The Fighter’s Diet

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Introduction

I’m calling this the fighter’s diet, but it could just as easily be any athletes diet or even someone who wants a lean muscular physique because the same principles still apply.

If you’re not a heavyweight, chances are you have to make a weight class. And the idea is to be the biggest and strongest at that particular weight class that you can possibly be. Which is why you hear about guys cutting a ridiculous amount of weight to fight.

The problem with that is if you come in at a weight so high that you have to sweat off 20 lbs of water weight and completely dehydrate yourself—you’ll be weak for your fight. Not to mention the fact that cutting that much weight in a hurry is unhealthy and dangerous.

So the solution to me is to cut as much body fat as you can, see where your body weight falls, and then drop to the weight class 10 to 12 lbs below that (ideally this is something you’d want to know prior to a training camp for your fight)

For example, I’m going to fight at 170. This morning I weighed in at 185. So I’m slightly over where I want to be before I start my cut a week to two weeks before weigh-ins.

Short version of what a cut’s like: no carbs a week to two weeks out, no water 24 to 48 hrs out, cardio, and sauna.

As you can guess, that gets pretty miserable. The more weight you’re over—the more miserable the cut’s going to be.

Back to my original solution. Being 10 to 12 lbs above your targeted weight class will make the cut go much more smoothly.

What you weigh in at the completion of your diet depends upon body fat
% and how much muscle mass you have.

This particular diet isn’t about muscle mass, it’s about prefight nutrition that will maintain a reasonable and fit walking around weight. So I’m assuming you have as much muscle as you currently want.

The diet is designed to maintain current muscle mass or possibly build a little (depending on the type of wkout program you’re doing...fighters wkouts consist of so much cardio it’s unlikely they’ll build much mass, but strength, yes, definition, yes.) and decrease body fat so you can have the leanest and meanest physique possible.

Keep in mind that along with proper nutrition, some form of resistance training and cardiovascular exercise is required to increase muscularity and lower body fat. It’s the synergy of those three components that gets our desired result. But considering I’m addressing you fighters out there...I’ll assume you’re already doing some form of strength and conditioning program.

Before I dive into the diet, which is how I’ve been eating for the last two years on and off, I’d first like to be transparent with the fact that I’m no nutritionist. Be that as it may, it doesn’t mean that I don’t know what I’m talking about, although you can be the judge of that.

I’ve spent an inordinate amount of time researching proper athletic nutrition so I’ve got plenty to share with you. Most of what you’ll read below is insight that I’ve gleaned from endurance athlete’s and bodybuilder’s dietary regimens.

When it comes to nutrition, there’s no better group of athletes to emulate. Those guys got it down to a science.

The simplest way to for me to take you through this is to give you examples of what I consume on a daily basis, then explain the reasoning behind it.
Chapter 1: The Pre-Breakfast

Within the first 10 minutes of waking I’m already headed to the fridge for my first meal.

Why?

Because your body has been on an 8 hour fast and we want to try to consume something as quickly as possible before our body goes into a catabolic effect (most likely it’s already be there).

In layman’s terms, the longer your body goes without the consumption of protein the more muscle your going to lose. Remember, we want to keep the muscle and burn the fat.

I mix a scoop of your standard whey protein with about 10 oz of milk I don’t do it, but preferably skim milk so you get the sugar without the fat. The reason why this matters is the sugar is quickly absorbed while
the fat is digested much more slowly.

**Going off on a tangent #1**...I know many of you are thinking that shouldn’t we stay away from sugar? Well yes, because sugar is typically your number one cause of increased bodyfat, but that doesn’t mean you should stay away from it totally. The two times a day that sugar is ok to consume is for breakfast and post-workout. Sugar aids in protein synthesis. Sugar spikes your insulin levels which in turn helps transport the protein from your blood into your muscles. So when our bodies are broken down post workout, or are in starvation mode like right when we wake up, we need something that absorbs quickly. Any other time of day we wouldn’t need that, and absorbing food quickly would be a bad thing because it’ll lead to excess bodyfat.

I chose the whey protein because it is a quickly digested as well.

I buy the chocolate flavor because I mix it with milk. But you could just as easily mix it with any other type of juice or sports drink. If you plan on doing that I’d suggest vanilla, any other flavor is going to make finishing your pre-breakfast meal quite unpleasant.

To make things simple I use a shaker cup and a lil gyro ball to help mix it up (*clumpy protein doesn’t taste very good*). Taste isn’t the reason why you drink these things, but with the modern advancement of supplements there’s no reason why you shouldn’t enjoy them.

**Multivitamin and Fish Oil**

Every morning with my shake I go ahead and down my pills for the day. You could literally drown yourself in pills all day, I use to (*you’ll see some of them in the pictures below*), but sticking with the basics should do.

Fish oil helps reduce bodyfat with tons of other healthy benefits—I take two.
And the multivitamin helps fill in all the nutritional gaps in your diet. It’s really hard to get the recommended daily dosages of everything. So just one multivitamin helps tremendously.
If you’re wondering why you should bother taking it then I’ll say that anything that allows your body to run more efficiently will aid in calories burnt, body fat reduced, and weight lost.

You want to look at your body like an engine. Seemingly small parts of an engine can cause it to run worse or not at all. The multivitamin may be a small part but your body’s going to run much better with it.

