Meal Plans For Athletes

The needs of athletes vary greatly depending upon one’s sport and level of activity. The needs of a marathon runner are quite different from those of boxer or Olympic Weightlifter. Despite these different needs all athletes share a few things:

- Means of optimizing performance
- Methods for improving recovery

The Paleo diet is the perfect solution for both performance and recovery. Lean protein sources such as chicken, lean beef, turkey, pork loin and sea food are ergogenic (performance enhancing) because of the large amount of Branched Chain Amino Acids (BCAA’s) which have been proven to be crucial in rapid recovery after hard training, both for strength and endurance athletes. So all of your meals will start with 4-8 oz of lean proteins.

The next piece of customization is dependent upon the nature of your sport.

Sample Meal Plan: The Endurance/Crossfit Athlete

High-intensity aerobic or anaerobic sports such as soccer, boxing, wrestling, mixed martial arts or sprint interval training (running, biking, swimming, rowing) should take advantage of a period of time post workout when the body is primed for recovery. A meal of 4-8 oz of lean protein PLUS 50-100g of nutritious, Paleo friendly carbohydrate such as yams, sweet potatoes, squash or fruit should be consumed within 30 min post workout to optimize repair of muscle tissue and to ensure muscle glycogen is optimally replenished. The amount of carbohydrate will vary based on how large you are and the volume and intensity of your training. The larger you are or the harder/longer the training, the more carbohydrate you will GENERALLY need to optimize recovery. Some athletes may find they require 2 protein+carbohydrate meals to optimize recovery from particularly grueling work or multi-session training days. Subsequent meals should be built around lean protein, multi-colored, low carbohydrate density vegetables and good fats. Let’s assume an early run, bike or swim interval session. Depending upon your preferences you may opt to train on an empty stomach. If you prefer a small snack before training here is a good way to start your day:

Pre-training Snack:

2 oz chicken OR 2 scrambled eggs

1/2 to 1/4 honey dew melon OR 1 cup of blueberries.

Post Training Breakfast: (best if consumed within 30 min of training)

Salmon scramble, 1/2 honey dew or rock melon+1 cup of blueberries.

OR Grilled salmon, sweet potato hash browns with olive oil and cinnamon.
Lunch:
Grass fed ground beef marinara over baked spaghetti squash.

Snack:
Can of sardines, medium orange, hand full of almonds.

Dinner:
Baked Halibut, large Artichoke. Garlic-pistachio “pesto” for the halibut and as a dipping sauce for the artichoke.

Sample Meal Plan: The Power Athlete

For sprinters, and other power athletes most meals should be built around lean proteins, a variety of low carbohydrate density vegetables and liberal use of good fats. Power athletes may find benefit from a higher intake from Paleo friendly carbs such as yams, sweet potatoes and fruit once or twice per week. This is called a “cyclical-low carbohydrate” diet and has been enormously popular with track and field athletes, football players, Olympic weightlifters and other athletes who place a premium on strength, power and exceptionally low body fat levels. Doctor Mauro Di-Pasquale is the world authority on this way of eating and we highly recommend you read his work for further information. To see the best possible performance and body composition, the power athlete should eat at least 1g of protein per lb of bodyweight per day.

Breakfast:
4-6 egg omelet with 1 whole avocado. 1/2 cup blue berries.

Pre-workout snack:
2-4 oz grilled chicken, handful of almonds or macadamias.

Post-workout meal:
6-8 oz grilled salmon, asparagus, mushroom, bamboo shoot, coconut milk curry.

Snack:
Canned salmon salad with olive oil, avocado, tomatoes and red onion.

Dinner:
Grilled grass fed Rib eye with grilled shrimp. Large mixed salad with greens, red onions and ginger sesame dressing.