

High Energy Needs and food costs

If you remember the 2008 Olympics, you remember hearing about Michael Phelps' 12,000 calorie diet.

As a board certified sports dietitian who works with a variety of athletes, and as a former Division I swimmer, I can attest to just how much energy that sport requires. But, while some sports and training programs require more energy than others, *all* athletes as well as individuals with high activity levels should be focused on *adequate energy* and nutrient intake - not eating *less*.

The diet-focused culture we live in, and the culture of some sports can make it seem like it's "normal" to feel hungry often. The culture of other sports also makes it seem "normal" to feel like a bottomless pit after practice or at night everyday. But, none of that is normal. If you eat adequate energy, you can spend your mental energy on performance rather than suppressing hunger or waiting til your next meal. Better yet, if you eat adequate energy earlier in the day (before you need to use it for your sport), you can prevent the feeling of wanting to eat anything and everything, too.

Acknowledging the need for greater quantities of food than the average person also means you need to purchase more food - and when focused on performance, you may be more likely to gravitate toward higher quality foods with higher nutritive values. Working with both college and pro-athletes, I see even those populations have a need for lower cost options, despite availability of dining halls and organization funded meals. So when considering the average person or the ultimate situation - *a family with teenage athletes* - I know the need for low-cost nutrient dense options is immense.

In this free guide, you'll see low-cost high-nutrient options for each food group/nutrient category, tips for getting the best deals without it being a time suck, and printables for a pantry inventory and grocery guide.

In the paid guide, you'll also receive more nutrition education on my formula for building balanced meals including the mix & match meal solution I provide to 1-1 clients, snack ideas timed around training and for specific times of the day, recipes, tips for reducing food waste, and guidance on what supplements you can stop wasting money on and which ones might be worth it.



Low-Cost, High-Nutrient Performance Foods

Starches

In addition to energy in the form of carbohydrates (the most efficient source for the human body, especially the muscles and central nervous system), whole grains and starchy vegetables provide other carbohydrates like fiber and oligosaccharides. These promote healthy gastrointestinal bacteria as well as more stable blood sugar responses. Additionally, they offer a variety of vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals that aid in the body's conversion of food into energy for exercising muscles as well as recovery, immune support, hydration, mood and more. Many whole grains offer more protein than you may realize, which is helpful if choosing to eat plant-based protein sources at any meals and snacks.

Read more about carbohydrates [here](#).



Low Cost Options

- Oats & Grits
- Rice & Corn
- Potatoes (all colors)
- Bulgur & Farro
- Whole Grain Cereal
- Whole Wheat Bread



Proteins

While protein contains energy, it is our main structural and metabolic nutrient, helping to repair muscle, while maintaining bone and all other tissues as well as making up hormones, enzymes, immune system factors and more. It's important to eat protein regularly throughout the day versus having very little at breakfast and snacks and large amounts post workout and at dinner. A common misconception is that consistent animal protein intake is necessary for gaining and maintaining strength and muscle size, but plant proteins have the ability to support your training and performance while usually carrying a much lower price tag. Focus on smaller portions of meat and swap out the animal protein in some meals for a more cost effective plant protein.

For more on effectively building muscle with plant protein, click [here](#).

Low Cost Options

- Dry & canned beans
- Tofu & tempeh
- Canned tuna & salmon
- Dry & cooked lentils
- Frozen & dried edamame
- Bean & lentil pasta*



*These may seem more costly than traditional pasta, but remember, offer much more protein.

Low-Cost, High-Nutrient Performance Foods

Vegetables

It's no secret that vegetables should be a focus of everyone's diet, and athletes are no exception. Research shows a higher vegetable intake may improve endurance performance, as well as recovery (1), and that higher vegetable intake is associated with increased feelings of happiness (2). The main goal is to consume a variety of colors to take in of phytochemicals, the plant pigments which work with energy nutrients, vitamins, and minerals to protect the body, preventing excess damage and aging. And don't be afraid of frozen and canned - they're processed within hours of harvest, which preserves nutrients.

Read about how to start liking vegetables [here](#).

Low Cost Options



- Local & seasonal
- Carrots & root veggies
- Avoid pre-cut and choose more out of packages for lower cost
- Onion family
- Frozen bagged
- Cabbage & romaine
- Canned vegetables



Fruits

While fruits tend to be more well-liked than vegetables, athletes again need more than the average person. As with vegetables, a variety of colors is important. Luckily, inexpensive forms of fruit make great pre-workout snacks and even options for fueling during training (see supplement section). Additionally, endurance athletes and those participating in cold weather sports can benefit from extra vitamin C, abundant in lower cost options such as frozen berries, kiwi, and citrus.

For a challenge and tips to eat more produce, click [here](#).

Low Cost Options

- Local & seasonal
- Kiwi & citrus
- Frozen berries
- Canned or in cups w/out syrup
- Bananas
- 100% juice
- Dried fruit



Low-Cost, High-Nutrient Performance Foods

Fats

Fat is an essential nutrient and an important energy source for trained individuals, especially longer lasting activities. In general, I recommend aiming to include more plant fats and fish fats when possible, as they balance the bodies inflammatory responses, protecting joints and repairing muscle.



Lower Cost Options

- Peanuts & PB
- Seeds
- Sunflower seed butter
- Bagged avocados
- Bulk size olive oil
- Fatty fish & eggs as "two-for" items with fat & protein



Flavors

Satisfaction with meals is near impossible without enjoying what you're eating. By adding the right flavors, you increase that enjoyment, and reduce the chances of overeating as your body searches for satisfaction. Keep a variety of options on hand, but don't overbuy so that spoilage occurs.