**Caffeine and Water Jump Start**

One reason why we consume an easily absorbed meal (*our protein shake*) is to get our body out of that catabolic state as quickly as possible. The second reason is it jumpstarts our metabolism.

The faster our metabolic rate, the more rapidly we’ll burn calories, fat, etc.

To aid that we’ll add two more things to our pre-breakfast regimen.
I’ll have a cup of coffee with a glass of water about 15-20 minutes after my protein shake.

The caffeine contained in the coffee is a well known metabolism booster. Use stevia or splenda to sweeten it and find a sugar free creamer that you like.
Really, the most important thing is the dose of caffeine. So you could substitute coffee for green tea, or even a caffeine supplement. Don’t be going crazy on the caffeine though. Once in the morning (that means one cup for you addicts out there) and once prior to your workouts, other than that—just like sugar—the amounts you consume should be limited.

As for the water, not only are your muscles breaking down over the course of your night’s rest, your body is also running inefficiently because its dehydrated.

That’s why we drink the glass of water, to rehydrate.

Going back to what I said about looking at your body like it’s an engine. The multivitamin assists in it running more smoothly, and so will staying hydrated throughout the day.
I’ve read that you can burn upwards of a hundred more calories per day just by drinking the recommended 8 glasses of water (it’s 8 right?). Whether it’s 4 or 8 or 10 it doesn’t matter to me, I’m not going to keep count, I always carry around a water bottle and drink out of it the entire day so I probably will easily reach the recommended amount. The idea is to be conscientious of it, and remember that anytime you’re thirsty you’re dehydrated and it’s already been too long since your last glass of water.
Chapter 2: Timing & Planning

Many of you including me don’t just sit around at home all day or have the freedom to do whatever you want, you have schedules and places you have to be at certain times.

The problem with that is it’s going to put a serious damper on The Fighter’s Diet.

Why?

Because if you have a schedule—you can’t just pick up and leave to go get a meal in.

You see, you can’t say ”oh I’ll just wait til later to eat”. Let me repeat, you CANNOT say ”oh I’ll just wait til later to eat”.

We’ve gone to a lot of trouble to get our metabolism ramped up with our Pre-Breakfast so why would we let it slow back down?

Here’s the timing part:

Over the course of the day, depending on how long you sleep, we’re going to be getting in about 6 or 7 evenly spaced meals.

It’s paramount that you consume a balanced meal or snack every three hours. We’re doing this to keep our blood sugar levels even, keep our muscles fed and ready to perform, and to give our body something to chew on because the digestive process itself burns calories. That’s why it’s better to eat 6 small to medium sized meals than 2 or 3 big ones.

Now I know you’re saying it’s impossible to pull off that kind of timing, I got shit to do.

Yea I know, so do I, and so does everybody else. But if you want a lean muscular physique and if you want to make your weight class easily and
with more gas left in the tank than the other guy, then this is what you HAVE to do.

You really got to want it at first. Because at first, even I said to myself I’m not willing to go the extra mile. But trust me once you get used to planning ahead it becomes habitual and you won’t even think about it.

This isn’t really a “diet” per say, it’s more of a lifestyle change.

I’m kind of rambling here, but everything I’m telling you is in the attempt to convince you that the timing is so important that you’ll be willing to plan ahead for it.

**What do I mean by planning?**

If you have a schedule like most of us then you’ll have to bring meals with you. I know this is a pain in the ass, but it’s not so bad.

You’ll see these things throughout the pictures in this series, but you’re going to have to invest in items like:

- Tupperware
- Plastic utensils (*I have a spork!*)
- A Protein Shaker Cup
- Pill box
- Protein bars
- On the go meals
- Water bottle
- A backpack (*to carry all this shit in*)

There might be some other things I’m forgetting, but you get the idea. Whatever it takes to get the job done.

You might have to pre-prepare meals. Either the night before, or maybe you need to grill all your chicken for the week on a Sunday afternoon.
WHATEVER it takes.

If you have a flexible schedule where you can come and go as you please…then congratulations this will be way easier.

But for those of you who don’t have that…suck it up. Go ahead and look like an idiot to your co-workers because you carry around a lunch box, who cares?

Timing and planning guys. Timing and planning.

Ok. On to breakfast.
Chapter 3: Breakfast of Champions

They say breakfast is the most important meal of the day, but for me I suppose that’s my Pre-Breakfast. So let’s just call this what it is—another critical meal in The Fighter’s Diet, because they are all, in fact, critical.

In this particular case, that saying might be true. Except I’d change it to Diet of Champions, but that doesn’t really have the same ring to it. If you want to be an elite athlete and have an elite physique, you have to have an elite diet. It takes discipline…more on that concept later.

Ok, so about an hour and half after I take care of Pre-Breakfast I’m already ready to consume my second meal of the day.

Confused?

Earlier I mentioned we should consume meals every three hours, why is this different?

Here’s a corollary to that theory (I feel like this follows the i before e thing except after c, but maybe that’s just me), you should always consume a meal every three hours EXCEPT after Pre-Breakfast and following a work out.

The reason why you do that is because we’re drinking protein and simple carbs at a time where those nutrients are going to be absorbed the quickest.

