



NUTRITION BIBLE





Welcome to Level Up's Nutrition Bible!

Some of you on this program may be looking to improve your athletic performance, others may want to lose fat, and some may aim to gain muscle mass. Read through this entire document and focus on the sections that are most relevant to your goals. I'll start by providing general nutritional information, followed by more specific advice tailored to your individual goal.

I assume most of you have tried a "diet" at some point. There are countless diets out there, and if any of them put you in a calorie deficit, they will lead to fat loss. On the other hand, if you're in a calorie surplus, you will gain weight or muscle. However, many diets, especially those aimed at fat loss, tend to be very restrictive in one area. For example, a low-carb or ketogenic diet creates a calorie deficit by limiting carbohydrate intake, while a low-fat diet reduces calories by cutting fat. Whether it's the Zone, Atkins, or raw food diet, the primary reason people lose weight on any of these is because they are in a calorie deficit. It's crucial to understand this point—calorie deficit is the key!

In my opinion, nutrition accounts for about 80% of the effort when trying to change your body shape and size. Without proper nutrition, you won't see the results you're aiming for. In fact, I could help someone achieve great results just by adjusting their diet, without changing their workout routine. That's how important nutrition is. I want to emphasize that you can't be casual about it—you need to commit to getting your nutrition right.

I strongly recommend that anyone aiming to lose fat or gain muscle track their calories using MyFitnessPal. It's the only reliable way to ensure you're eating the right amounts for your body and your goals. I'll explain how to do this in more detail later. Those of you focused on getting bigger, faster, or stronger will also benefit from tracking your food, although it's less critical as long as you're getting enough fuel to support intense training sessions and recovery.



CORE PRINCIPLES

CALORIE DEFICIT FOR FAT LOSS

The only reason people ever lose body weight is because they are in a calorie deficit. Period. It's not because the latest fad diet has some magical effect, it's not because they cut out carbs (which, by the way, aren't the enemy), and it's not because they eliminated gluten. Whatever approach they followed, it ultimately put them in a deficit. If your goal is to lose fat on this program, you need to be in a deficit, plain and simple. On the flip side, if you want to gain muscle mass, you need to be in a calorie surplus, meaning you're consuming more than you're burning.

YOU CAN'T OUT TRAIN A BAD DIET

No matter how hard you train in the gym, you cannot out-train a poor diet. You could push yourself to the limit, doing intense circuits for an hour and burning a lot of calories, but if you're not eating the right amounts, you won't see the results you want. Proper fueling and providing your body with the nutrients it needs for recovery are just as important. In short, nutrition is key!

STRENGTH AND RESISTANCE TRAINING

This will form the foundation of our training. First, let me repeat something you've probably heard before: "Muscle burns fat." But what does that really mean? While muscle doesn't directly burn fat, it actually increases your Resting Metabolic Rate (RMR). In other words, the more muscle mass you have, the more calories your body will burn throughout the day—great news for those of you who have already built muscle!

HYDRATION IS ESSENTIAL

Drinking plenty of water offers numerous essential benefits. It helps flush toxins from your body, acts as a natural appetite suppressant, and supports the proper function of all your body's systems. From a performance standpoint, dehydration can lead to reduced blood flow, cramps, decreased cognitive function, and increased muscle fatigue. So, make sure to stay hydrated