Low Cost Options

- Avoid over-size spice containers; get small amounts from bulk
- Purchase multiples of favorite shelf stable sauces when on sale
- Make your own dressings and sauces; freeze extra
- Grow your own herbs



Favorite Low-Cost High-Nutrient High-Quality Branded Snacks

- Clif bars by the box
- Larabars on sale
- Trader Joe's "bambas"
- Trader Joe's string cheese
- Siggi's yogurt
- Seapoint farm roasted edamame
- Trader Joes mini PB sandwich crackers
- Bark Thins via Cost Clubs



Planning & Shopping

5 tips to effectively stock your kitchen

Before you shop...

It's essential to always take note of what you already have on hand. It's easy to open the fridge and say or think "there's nothing to eat!", but if you took a few minutes to evaluate the situation in your entire kitchen, you may feel different much of the time.

1. Take an intense inventory of your pantry and freezer at least once a month, and if you have time, do so each time you plan to grocery shop. This can save money if you notice foods before they spoil or move past their "best by" date and can reduce the chances that you buy duplicate items. On top of that, you may discover ingredients and meal ideas that mix up your normal routine.

2. Next, you want to make a loose plan for the week. This may only include dinners so that you can make double and use leftovers for lunch. It may only include plans for breakfast and lunch if that's where you're usually lost and making dinner is always a breeze. Maybe your plan is focused entirely on pre-workout and post-workout snacks. Choose whichever you struggle with the most during the week.

3. Create your grocery list. Consider your plan and how many people you need to feed, including snack needs. Coming home with less than you need for the week means wasting time and gas to get back to the store, and if you ask me, time is money! *See grocery list template.*

4. Be flexible at the grocery store. Did you plan to buy one type of fish, but another is on sale? Notice quinoa is 2-for-1 and realize you can swap it into your rice dish for nutrient variety? Is there a fruit or vegetable that was locally grown, so it may last longer at home since you're likely buying it closer to harvest? In those situations, just adjust your plan by swapping items in and out. What you *don't* want to do is buy necessary items just because they're on sale. Stay away from those end cap deals unless they're on your list or a non-perishable item you're always restocking in your home.

5. Keep a list of what you need to eat. While this can be a digital list in your notes section, I like keeping my list in a place I'll see it before each meal. Sometimes items get "lost" in the fridge when you don't stop to think and before you know it, they've spoiled and you're throwing another \$5 down the disposal. If you really aren't going to get to an item (or more), just freeze them before they spoil!

Planning & Shopping

cost clubs, reward programs. & coupons

You don't have to have a cost club membership or spend time downloading or clipping coupons to save money on your groceries. In fact, some people end up spending more via cost clubs and coupons. Here's how to shop savvy at the store, without wasting time and money.

1. Evaluate your need for a cost club membership.

For a lot of families and couples, cost clubs can make sense. The problem is when you start to purchase things simply because "it's a good deal" or you try an item for the first time in a bulk size. In those cases, you are actually wasting money by purchasing something you don't really need, or you buy an excess of something you may not like. This extends past food to the appliances, books, magazines, electronics and clothing in these stores as well. If you're good at sticking to a plan and you don't end up throwing out spoiled food from your trips, keep at it.

2. Utilize the right rewards apps and programs.

Some rewards programs and apps are easy and really save you money. Others waste your time with clipping paper coupons and checking emails daily only to rope you into the store for one item that you could have purchased elsewhere for a mere 50 cents more. CVS, for example, makes sense when reward dollars accumulate and I happen to be able to use them when I need to go to the store. But if I head in simply because I receive an email that I have a \$3 reward and "need to use it" I'm not helping myself. One of my favorite apps is for Sprouts Farmers Market (in many cities nationwide). They have some great coupons for items that I actually buy often and something they're also on sale. It takes no more than a minute or two to "clip" my digital coupons. If you already have a Prime membership that actually saves you the annual fee when you consider shipments and Prime video, it's a huge bonus to get the Prime deals at Whole Foods, especially when they're on produce. However, if you don't use Amazon services and aren't at Whole Foods often, this is a service you can skip.

3. Be picky with coupons.

Similar to impulse buys at cost clubs, many people make impulse buys simply because they have a coupon for something. Before clipping or using a coupon, ask yourself if you would buy that item otherwise. If you wouldn't and the reason is only due to cost, maybe it's a good time to treat yourself. But don't waste your time trying to become an extreme couponer just to accumulate new overly processed foods in your pantry.

KITCHEN INVENTORY

we already have...

Kelly Jones
nutrition

STARCHES	PROTEINS	VEGETABLES	FRUITS	FAT & FLAVOR	SNACKS

meals we can make...

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PERFORMANCE GROCERY LIST

Kelly Jones
nutrition

STARCHES	PROTEINS	VEGETABLES	FRUITS	FAT & FLAVOR	SNACKS

my prep plans for the week

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Kelly Jones

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Kelly Jones is a media and consulting dietitian based in greater Philadelphia. With degrees in nutrition and exercise physiology, and a board certification in sports nutrition, her expertise lies in performance nutrition for collegiate and professional athletes as well as busy, active adults. When consulting with sports organizations and food companies, Kelly ensures that nutrition marketing messages are based in sound science while offering tips that apply to everyday life.

Kelly has a whole food, plant-forward approach to nutrition, while encouraging intuitive eating and flexibility to optimally fuel the body and mind. As mom and former Division I athlete, who continues to enjoy most forms of fitness, she helps her audience integrate better nutrition and joyful movement into their lifestyle in realistic and sustainable ways.

Kelly is also the co-creator of the online course: FitFueling: Intuitive Eating for Active Females.



Find her recipes and tips for fueling an active lifestyle at [KellyJonesNutrition.com](https://www.KellyJonesNutrition.com) or by following her on Instagram @KellyJonesRD or Facebook @KellyJonesNutrition.