Whether your body’s in a catabolic state after a night of fasting or it’s broken down and in need of serious repair post workout, it’s going to mow through nutrients faster than Edwin Valero did his first 20 opponents (there’s an obscure boxing reference for you).

Especially if you’re feeding it what I’m telling you to feed it.

Any other time you’d wait to eat, but in those two scenarios you don’t.
It’s not an exact science on the timing either. I’ve eaten anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 hours after my shake depending upon how I feel. The longer you do this diet the more sensitive you’ll get to your body telling you it needs something.

So an hour and half after my Pre-Breakfast I’ll typically eat 4 eggs with hot sauce, two pieces of whole grain toast with smart balance butter, and a couple servings of fruit. Water to drink.

Depending on the day I might have to take it with me in some tupperware. *Whatever it takes right?*

I use the eggs for my protein, and the toast and fruit for my fibrous and complex carbs…that’s your energy right there.

I should eat just the egg whites to lower the cholesterol (*so should you*), but I don’t. You can buy egg whites in the carton or you can just separate
the yoke from the white part before cooking them. I find the first option too expensive and the second too psycho. But I’ll probably change my tune.

Breakfast is usually pretty tasty, so the hot sauce is used just because I like it. For other meals though, it’s a savior. Like on my no-carb dinners. There are plenty of sauces and seasonings that don’t really affect the nutritional value of a meal and yet make the meal ten times better. So invest in some of those. Be careful though, read the label! The texas pete has a little too much sodium, but I’m ok with that just as long as it’s not close to fight time. Sodium will cause you to hold excess water.

Going off on a tangent #2...you see that I’m eating whole grain bread as one of my breakfast sides. Typically if you’re trying to cut down on bodyfat and/or weight you want to stay away from or severely limit your sugar (ill go over that later), bread, pasta, and dairy consumption. But if you’re going to consume them you should make sure they are in small
portions, they are whole grain or at least whole wheat, and you consume them earlier in the day. As a general rule you should stay away from anything white. White rice, white bread, etc. If you eat them you might as well be eating a bowl of sugar. Because they digest too quickly and anything that isn’t immediately used by the body is stored as fat. Bad, bad, idea. The whole grain allows for a much steadier digestion. Pasta would be characterized as TOO slow of a digestion. Complex carbs are ok, but not the ones that take a century to digest.

If you’re going to use butter, use the brand Smart Balance. It’s the healthiest label I’ve seen on a butter. You should probably still go easy on it though.

The servings of fruit are important for several reasons. Fiber, vitamins, etc. Once again don’t go crazy on fruit either because it does contain sugar. The good thing is its fructose, not glucose (simple carb/sugar), so it at least has to pass through the liver before digesting. Think of fruit as a slightly slower digesting sugar with nutrient rich benefits.

There are other breakfast options that’s just what I eat usually. You could go with oatmeal with berries and scoop of whey mixed in.

Kashi has some good cereals with a little protein in them.

Most of the breakfast meats aren’t that great for you (ham, bacon, sausage), but maybe there are some healthy substitutes for them out there. I’m not well read on turkey bacon, but I have heard of it. That may be an option for you to look into?

Since we’re covering options I should probably go over what kind of balance I’m trying to achieve for every meal so you can mix and match to your heart’s desire.

I’d imagine not everybody is going to have the same tastes as I do. But remember we’re not exactly eating for taste here…we’re eating for performance. We’re eating for a result. I’ll cover that next.
Chapter 4: The Properly Balanced Meal

We’re going to take a slight detour off my daily diet in this chapter so I can explain what exactly I’m looking for out of each meal I consume. I realized that I’m telling you what I’m eating and why, but I haven’t really broken down my plan heading into each of those meals.

Whether it’s your strength and conditioning, or your skill work, or in this case, performance nutrition, it’s super important to have a plan.

Plans get results

The idea behind The Fighter’s Diet was outlined in the introduction, but basically we’re attempting to maintain our muscularity while decreasing our bodyfat percentage—to be the biggest and strongest we can be at the lightest possible weight class.

In order to achieve that we’ve got to eat properly balanced meals 6 or 7 times a day. I already covered why we need to eat so frequently, but I haven’t talked about a balanced meal.

What do I mean by properly balance meals?

Now I know the simplest way to look at losing weight is to burn more calories than you consume (because we are trying to lose weight by cutting body fat).

But I’m not a big fan of calorie counting. Besides the fact that it seems like way too much effort to me, I know that all calories aren’t created equal.

So what I try to do instead is just improve the quality of calories I consume.

For example, I can look at a package of crackers and say to myself ”oh,
look it’s only a hundred calories, so that’s ok”, but out of those hundred calories there’s only 2 grams of protein with 23 grams of carbs and 8 grams of fat (I’m making these numbers up by the way).

Even though the calorie count is low we’re coming up short on several fronts.

For one, that isn’t exactly the protein to carb ratio we’re looking for out of a meal.

And two, the TYPE of carbs and fat contained in the crackers aren’t ideal.

I’ll explain both.

**Protein to Carb Ratio**

Usually I want at least a 1:1 protein to carbohydrate ratio.

So that means if the meal you’re consuming contains 20 grams of carbohydrates you’ll want 20 grams of protein to go with it.