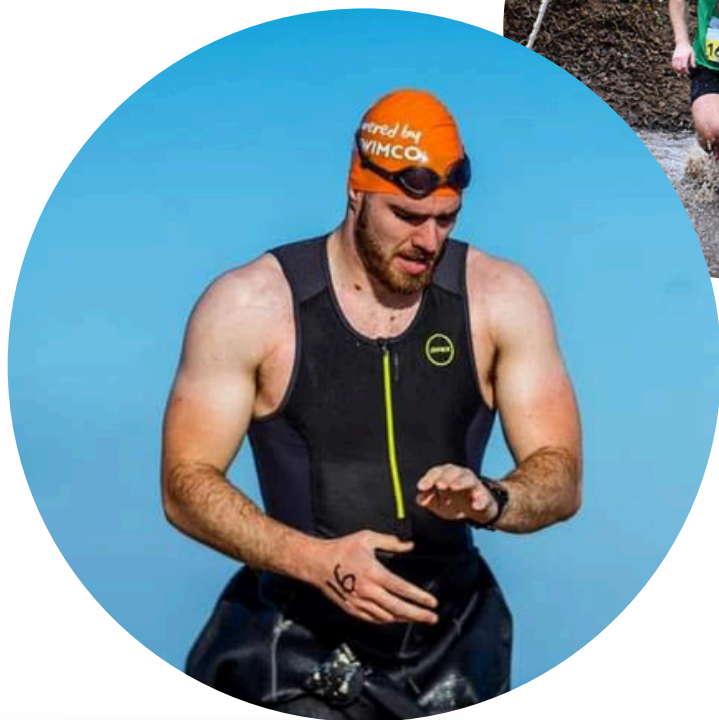


THE IMPORTANCE OF N.E.A.T ACTIVITY

Non-exercise activity thermogenesis (NEAT) refers to the energy you burn through activities other than exercise, eating, and sleeping. This includes everyday movements like walking to the store, doing household chores, and more. I want you to pay attention to your daily activity levels, as they can significantly impact your results. Tracking your steps is a great way to gauge how active you are, especially if your goal is fat loss

CONSISTENCY

The final principle, and the one that will ultimately determine whether you maintain your results, is consistency. It sounds simple, but I've seen so many people achieve great results only to lose their progress and end up back where they started, which is incredibly frustrating. My goal is for you to learn throughout this plan so that you're equipped to continue on your own after we're done working together. Stay consistent, and the results will follow!





NUTRITION TERMINOLOGY

Calorie: Used to indicate the energy provided by foods.

Empty Calories: Provide energy without providing any nutrients e.g. sugar and alcohol.

Macronutrients: Typically refers to the nutrients like carbohydrates, fats and protein.

Micronutrients: Nutrients required in smaller amounts such as vitamins and minerals.

Metabolism: Metabolism is the process by which your body converts what you eat and drink into energy.

Body Mass Index: Measures body weight in relation to height. Not super important as it doesn't consider what kind of weight you carry.

Satiety: The feeling of satisfaction you get after eating.

Protein: A nutrient made up of amino acids that are necessary in the diet for cell structure and function.

Carbohydrates: Typically used as our main energy source.

Fats: Fats are another form of energy and also help to maintain healthy skin and hair. They also insulate the organs and maintain healthy cell function.

Calorie Deficit: When you burn more calories than you consume

Calorie Surplus: When you burn less calories than you consume



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PRE & POST WORKOUT NUTRITION

Pre-Workout

It is important that we enter into training sessions with enough energy to perform at a maximum output. If we look at our macro breakdowns (found below) we know that carbs will be the immediate source of energy for intense training. With that being said it's going to benefit our training by ingesting some carbs before our workouts. Along with a carb source we will also benefit from taking in some protein to prevent any muscle wastage when training at high intensity. Now generally speaking there are carbs considered quick releasing 'simple' carbs (sugars etc) and slower releasing 'complex' carbs (oats, rice, potatoes etc). There are better times to take each type which I will discuss below.

For those of you who train in the mornings you will benefit from quicker releasing carbs as you will in all likelihood be grabbing something quickly before the gym. A banana with low fat Greek yoghurt 30-60 minutes prior to training would be the ideal pre workout meal for early gym goers. It's quick, easy and you're getting a hit of carbs (from the banana) and protein (from the yoghurt).

For the evening or after work trainers out there you will want a balance of slower releasing carbs throughout your day so your glycogen levels (stored energy in muscles) are topped up and ready to provide you with the energy you need to perform at maximum output. At least the final meal before you train should contain a carb source such as oats, sweet potato or rice along with protein and should be a good hour and a half before the workout.

