setting yourself up for a binge."

THE GET-LEAN FIX

Try to eat every three to four hours, says Piattoly. "Eat breakfast, then wait until you feel hungry and eat just until you're no longer hungry," he says. "That's where people usually go wrong. They eat past the point of satisfaction until they're 'full.' Eat only until you're no longer hungry. If you don't feel hungry again in three to four hours, you ate too much earlier." Once you get the hang of it, weight loss and maintenance is much easier. ①

WHERE THE CARBS ARE

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES ARE A MORE SUBSTANTIAL SOURCE OF CARBOHYDRATE THAN MOST PEOPLE REALIZE.



Pasta & Grains

SPAGHETTI (1 cup)	40g
SPAGHETTI, whole wheat (1 cup)	37g
TAGLIATELLE (1 cup)	44g
WHEAT BREAD (1 slice)	12g
RYE BREAD (1 slice)	15g
MIXED-GRAIN BREAD (1 large slice)	15g
FRENCH BREAD (5 inches)	18g
PITA BREAD, WHITE (6-inch diameter)	33g
LONG-GRAIN WHITE RICE (1 cup)	45g
SHORT-GRAIN WHITE RICE (1 cup)	37g