The typical american diet contains a larger percentage of carbohydrates than protein. And that’s ok, but I’ll keep reminding you that in order to cut weight we need to consume less carbs to accomplish that.

Obviously it’s more difficult to get enough protein in each meal than it is carbohydrates, so just as long as the ratio isn’t too far out of whack then I think you’ll be fine.

Something like 15 grams of protein to 30 grams of carbs isn’t so bad.

We have to increase our protein consumption because that’s what helps us sustain our muscle mass. And also, protein slows down the digestive process so your blood sugar would spike less if you took in the wrong type of carbohydrates.
Less of a spike=less body fat stored.

If you did nothing else right, choose to never eat a meal without a good amount of protein.

I’ve made that a habit over the last two years, so even when I quit exercising and eating correctly, the amount of body fat I put on was negligible for that one reason.

The Types of Fat

There are a couple different types of fats, and not all fats are bad. Monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats are the ones you want and need.

So, despite the name, just because you’re consuming fats doesn’t mean that it’s going to make you fat.

The ones you do need to keep an eye on are trans fats and your saturated fats.

You shouldn’t consume trans fatty acids under any circumstance (think margarines, fried food, depending on whether the type of oil it’s fried in is hydrogenated or not. If you see that word on any label, RUN) because your body can’t do anything with it. It’ll just store as fat.

You should keep the amount of saturated fats you consume to a pretty low figure (think beef, pork, egg yolks, and dairy products), but you still need them because they help maintain muscle mass by their association with testosterone production.

The Types of Carbs

As for carbohydrates…there are two groups of carbs, simple and complex.

Simple carbs are sugars. With names like glucose, galactose, fructose,
sucrose, lactose, and maltose.

For the most part you want to avoid simple carbs, except in the morning and post workouts.

Discounting those two exceptions, as a general rule you should limit your sugar intake to under 25 grams TOTAL for the rest of the day.

Sugar is what will derail your diet more than anything else. So please try to adhere to this general rule, breaking it will more or less render the rest of the MMA Diet useless.

Fructose (which is the sugar found in fruit) might be the one exception to that general rule. Fructose has to be broken down further by the liver before it enters the blood stream so it isn’t going to raise blood sugar levels as much. But I still wouldn’t go crazy with fruit.

Complex carbs can be broken down into two groups…starchy and fibrous.

Starchy carbs are just longer chains of glucose molecules. In other words, sugar. So these complex carbs can get you in just as much trouble as simple carbs if you eat the wrong ones.

Starchy carbs are foods like bread, pasta, rice, cereal, potatoes, and beans.

I’m not saying you shouldn’t be consuming starchy carbs, but you should be consuming starchy carbs that are lower on the glycemic index (a chart that ranks different sources of carbs and how much of an effect they have on your blood sugar).

Foods like whole wheat or whole grain bread and pasta, brown rice, and sweet potatoes all have a lower glycemic index ranking and are ok to eat at the proper times.

Then you have your fibrous carbs...foods like fruits, veggies, nuts, and
grains: wheat and oats

For the most part you can eat as much of these as you want. Americans typically lack dietary fiber in their diet (sounds kind of redundant doesn’t it?).

Fiber is good for you, so consume upwards of 80 grams a day if you can.

**Back to our example**

In all likelihood, a 100 calories worth of crackers isn’t going to affect our goal here, but it’s that mode of thinking that can get you into trouble.

Think about it, what if you applied that poor protein to carb ratio with bad carbs, and bad fats to a much larger meal...what do think would happen?

One meal like that would eff up your diet for the entire day. It wouldn’t matter if you ate properly the rest of the day or not, you’re already storing fat that you shouldn’t.

It matters how much protein is in each meal. It matters what type of carbohydrates you consume. It matters what type of fats you consume.

My goal is to eat meals that are high in protein (*anywhere from 15 grams to 35 grams*), moderate in fats (*under 15 grams*), and moderate to low in carbs (*under 30 grams*).

I’m not looking so much at the number of calories per meal as I am the type of calories per meal that I’m consuming.

Keep that in mind each time you sit down to fuel up.
Chapter 5: It Requires a Little Discipline

Quite possibly, the most important aspect of our diet is not the food itself, but the discipline to eat the right food.

So for this post we’ll talk about that and cheating…if it’s ok and when to do it.

Make it a Lifestyle Not a Diet

Without a doubt the toughest part of this diet is the ability to actually stay on it. And I say this coming off a sugar bender last night. So don’t think I’m sitting up in my ivory tower just passing judgement on all of you who aren’t as good as me because you can’t make the sacrifices like I have.

It’s not like that at all. I know how tough it is to eat well. I LOVE carbs. I LOVE fatty foods. They’re awesome. But we both know we can’t eat them all the time if we want our results.

The good news is I think the sacrifices you make by abstaining from those bad foods are well worth it in the end.

If you’re a fighter, you’re going to perform better at a more optimal weight.

If you’re just the average person you’re going to have more energy, your health will improve, you’ll look better, and you’ll have more confidence.

At first I was resistant to my mentor’s suggestions, one an endurance athlete, the other a bodybuilder…I said to myself, ”there’s no fucking way I’m doing all that,” but the reality is I wanted an elite physique and I caved bit by bit until I too became the guy shaking his head at other
people’s diets.