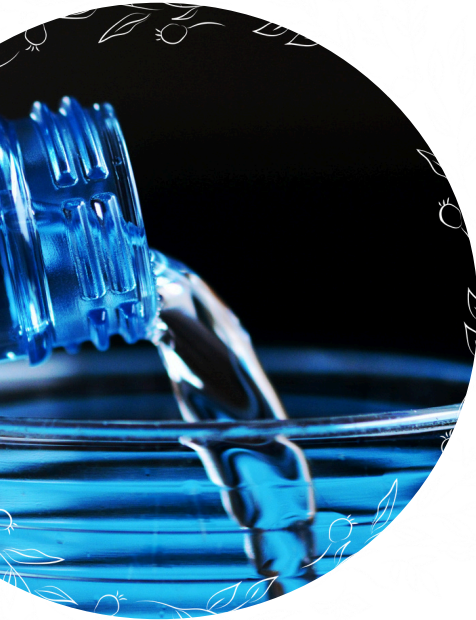
Post-Workout

This part will have more importance for people who want to recovery faster so they can train again or play rugby etc. After an intense workout we want to replenish our glycogen stores or energy (by taking on fast acting carbs) and look to increase muscle size and repair any damage caused to the muscles and we do this by taking on protein. Again without overthinking at this stage we could benefit from a protein shake (quickly broken down) and a banana or some rice cakes (again quickly broken down).





THE IMPORTANCE OF HYDRATION



Many people tend to underestimate the critical role of water in our daily lives. Dehydration can lead to reduced performance and leave you feeling sluggish, which is exactly what we want to avoid. It is absolutely essential for the proper functioning of your body.

Staying hydrated helps your body metabolise stored fat more efficiently, resulting in greater fat loss. Additionally, water can suppress your appetite and help you feel fuller for longer—a big win for anyone trying to slim down.

From a sports performance perspective, hydration is key. It ensures good blood flow to the muscles, helps your body cool down effectively through sweating, prevents dizziness, and delays muscle fatigue.

Make it a habit to drink water consistently throughout the day. If you feel thirsty, it's a sign your body is already becoming dehydrated—don't let it get to that point! Aim for at least 2 litres a day if you're on the smaller side, and up to 4 litres if you're larger. Prioritise this—it's vital for both your health and performance.

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SUPPLEMENTS

Supplements are just that... a supplement to a diet. They should be used as an ADDITION to a balanced diet and not make up the bulk of your nutrition. I get far too many people overly concerned with what supplements they should be taking when their nutrition isn't even correct. Nutrition always comes first!

There are a few supplements that I believe could be of some use to you, both for convenience and health benefits. Supplements can be used to aid sport performance and recovery so if you're looking to gain that edge then I suggest you have a read of this next section.

Multivitamin

A multivit will act as a safety net to ensure that you're getting enough vitamins in throughout your day. You will likely get enough in your diet if you are eating enough fruit and veg but this takes any concern away. This can be taken any time during the day but I recommend getting it in first thing.

Vitamin C

This is important for growth and repair of cells as long as boosting your immune system. Taken any time of the day. 1000mg.

Whey Protein

This should be used more so for convenience as you can just knock a shake down you wherever you are. You can easily get enough protein from your diet alone but post workout this is a very handy product as it's easy to take to the gym with you and is quickly absorbed as you body doesn't have to process it like it would a chicken breast.

Creatine

Creatine essentially helps provide us energy in our cells, in particular our muscle cells. It is found naturally in red meat and fish so can be covered in the diet. However it's a useful supplement that is taken to help with short bursts of energy like when weightlifting. It wont be very useful in longer duration exercise such as distance running. It can be taken pre or post workout and only 5g is necessary. Don't listen to any 'loading phases' that the brands recommend, its not needed and is a marketing ploy to get you to use more product! I will also add on that this is the most tested supplement around and is thought to be a good addition to supplementation when performing resistance training. I would highly recommend this.

Intra-workout Products

These can be a great addition to your supplementation. Intra-workouts typically help to keep you hydrated, provide you with electrolytes, helps to delay fatigue and increase exercise capacity.

