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Help, But No Guarantees

I used special diets, vegetarian diets with lots of vitamins. Then I'd see the East Germans gorging themselves on greasy French fries and Wiener schnitzel then go out on the track and set world records. It makes you wonder about diet.

–Mark Gorski. Olympic Gold Medalist, Cycling.



nu-tri-tion (nū-trīsh'ən) n.¹

1. The process by which a living organism assimilates food and uses it for growth, liberation of energy, and replacement of tissues; its successive stages include digestion, absorption, assimilation, and excretion.
2. The science or study that deals with food and nourishment, especially in humans.

Nutrition can help, but it is not everything.

Athletes sometimes ascribe magical powers to nutrition, believing that if they just “get it right,” performance will zoom and fitness will be transformed.

Good nutrition can help performance. Poor nutrition can *worsen* performance. There is no guarantee, either way. Many athletic health gurus have died early.²

Just as athletes sometimes have unrealistic expectations about the importance of nutrition, so does the general population. Eating healthily or “health foods” does not result in immortality. It is possible to drink heavily, be morbidly obese and yet live a long life.

It is all about risk and odds. Healthy nutrition does lower the risk of cancer, heart disease, and a host of other diseases. Further, for the years we do have, it helps many of us live stronger.

¹ *Stedman's Medical Dictionary, 2002 by Houghton Mifflin Company.*

² To name just three: runner Jim Fixx, PowerBar founder Brian Maxwell, bicycling nutrition guru Ed Burke.

Read Me First—Forward

There is a lot of information in this book. Some parts of this book are best used for reference. Other sections provide important information for you to use right away—the next time you train.

Here are some training essentials:

- Replace fluids.
- Consume calories while exercising.
- If exercising for many hours, pay attention to sodium.
- Avoid multiple or costly supplements.
- Almost always avoid so-called ergogenics.

Here is what you will find in the different parts of this book:

Nutrition Quiz. A fun start. If you get all the questions right, maybe you do not need to read the rest of the book!

Part 1. Workout & Event Nutrition. The practical aspects of endurance sports nutrition.

Part 2. Calories. A mix of the practical with basic science, helping you understand *why* recommendations are made.

Part 3. Sports Foods. Lists of representative sports nutritional products. Once you understand what is in these products, you may be more confident about using “real foods” or other options.

Part 4. Ergogenics and Ergolytics. This part is all about the products that are sold to make you go fast—which, most of the time, do not. You will find a review of what is in the marketplace, and explanations about why, generally, it may not be worth spending your money or risking your health.

Part 5. Nutrition Promotion and Quackery. Education about how products are marketed, how to be a smart consumer, and about the dangers of nutritional quackery.

Part 6. Body Fat, Weight. Many endurance aerobic athletes strive to lose weight. You will find a review, not necessarily glamorous, of how to lose weight. You will also read how basically every diet you have read about as new is really a reincarnation of something previously promoted.

Part 7. Healthy Fast Food. Not an oxymoron. Sensible ideas for breakfasts and quick, low-calorie dinners, chock full of nutrients.

Part 8. USDA & FDA Basics. What is the food label about? What are the laws for advertising nutrition facts, daily values, nutrient content, and other health claims? What do the claims really mean?

Part 9. Vitamins, Minerals, and Other Nutrients. This part is relatively dry reading. Some of it is technical. Save it for when you have a lot of time, as reference material, or to help you understand the academic underpinnings of the more practical information about vitamins, minerals, and supplements presented throughout this book.

Key Points. A summary of the key points made throughout the book.

Please send me an e-mail if you have suggestions for the next edition—things I have missed, things you would like to see me address, things you would like me to change. You will find contact information on my website, arniebakercycling.com.

Thank you,

Arnie Baker