Yes, there are a lot of changes you have to make and yes, there are plenty of sacrifices. But you’d be amazed at how easy it becomes once its habit.

People think I’m nuts the way I eat, and trust me I’m NOT as fanatical about it as some people, but by now it’s completely normal to me. I’ve made it habitual. I think I said this before, but even when I quit exercising and quit my diet—I still wasn’t eating all that poorly…just because I was so accustomed to eating a certain way.

And because of that my physique didn’t really change all that much.

The easiest way to think about it is not to look at it like a diet, but as more of a lifestyle. Make a commitment to change things one by one, and eventually you’ll be eating a completely different way, actually like it, and be able to sustain it.

From there you’ll be able to laugh and say discipline smishipline.

Is it ok to Cheat?

I’ve read that cheating is not only ok, but encouraged. Before you get excited about that, I’m sure it’s not to the level that you’re thinking.

When you eat cleanly it’s important that every once in a while you throw your metabolism a curve ball. The reason why you do that is because your body gets so used to processing the same types of foods over and over again that if you throw something at it that it isn’t used to then you’re body will work that much harder to metabolize it. Actually speeding up your metabolism, and burning more calories temporarily.

Now it’s important to note that this isn’t to be done to excess.

The idea is to pick one meal a week to binge on whatever you’d like. I’ve successfully done it once every three or four days and still achieved
the physique I wanted.

But this last twelve weeks I did it even more often than that.

After 12 Weeks of Doing The Fighter’s Diet Semi-Perfectly
After 12 Weeks of Doing The Fighter’s Diet Perfectly

See the difference?

This goes to show that the more often you cheat the less effective the diet becomes. That’s why discipline is a major factor.

**Some other tips to cheating:**

- If you’re going to do it try to cheat earlier in the day. The earlier you do it the better chance you have of burning it off as opposed to it storing as fat.

- Also always consume protein while cheating...it’ll slow down the digestive process and you’ll at least get some nutritional value out of your meal.
Chapter 6: Lunch

Lunch is typically on the go for me, so this is where that planning comes in that I was talking about.

In order to keep your metabolism up and running we’ve got to eat our lunch roughly 3 hours after breakfast.

So far it’s gone like this: Pre-Breakfast, Breakfast, and now lunch.

If you’re getting up at the crack-ass of dawn then you’ll probably have a snack between breakfast and lunch. I’ll talk about suitable snacks in the next chapter.

But right now…

What to Eat for Lunch

Obviously, there’s no real right answer other than eating a balanced meal, but I’ll tell you what I eat so it can give you at least a couple ideas.

With few exceptions, I usually eat one of a couple different things each day. One, because they’re quick and easy, two, it allows me to think less *(always a plus)*, and three, I found some things I enjoy eating that gives me my balanced meal.

There’s a locally based health food store called Active Edge I go to a whole bunch that sell fresh, relatively inexpensive meals to go. I would think that most cities would have something like this so you just have to look.

There I usually buy a chicken or turkey wrap loaded with veggies in a whole wheat tortilla with a vinaigrette dressing.
Subway, and their ubiquitous poster-boy Jared, also offer some options for us on our diet.

There I always get the oven roasted chicken sub on grain bread, with provolone cheese, lettuce, tomato, onions, jalapenos, and oil and vinegar. I eat half of it, and save the other half for dinner or something. You’re getting more than enough carbs with just 6 inches, so I wouldn’t suggest wolfing down the whole foot.

Another place I like to go is Salsaritas…it’s an americanized mexican food chain that you can quickly dine-in at. They offer a whole wheat tortilla to go with their chicken burritos that I load with much of the same ingredients as subway and active edge.

If I’m low on cash I’ll make my own wrap at home with these microwavable boneless chicken breasts that I found at the local grocery store (greatest thing ever for the lazy dieter). I’ll place them in some
whole wheat/whole grain tortillas with lettuce, little bit of cheese, and lots of hot sauce.

What to Drink during Meals

You might not think very much of this, but if you’re not careful the liquid you consume with every bite you eat can completely derail your diet even if you did everything else perfectly.

I implore you to take a look at the nutritional label of any soft drink or sports drink, and you’ll see how much sugar is in each.

Sugar is our #1 enemy (except morning and post workout), so we must be weary of the types of drinks we imbibe.

I drink a diet drink with most lunches and dinners.
It’s been my savior. I know that the artificial sweetener put in these things, aspartame, is supposed to be killing people—but the sugar will kill you too…heart disease from obesity.

Besides I’m not sure how much I believe that anyways. And I’m also not saying drink a two liter every day, I’m saying a 12 ounce can twice a day. If you do it in moderation I think you and I will be fine.

They’re filling, and they’re like dessert all in one. Especially if you try the Diet Cherry Dr Pepper…that flavor is awesome.

Other than that I stick with water and maybe a G2. Or perhaps a glass of milk if I need to add a few more grams of protein to a meal.

Whatever you drink make sure you’re aware of its contents.
The Common Theme

I won’t drag this out because I’ve gone over these principles in detail in previous chapters, but each of those meals is pretty balanced.

High protein, slow digesting complex carbs, fibrous veggies, light dressings, low sugar, some healthy fats (*and let’s be honest, some unhealthy lol*), etc.