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MACROS

You will hear people, myself included talking about 'macros' from time to time, which is just short for macronutrients (refer to common terminology). The main macronutrients that we are going to focus on are protein, carbs and fats. I will give you an overview on what each macro is used for so you better understand why they're important in our diet



PROTEINS

Protein is widely believed to simply make your muscles grow, however it has many other benefits to the body. Protein is also used to make enzymes, hormones, and other body chemicals. Protein is an important building block of bones, muscles, cartilage, skin, blood, hair and nails. By replacing carbs and fat with protein, you reduce the hunger hormone and boost several satiety hormones. This can help you feel fuller for longer meaning you will be less likely to overeat. Protein helps us gain lean muscle mass, which is essential if you want to keep your metabolism nice and high.

FATS

Let me start by saying DO NOT associate fats in your diet with 'body fat'. The two certainly do not go hand in hand and by eating fats you will not automatically put on body fat! When going about our daily activities or performing low intensity activities such as walking or cleaning the house, fats are the primary fuel source. During intense exercise the body will firstly use carbs as it's fuel source but that will transition to using the calories from your fat stores. Fat also helps you absorb vitamins A, D, E, and K, the so-called fat-soluble vitamins. They are called "essential" because your body cannot make them itself, or work without them. Your body needs them for brain development, controlling inflammation, and blood clotting.



CARBOHYDRATES

Carbs are considered our main energy source and are typically found in fruits, vegetables, breads, pastas, oats, rice, potatoes etc. Your body stores these carbs in the liver and muscles as glycogen, which is primarily used in intense training. Carbs improve athletic performance by delaying fatigue, which is why I don't recommend extended periods of 'low carb' dieting. Gym performance will suffer considerably meaning you will likely lose lean muscle tissue. Sugary or starchy carbs are considered less desirable (unless after training) due to the fact that they cause a sharp rise in blood sugar which then causes the hormone insulin to be released to bring our blood sugar levels back down. This is great after training, as the calories will be taken straight to the now depleted muscle cells to store up ready for your next session. There has been a lot of hate thrown at carbs due to all the low carb diets that have sprung about. Do NOT FEAR the carb!



TRACKING YOUR INTAKE

WORKING OUT YOUR INTAKE

If you're going to track you need to work out how many calories you burn on an average day which is known as your TDEE (total daily energy expenditure). You then need to alter the calories depending on your goals. To find out your TDEE you can simply use an online calorie calculator. They will all vary slightly and that's fine, this is just your starting point, then you can adjust after a week or two if you're not getting the desired result!

Scan the QR code to the right. Input all your data. You will be given a maintenance number and this is your TDEE that we want to use. For an example I will use 2500kcal as my maintenance. The maintenance means that if you were to go about your every day life and ate that amount you should stay the same weight.



ADJUSTING CALORIES

Now we have your maintenance calories we need to adjust them to relate to your goal. If your goal is to stay around the same weight then happy days you already have your target number of calories to hit in a day!

Fat loss - For those of you who have the main goal as fat loss I recommend decreasing calories between 10- 20%. Obviously a bigger deficit will lose fat quicker but be harder to stick to and performance may drop due to a lack of energy. A smaller deficit will be a bit slower on the fat loss but you will still be able to lift well and you shouldn't find the decrease in food any trouble. It depends what you want. So using my example I would be between 2250kcal and 2000kcal depending on how quickly I wanted to lose.

Muscle gain - Those who want to put on size and gain muscle mass we are going to increase your calories from your TDEE. I would recommend aiming for 10-15% increase as if you increase much more than this you will end up putting on a whole load of body fat which I'm sure nobody wants. If you do then by all means help yourself lol. So looking at the example again I would be between 2750kcal and 2875kcal



When looking to drop body fat I think aiming to lose 1-2lb a week is a realistic target to set. Similarly when looking to gain you would be more towards 0.5-1lb a week if you're looking to gain lean muscle. If you're not getting those results or you plateau then adjust your calories again. If it's fat loss I would decrease cals by 100 - 200kcal a day and if you were looking to gain maybe increase by 100-150kcal a day. Then track your body weight weekly and adjust when needed

SETTING YOUR MACROS

Now we have your calorie goal we want to set your macros. Now there really is no need to track protein, carbs and fats separately. All we are going to concern ourselves with is overall calories and protein. The carbs and fats can be made up as you like as long as you hit the calories.

