

SportsNutrition

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The Athlete's Kitchen

Have you ever wondered which is *the best* sports drink, energy bar, or gel? The answer is the best choice is the product that pleases your taste buds and settles well in your stomach. You simply need to experiment to determine which products (if any) work best for your body.

A multitude of businesses have jumped on the bandwagon to create sports foods that appeal to a variety of athletes, including those with special diets (such as gluten-free or vegan) to athletes who are just plain hungry and want a "healthier" cookie (most energy bars!). While busy athletes enjoy the ease of using pre-wrapped fuel, engineered sports foods tend to be more about convenience than necessity. Certainly, there is a time and place for these products, but "real" food (such as raisins, gummi bears, chocolate milk) can do the same job at a lower price. Don't underestimate the power of peanut butter, bananas, and honey!

Below is an extensive (but incomplete) list of various types of sports fuels. Perhaps the information will help you untangle the jungle of choices. Don't be swayed by a product's name; it might be more powerful than the sports food itself!

SPORTS DRINKS:

With sodium (and perhaps other electrolytes): Gatorade, PowerAde, Edge Energy, Hydro-Boom!, GU2O, CytoMax

All natural, without dye/food coloring:

Carb BOOM! Electrolyte Drink, First Endurance EFS, HEED, Clif Quench, Recharge, Coconut Water

Extra sodium (if you plan to exercise for >2 hours in the heat):

Gatorade Endurance, PowerBar Endurance, E-Fuel, First Endurance EFS, Clif Shot Electrolyte Drink, E-Load, Hydro Pro Cooler, Motor Tabs, GU Brew Electrolyte, Infinit, UCAN
Added "buffers": Cytomax, Perpetuem, Revenge Sport

Extra carbs: Perpetuem, Carbo-Pro

Added protein (May reduce post-exercise muscle soreness):

Amino Vital, Perpetuem, Accelerade, Revenge Pro
Sports drinks for dieters (i.e., lower calorie): G2, PowerAde Zero, Ultima Replenisher, Propel, Nuun, Nathan Catalyst, Elixir

GELS (*Test these during training; they often contribute to diarrhea*)

Gu, Carb-BOOM!, Clif Shot, Honey Stinger

Extra sodium: PowerBar Gel, Crank Sports e-Gel, EFS Liquid Shot, Gu Roctane

Added protein: Accel Gel, Hammer Gel, EFS Liquid Shot, Gu Roctane, Endless edge

Added caffeine: GU (most flavors), Rocktane (most flavors), Clif Shot Gel (Mocha, Double Espresso, Chocolate Cherry, Citrus, Strawberry); Carb-BOOM Chocolate Cherry, Hammer Gel Espresso, PowerBar Gel (Double Latte, Tangerine, Chocolate, Green Apple and Strawberry-banana); Honey Stinger Ginsting and Strawberry

Added extras: EAS Energy Gel (taurine)

SPORTS SNACKS FOR ENDURANCE EXERCISE

Jelly Belly Sports Beans, Clif Shot Bloks, Carb BOOM! Gu Chomps Energy Chew, Sharkies, FRS Health Energy Chews

Commercial Sports Foods: A Source of Confusion?

RECOVERY DRINKS (*Carbs with a little protein*)

Amino Vital, First Endurance Ultragen, EAS Endurathon, Perpetuem, PowerBar Recovery Drinks, Recoverite, Endurox R4, Gatorade Nutrition Shake, Hormel's Great Shake, GNC's Distance, Clif Shot Recovery Drink, First Endurance Ultragen, Gu Brew Recovery

ENERGY BARS (*for extra energy, not a meal replacement*):

All natural/organic ((have no added vitamins or minerals):

Clif Nectar, Clif Mojo, Lara Bar, Optimum, HoneyBar, Odwalla Bar, PowerBar Nut Naturals, KIND Bar, Zing Bar, NRG-Bar, Honey Stinger Bar, Kashi Bar, Peak Energy, Perfect 10, Gnu Bar, Raw Revolution Bar, Olympic Granola Bar, Pure Bar, Pro Bar, Sun Valley Bar

Caffeine-containing bar: Peak Energy Plus

Dairy-free: Clif Nectar, Clif Builder's, Olympic Granola, Pure Fit, Perfect 10, Larabar, AllerEnergy Bar, Soy Rocks Bar

Grocery store options: Nature Valley Granola Bar, Nutri-Grain Bar, Quaker Chewy Bars, Fig Newtons

Gluten-free: Perfect 10, Larabar, Hammer, Omega Smart Bars, EnvirKids Rice Cereal Bar, Zing Bar, BoraBora Bar, Extend Delight, Wings of Nature Bar, Elev8Me *Wheat-free but many not be gluten-free:* Odwalla Bar, Clif Nectar, Clif Builder's

Kosher: Pure Fit, Larabar, Extend Bar, Balance Bar

Meal replacement bar (with 10-15 g protein): Kashi Go Lean Bar, MetRx Mr. Big, MetRx Big 100 Colossal, Balance Satisfaction

Nut-free: AllerEnergy Bars, Metaballs

Peanut-free: Soy Rocks, AllerEnergy bar, Larabar

Protein bars (soy, whey, egg, or blended protein source):

PowerBar ProteinPlus, EAS Myoplex Delux, High 5 Protein Bar, Maximuscle Promax Meal, Tri-O-Plex, Clif Builder's Bar, Detour Bar, Honey Stinger Protein Bar, Pure Protein,

Raw food: Raw Revolution, Pure Bar

Recovery bar (4:1 carb:pro ratio): PowerBar Performance

Soy-free: Larabar, Perfect 10, Clif Nectar, KIND Bar, Bumble Bar, NRG-Bar, AllerEnergy Bar, Zing Bar, Gnu Bar, Raw Bar

Vegan: Pure Fit, Larabar, Hammer Bar, Clif Builder's, Pro Bar Vega Whole Food Raw Energy Bar, Perfect 10, Soy Rocks Bar

Vitamin+protein-filled candy bar: Marathon Bar, Detour Bar

Women's bars (fewer calories; soy, calcium, iron, folic acid):

PowerBar Pria, Amino Vital Fit, Luna Bar, Balance Oasis

40-30-30 Bars: Balance Bar, ZonePerfect

If you intend to buy energy bars instead of bananas, consider supporting entrepreneurs with great products: SunValleyBar.com, zingbar.com, OlympicGranola.com, NRG-Bar.com. A dad (with 8 kids!), triathlete and three dietitians will appreciate your purchase!

Nancy Clark, MS, RD, CSSD (Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics) counsels both casual and competitive athletes in her practice at Healthworks, the premier fitness center in Chestnut Hill MA (617-383-6100). Her *Sports Nutrition Guidebook* and food guides for new runners, marathoners, and soccer players are available at www.nancyclarkrd.com. See also sportsnutritionworkshop.com.