Sure, there are things I could leave out so they were better for me, but I’m no monk. I’m from the ”*eh, that’s good enough*” school of thought. Trying to eat balanced meals (*yes, you actually have to try*) with the addition of a fighters exercise regimen will lean you down in no time.

The more exercise you do the more flexibility you have with your diet.
Chapter 7: Snack Time

Realistically, packing up 3 meals before you head off to work or the gym is a little insane. I’ve taken two many a time, but three? That’s way too much effort.

Thank god for supplements.

When you can you should be eating real food, and not as one of my friends calls it ”space food.” However, when we’re trying to eat every three hours sooner or later we’re going to run into a time where we just can’t get up and go eat.

For example take your average 8 to 5 work day…most of us have day jobs so I think this is the most appropriate example.

You got an hour for lunch, ok cool, but if you ate breakfast at 7:30 AM you need to eat again by 10:30, and if you ate lunch around 12:30 you need to eat again by 3:30.

You can’t just skip out on eating at those times. So what do we do?

Eat a Protein Bar

Now, there are plenty of other valid snacks, but I usually eat protein bars. Or perhaps a protein bar and a piece of fruit.

Just go by GNC or the Vitamin Shoppe and start trying to find some protein bars that you like.

Typically the better they taste the worse they are for you, but in the big scheme of things the fact that you are eating a protein bar over something else is what really counts.

So when I see a bar that I like whose nutritional label is a little high in carbs and fat I usually ignore it.
What I want out of a protein bar is what I would want out of a well balanced meal. Low in saturated fat, moderate in carbs, high in protein.

Of course it doesn’t always work out like that.

What I really want is a 1 to 1 ratio of carbs to protein. So if it has 20 grams of carbs—it also has 20 grams of protein.

**My Favorite Protein Snacks**

Bars:

- Oh yeahs
- Carb Conscious Supremes
- Clif builder bars

Brownies:
• Big 100 Cookies:
  • Tri-o-plex Beef Jerky:
  • Ostrim

Some these are so good it’s almost like cheating, but not.

Chapter 8: Pre-Workout Nutrition

The best analogy I can come up with for pre-workout nutrition is to imagine your body is like a car. Common sense tells us that for our car to accelerate it has to have fuel.

Completely ignoring pre-workout nutrition is a little like pretending you can drive your car without gas.
Not all that smart.

So we’re going to talk about the what, when, and why of pre-workout nutrition.

Pre-Workout Nutrition

It doesn’t matter whether its your cardio session, or your strength training, or sparring, or your skills work…they are all classified as "workouts" so you need proper pre-workout nutrition.

And really all this means is making sure you have a balanced meal or snack an hour prior to your workout.

The reason being is you want your glycogen stores full so your intensity
and strength capacity can remain high throughout.

If you don’t, your workout will stall—like a car without fuel.

Anytime I have a sparring session and I’ve neglected to eat before…I fatigue quickly, and the ass-whipping begins shortly there after. Happened last Thursday in fact.

The timing is pretty important. Eat too close to your workout and the body can’t digest it fast enough (that makes for a poor workout too)—eat too soon and your body doesn’t have optimal energy.

There’s a nice window of time I like to consume my meal and that’s anywhere from an hour and fifteen minutes to forty-five minutes prior to my workout.

As for what you consume, that typically depends on what time of day it is and what you’re doing. But it should contain protein so you get your essential amino acids and a pretty good amount of complex carbohydrates.

I don’t mind the whole carb loading thing before a workout just as long as you don’t over do it and they’re consumed with protein.

**Some Other Steps to Aid Workout Performance**

You really don’t need much other than the meal or snack I described above, but there are a couple other things that can help.

**Fruit**

Eating a piece of faster digesting fruit like an orange, apple, or banana as a quick energy source 30 min prior will help kick-start your workout.

**Caffeine**

Whether in the form of an energy drink (*buy the ones without sugar*) or coffee or pill, caffeine 15 min to 45 min before your workout can give
you a boost in energy and focus.

**No-Explode**

Is a nitric oxide and creatine mix that I’ve successfully used to prolong and intensify strength and conditioning workouts.

Take 15 to 30 min prior to workout.

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**Chapter 9: Post-Workout Nutrition**

The three most important meals of the day are breakfast (*or using my terminology* Pre-Breakfast), your pre-workout meal, and your post-workout meal.

You could easily argue that post-workout nutrition is THE most important of the three.

Following any type of workout whether its your strength & conditioning, your cardio, sparring, or your skill work—proper nutrition right after you’re done is critical.

It's critical because your body needs lots of nutrients to recover, and it requires certain types.

So let’s talk about that.

**Why is Post Workout Nutrition So Important**

There are a couple reasons why post workout nutrition is so important.

**1. Recovery**

*You’ve depleted your muscle glycogen, your blood sugar’s dropped, and*
your muscles have been broken down.

If you don’t provide the proper nutrients post workout they won’t repair themselves or grow.

2. Metabolic Rate

The idea behind this diet is to keep our metabolism high so we’re burning calories and our fat stores.

If you don’t consume the right nutrients post workout your blood sugar levels can’t normalize—which in turn causes your body to go into a catabolic effect. You begin to lose muscle as well as slow down your metabolism.

There is about a 45 minute window post workout that your body craves nutrients.