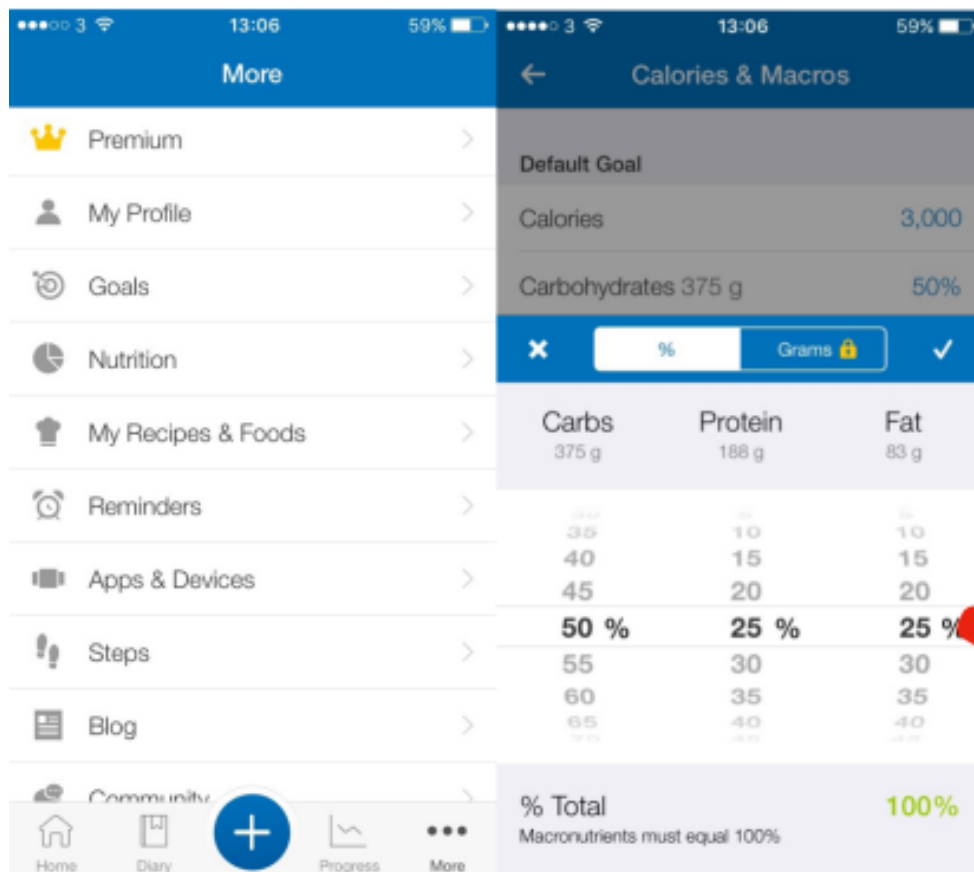
I tend to suggest setting protein at a 1.6 - 2 grams for every 1kg of body weight. Lets say i am 100kg for example (just for easy maths lol) I would be between 160-200g of protein. I like my protein so lets say I go for 200g this would be equal to 800cal because as we know a gram of protein holds 4 calories so $200 \times 4 = 800$. As I said don't worry about setting fat and carb goals, I'll show you below how to set up on Myfitnesspal.



SETTING UP MYFITNESSPAL

To start the app will ask you to input all of your information and it will generate a caloric intake for you. This is an easy way to get an idea of roughly you want to be sticking too.

However, you can ignore this if you want to enter these figures manually, based on the calculations you have made above.. You have worked out your calories and macros based on the information above. To do this you will need to click 'more...' in the bottom right hand corner and then go into the 'goals' section and then into 'Calorie and Macronutrient Goals'. You can then change the amount of calories that it will give you and divide the macros accordingly. Unless you get the paid version you can only round to the nearest 5% so go as close as you can. Again were not too worried about fats and carbs but make sure there protein is as close as possible! Just set fats at 20% and the rest go to carbs.



