



SHUTTERSTOCK

BUILDING A PERFORMANCE PLATE

As a student-athlete, I know that a proper diet is important for fueling my performance, both in-season and offseason. However, building a healthy plate at each meal is sometimes a challenge, because I don't know if my meals consist of the correct combination of foods.

How can I make sure my daily meals are built fully to support my training?

WHAT IS A PERFORMANCE PLATE?

Quality hours in the gym and on the practice field or court are definitely important for improving performance, but your full athletic potential can be hindered if you're not incorporating proper fueling strategies. Whether you eat your meals at the university dining facility or at home, each and every meal you consume during the day should be considered an essential part of your training regimen. Your daily "training table plates" or "performance plates" play a significant role in your energy levels, hydration status and recovery potential.

(For performance plate suggestions and sample meals, turn the page.)

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IMPORTANT COMPONENTS OF A PERFORMANCE PLATE

To succeed in building an energy-packed, nutritious meal, try to include all five of the following components:

1. **Whole grains or energy-enhancing foods:** 100 percent whole-wheat bread, bagels, tortillas, pita bread and crackers; brown rice; whole-grain pasta; beans; potatoes; oatmeal; whole-grain breakfast cereals; yogurt.
2. **Lean proteins or recovery/muscle-building foods:** Grilled/baked/broiled/roasted chicken, fish, pork loin, turkey, sirloin and lean ground beef; eggs; low-fat cheese; tofu.
3. **Fruits and vegetables or antioxidant-rich foods:** Apples; oranges; bananas; blueberries; grapes; melon; strawberries; broccoli; green beans; spinach; romaine lettuce; carrots; cauliflower; mushrooms; cucumbers; tomatoes.
4. **Fat or immunity/flavor-boosting foods:** Salmon; tuna; nuts; seeds; olives; olive oil; canola oil; avocado; nut butters; oil-based salad dressings.
5. **Fluid or hydration-promoting beverages:** Water; low-fat milk (cow, almond, soy, etc.); 100 percent fruit juice.

HARD VS. LIGHT TRAINING DAYS

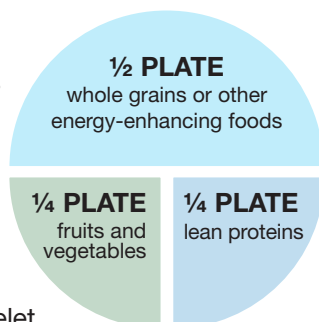
It's important to remember that your calorie and nutrient needs change depending on the intensity of training. Your performance plate may look different in-season versus offseason, or on hard training days versus light training days.

Preseason and In-season, Hard Training Days

- Calorie and carbohydrate needs are at their highest.
- High fluid and electrolyte intake is needed to maintain hydration.
- Adequate protein and antioxidant-rich foods are essential for adequate recovery and immune function.

Performance Plate Portions

- Moderate amounts of healthy fats and condiments
- Adequate fluids for hydrating or rehydrating purposes



Sample Breakfast

- Two or three whole-grain pancakes; low-fat yogurt
- Turkey and vegetable omelet
- Blueberries (on top of yogurt)
- Walnuts (on top of yogurt); syrup for pancakes
- Water

Sample Lunch

- Whole-wheat tortilla; pretzels
- Grilled chicken strips (in tortilla)
- Spinach leaves and tomato (in tortilla); fresh fruit salad
- Avocado and hummus (in tortilla)
- Water and/or electrolyte sports drink

Sample Dinner

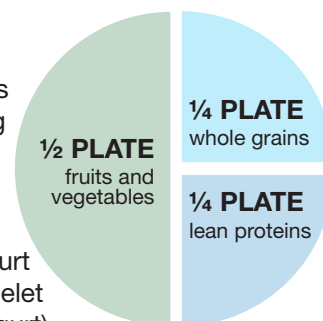
- Whole-grain pasta; dinner roll
- Meatballs (lean ground beef or ground turkey)
- Tomato sauce (for pasta); steamed broccoli; side vegetable salad
- Oil-based salad dressing
- Water and/or low-fat milk

Offseason, Lighter Training Days

- Calorie and carbohydrate needs are reduced due to decreased training and/or offseason weight loss goals.
- Proper fluid and electrolyte intake are needed to maintain hydration.
- Adequate protein and antioxidant-rich foods are necessary to sustain health, body composition and recovery.

Performance Plate Portions

- Limited amounts of healthy fats and condiments
- Adequate fluids for hydrating or rehydrating purposes



Sample Breakfast

- One or two slices whole-wheat bread; low-fat yogurt
- Turkey and vegetable omelet
- Blueberries (on top of yogurt)
- Walnuts (on top of yogurt)
- Water

Sample Lunch

- Whole-grain crackers
- Grilled chicken strips (on top of vegetable salad)
- Vegetable salad: spinach leaves, romaine lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, mushrooms, olives
- Avocado (on salad) and oil-based salad dressing
- Water

Sample Dinner

- Baked potato
- Baked salmon
- Steamed broccoli; side vegetable salad
- Oil-based salad dressing; limited toppings for potato
- Water and/or low-fat milk

Whole grains may decrease, and lean proteins may increase, for offseason weight loss.