I tell people all the time that if they’re trying to build muscle with their workouts and they miss consumption during this window that they essentially just wasted their time working out. Yes, it’s THAT important.

But as an athlete or the average person who’s trying to sustain their current muscle mass and burn fat, if you miss this window—not only are you going to feel like shit, but you’ll slow your metabolism down. Which isn’t helping you accomplish your goal either.

So if consuming a meal post workout is so important, what’s the best thing to consume?

The Post Workout Recovery Shake

You can argue other substitutes, but the best thing to consume is a protein shake.

And I do this immediately after I stop whatever workout I’m doing, the sooner the recovery process gets started the better.
After your workout your body needs two things:

1. **Protein**

*To repair or build muscle mass.*

2. **Fast Digesting Carbs**

*To help stabilize blood sugar levels, replenish your muscle’s glycogen stores, and to spike your insulin levels so that the protein gets transported from the bloodstream into the muscles.*

Protein comes in the form of powdered whey, soy, or casein.

I’d go with whey because it’s the fastest digesting protein (*soy is fast digesting too*).

And your fast digesting carbs (*simple sugar*) can come in the form of juice, a sports drink like gatorade, or skim milk.

You can make them yourself or you can buy the RTDs (ready to drink) shakes available at every supplement store.
Regardless of which path you choose the goal is still the same. I try to consume anywhere from 20 to 40 grams of protein and 40 to 60 grams of fast digesting carbs.

Depending on bodyweight, your ultimate goal (more muscle/less muscle), and the intensity of your workout those numbers will fluctuate from person to person.

The Post Workout Meal

If you thought post workout nutrition stopped with the shake…you’d be wrong.

Because of the increased absorption rate of nutrients post workout you’ll find yourself getting hungry sooner than the typical 3 hours between meals.
And that’s ok—it’s just a continuation of the recovery process. You’re body’s letting you know it’s time for another balanced meal. Usually around 60 to 90 minutes post workout.

This, if you’ll remember, is just like our pre-breakfast and breakfast scenario.

You’ll notice that your pre-workout meal, post workout shake, and post workout meal are all kind of grouped together closer than our typical 3 hour interval, and that’s fine.

They’re all still counted as meals. This is how we’re able to reach 6, 7, and possibly up to 8 meals a day (*if you have multiple workouts*).

After your post workout shake then meal you’ll return back to the normal interval.

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**Chapter 10: Dinner & Late Night Meals**

Dinner means different things to different people. Most of the time we call the meal around 6 o’clock ”*dinner*”, but I suppose when you’ve adopted the eat every three hours schedule…things can get a little confusing.

Sometimes if I eat dinner at 6 I still will have two more meals before I hit the sack.

So in this chapter we’ll cover what to eat for dinner and principles to live by for all other late night meals.

**Eating Out is OK**

Don’t let those health nuts that say, “*oh I never eat out because its unhealthy*” fool you. Most of time you can find something moderately healthy at every restaurant and even most fast food places. You just want
to stick with the principles laid out in this diet.

Actually, the ones who say such things are usually fat anyways…just sayin’.

I use my dinner around 6 o’clock as my variety. I don’t have a set meal that I eat and if I have the money I like to go get something.

I like to go to my favorite mexican restaurant and get two chicken burritos or I like going to get japanese food with the hibachi chicken. Chick-fil-a has that spicy chicken cool wrap, and taco bell has that lower-fat fresco menu.

Is this optimally healthy for me? No, of course not. But I still make sure I don’t sway too far from my own guidelines.

I always make sure that there’s protein. I exercise portion control. And depending on my mood I may or may not watch the carbs.

**Yes, There’s a Catch**

You may look at what I eat for dinner and be like, ”*well, that’s not all that disciplined*”…and you’re right its not.

But I also typically have an evening workout and those are the last carbs I’ll be consuming for the day.

If I didn’t have a workout coming up I’d probably be more conscientious of my dinner carbs, but I do—so that gives me a little more leeway in my diet.

**Cut off Carbs at 6**

Notice I said cut off carbs at 6…I didn’t say don’t eat after 6.

The reason being is once your body burns through all the carbs you’ve ingested it then turns to your fat stores.
So the later you consume carbohydrates the less time your body will chew on your fat stores.

The idea is to increase your metabolism by eating every three hours throughout the day, exercise intensely so your body expends a lot of energy trying to repair itself, and then take that momentum into the evening by removing the late night carbs from your diet so the body can strip away your fat while you sleep.

Is this optimal for muscle gain? No, absolutely not…but we’re trying to lean down.

**Protect Your Muscle**

Going no carb in the evenings sucks, but necessary if you want a nice lean physique.

With this tactic there are two issues that we need to address:

1. **Muscle Protection**

2. **Hunger**

You need to maintain your protein consumption every 3 hours right up until bedtime.

We do this to sustain the muscle we have—we want to protect it and burn the fat. If you don’t consume the protein your body will turn to eating muscle tissue for energy.

The protein keeps the body’s focus on burning the fat stores.

My favorite way to stave off hunger is to eat a salad with chicken.
You get your protein with the chicken, and the lettuce contains a lot of water so it’s pretty filling.