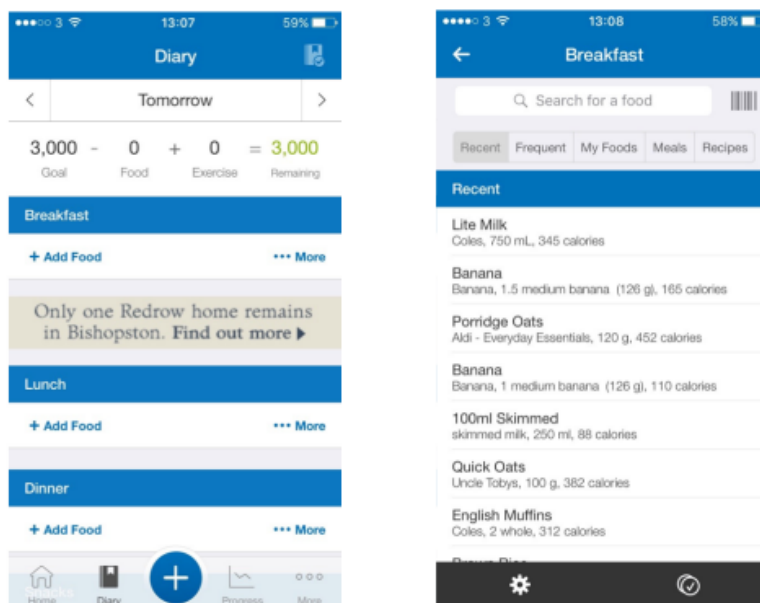


USING THE DIARY

When this is done you can then go into 'diary', this is where you input all of your food throughout the day. The goal is to get as close to your macro totals as possible within that day, if you look at the picture above the aim is to get 188g protein with 3000kcal.

You can essentially choose the foods that will get you there so you can eat different meals every day if you like. However I do find it much easier to have some fairly standard meals to use daily just so you have some sort of structure.

I personally have similar meals for my first meal and second meal every day. My evening meals change daily then as I eat with my girlfriend or out of the house etc but as long as you leave enough room for that evening meal this isn't an issue. You don't want to be taking Tupperware out with you so you can stick to your chicken and broccoli!!



To input food you simply click the '+ add food' button. This will bring you to the second picture shown above where you can either search for a food by entering food type and brand or by scanning the barcode on the packaging. You then need to alter the portion size.

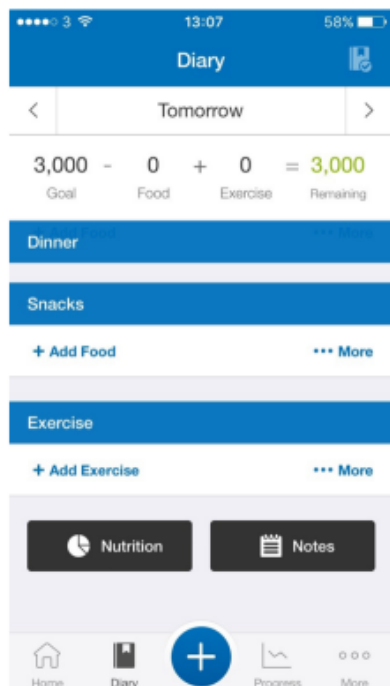


SAVING MEALS

You can also save regular meals which makes things so much easier, for example if you were having 120g of oats with milk and a banana most mornings you could save that as a meal and then it's as easy as one click to put it in the next day. To save a meal, click the 'more' button alongside your ingredients. Input anything that you eat or drink that will have calories, you needn't worry about vegetables as they only have negligible calories but always add in fruit if you have any.

TRACKING

At the bottom of the diary page is a tab saying 'nutrition' this will show you how much of each macronutrient you have left for the day and how much you have already eaten. Check this throughout the day so you have some idea of how much you have left. You should try to aim for whole foods when possible but if you want to have a biscuit, chocolate bar, pizza, subway whatever it is make sure you put it into Myfitnesspal and ensure that it doesn't take you over your totals, and try not to every day!! I find the 80/20 rule works well here, 80% from whole foods and 20% whatever you like!



Nutrition			
Calories	Nutrients	Macros	
Day View			
Today			
	Total	Goal	Left
Protein	69	188	119g
Carbohydrates	179	375	196g
Fiber	19	38	19g
Sugar	69	107	38g
Fat	39	83	44g
Saturated Fat	14	32	18g
Polunsaturated Fat	0	-	0a



EATING OUT & GUESS WORK

I'm often asked, "How do I log food when there's no barcode?" Dining out at restaurants is something many of us enjoy, myself included. Here's how you can track the calories in those situations. Some restaurants have their nutritional information available on MyFitnessPal, which makes things simple—just search for the meal. For example, in the UK, Nando's has all their menu items saved on the app, so you can easily find what you're eating and add it to your daily log. However, if the restaurant doesn't have this information, or if you're eating a home-cooked meal made by someone else, you'll need to estimate the macros as accurately as you can. Over time, you'll become much better at judging the nutritional content of meals.

Start by searching for the food in the search bar and estimating portion sizes based on how much you typically eat. Keep in mind that restaurant meals often contain extra fat due to added oils, so it's a good idea to leave some extra room in your calorie count for this. The goal is to get as close as possible to your target macros, but don't stress if you're slightly over on one or under on another—what matters most is that your overall total is close. With practice, you'll become more familiar with the macros in different foods. Enjoy the process, and feel free to reach out to me with any questions. Stay consistent and keep putting in the effort!



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ALCOHOL

Many of us enjoy a drink now and then, myself included. While I'm not going to tell you to completely cut out alcohol while following this plan, it's important to understand that heavy drinking sessions can slow down your progress. Alcoholic beverages contain calories not just from carbs, but also from alcohol itself, which has 7 calories per gram. On a night out, these calories can quickly add up, pushing you well over your daily intake.

Contrary to popular belief, alcohol isn't stored as fat. However, it acts as a fat-burning suppressor because your body prioritizes metabolizing alcohol before it can start burning carbs or fats. This means your body needs to burn off all the alcohol before returning to fat-burning mode.

In addition to alcohol's impact on fat burning, the choices we make after drinking can also hinder progress. For instance, how many of us have ended up at the local chippy or grabbed fast food after a night out? Those extra calories are more likely to be stored as fat since your body is busy processing the alcohol. And let's not forget the hangover, which often leads to less-than-ideal food choices the next day!



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Life is to be enjoyed but just understand you will be slowing your results down so try and keep drinking to a minimum where possible! HOWEVER do not fear. I am here to help. There are things we can do to account for those nights out.

1. The simplest approach is to limit the number of drinks you have. If you can stick to 2–4 drinks every few weeks, you’ll likely notice little to no negative impact—so enjoy them!
2. If you’re having a few drinks with dinner, it’s best to pair them with a lean protein source and vegetables. Since alcohol must be burned off first, avoiding carbs and fats in your meal can help prevent them from being stored as fat.
3. For a night out, I’d recommend having a protein-rich meal with fibrous vegetables and healthy fats beforehand. This will help keep you full and reduce the temptation to grab fast food on your way home, which is where much of the damage tends to happen.
4. If you’re a beginner or intermediate trainer, I suggest tracking your calories. To account for a night of drinking, you can lower your calorie intake slightly during the week, allowing for a higher intake on the day you plan to drink. Think of your calories as a weekly total instead of focusing on each day individually. For instance, cutting 200 calories per day for six days adds up to 1,200 calories you can use for your night out. While it’s not ideal, it’s a practical way to balance things out if you plan to drink.
5. Personally, after a “hangover day,” I aim for a super low-calorie day to get back on track. I keep protein high, carbs minimal, and fats moderate. This helps your body burn off the alcohol and any extra calories, reducing the risk of gaining fat.
6. You can also offset the extra intake by increasing your activity level. For example, burning an extra 700 calories through exercise during the week gives you more flexibility for your night out. At the end of the day, it’s all about balance!