And right before you go to bed I like to mix a scoop of whey powder and a scoop of casein powder with water. The casein protein is a slower digesting protein that’ll help protect your muscles for the several hours you sleep.

If you have a workout in the evening your post workout nutrition can vary depending on where you’re at physically.

If you need to cut down more or you’re unhappy with your current level of bodyfat then consume whey with water…no carbs. However if you’ve accomplished your goal weight or appearance feel free to go ahead with the normal post workout protocol.
**Bonus Chapter: Cutting Weight for a Fight**

Since my first amateur MMA fight is less than a month away, and I already know that my first ever weight cut is coming up I figure I should go ahead and talk about how exactly I plan to do it.

Weight cutting is just part of the sport...almost every fighter is trying to gain an advantage by being the bigger man in the cage. Some do it correctly, others don’t. The ones that don’t pay the price—whether it be a lackluster performance or worse, a loss.

**First Things First**

You know that before your final cut you should be within 10-12 lbs of your goal weight.

This means a disciplined regimen of exercise (which you’ve probably gotten from your fight training) and diet.

The synergy of those two will reduce your percentage of body fat down to the sinewy physique a fighter should have.

Then from there we start our cut.

**The 4 Ways to Cut Weight**

There is more than one way to do this, and more than likely you’re going to have to combine a few of them together to get your desired result.

The farther you are away from your goal weight the more drastic the measures you’ll have to take. Keep in mind that your cut doesn’t start a week out, it starts 8 to 12 weeks out with The Fighter’s Diet.

Here we go…
1. Fluid Restriction

I got the following from Martin Rooney’s book Training for Warriors.

5 days out begin drinking 2 gallons of water daily—make sure you carry around a gallon jug so you know, continue to 48 hour mark. During this time increase the amount of sodium you consume or in my case I’ll just eat normally because mine is already high. This will trigger your body to excrete more urine.

Then at the two days mark you reduce fluid consumption to one gallon and cut sodium completely from your diet.

24 hrs out you don’t drink any fluids, which I imagine will really suck, but I guess you just suffer through it. Perhaps a good solution is suck on a small piece of ice to combat the dry mouth…obviously you can’t go overboard with that, otherwise you’re defeating the purpose.

Martin says that you should expect to lose around 5 lbs in 24 hrs using this method.

2. Sweating

This is probably the method that most everyone is familiar with. It can take off 5-10 lbs of weight in a short period of time, but it can also cause a bit of fatigue.

You increase the body’s temp by putting on sweats or the plastic suits you see fighters wearing and then do some light exercise.

Or you can try the sauna at 15 minute intervals checking your weight at the conclusion of each interval so you don’t lose too much weight. If you don’t have access to a sauna, a hot shower is a viable substitute using the same principles.

3. Bowel Emptying
I suppose that’s the most polite way to say that. Your bowels contain around 5 lbs of waste at any given time. Flushing this out of your system the night before weigh ins is an easy way to cut a little bit of weight quickly without much effort.

I looked up a gentle all natural laxative to use called Senokot.

4. Diuretics

There are drug diuretics that are really effective but unsafe, and I’m sure you’ve heard of fighters getting popped by the athletic commissions for using them.

The concern is they will dehydrate you even more, cause you to lose valuable minerals, and possibly hinder performance.

So the solution is to use a natural diuretic. Another thing I got from Rooney’s book is the use of dandelion root. Which is available at your local supplement shop, or drug store. I doubt this mild diuretic will cause you to piss out more than a couple pounds, but all we’re looking for is just a little bit of help.

**Eating During Your Cut**

You should maintain The Fighter’s Diet up until about 48 hours before weigh-ins. Two days before you want to continue eating, but no sodium and keeping the portions smaller with very few carbohydrates.

Depending on how far you are away from your goal weight you may want to consider dropping the sugar and complex carbs all together for the two weeks prior to your fight. That’ll lean you out in a hurry.

24 hours before your weigh in you’re not going to be consuming liquids, but you should be eating a small, well balanced protein bar every 3 or 4 hours to maintain proper blood sugar levels.
What to Do After You Make Weight

Here’s the problem for me. I’m fairly certain amateur MMA has same day weigh-ins. That’s something I have to confirm, but I won’t be surprised if that’s the case.

Typically you’ll have a day to rehydrate, and stabilize blood sugar levels—plenty of time to regain lost energy.

So if I do in fact have same day weigh-ins, then that makes post weigh-in protocol even more important.

Rehydration and food consumption starts immediately after you step off the scale. I’ve read that a lot of guys will go with pedialyte right after…not sure yet if I’m going to go that route.

But I’m pretty sure I’ll go with that or a 20 ounce gatorade with a small portioned meal of protein/carbs.

And then continue drinking and eating at 45 min intervals up until about 2 hours before fight time. Like I said before, the idea is to normalize blood sugar levels, and rehydrate fully which could take up to 3 gallons of water. We eating smaller portions at short intervals because our body can only absorb so much at one time…so stuffing your face and drinking til your bloated only satisfies your cravings—it’s not going to help performance.

I’m contemplating a test run before the fight, but we’ll see. I imagine it might take a couple of fights doing this to really get the hang of it.
Conclusion

I appreciate you guys taking the time to read this and if you have any questions don’t hesitate to shoot me an email at jstamey@atlanticmma.com.