

April 2016 | teamusa.org | Susan Kitchen | Diet & Nutrition

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## 16 Foods a Smart Triathlete Must Keep in the Kitchen

Let's face it. Triathletes are busy, on-the-go people. We're known for carving out time for workouts and getting plenty of rest and recovery. But when the schedule is packed, getting the right nutrition can be a monumental challenge. That's why, no matter what your week has in store, stocking your pantry and fridge with healthy foods that can be ready in a flash will keep you on track with a balanced, healthy diet that fuels the body and packs a flavorful punch.

### 1. Greek Yogurt

This food works at any meal or as a snack, and a 6-oz serving offers 13-19g protein, 30 percent of daily calcium and Vitamin D.

How to enjoy: Deliciously, creamy and satisfying alone, it can be accompanied by fruit or granola, substituted in recipes for salad dressing or mayonnaise and used in smoothies. It also helps balance out the heat in dishes with hot peppers.

### 2. Beans

Don't let the modest bean fool you; it's loaded with nutrients to fuel a body in motion. With a variety to choose from—black beans, chickpeas, kidney beans and pinto — beans offer 19-22g of carbohydrates, 7-8g of fiber and 7-9g of protein per 1/2 cup serving.

How to enjoy: Dried beans (white or kidney) work well for dishes such as chili, hummus and soups. Canned beans (navy, black, Cannellini) make preparing soups, salsas and rice dishes fast and easy while providing a good protein source. Frozen beans (hulled edamame) are great in salads, pasta or rice dishes.

### 3. Quinoa/Rice (Brown or Wild)

With these hearty whole grains in your pantry, dinner can be ready in fifteen minutes! Not only cost effective, whole grains are a good source of fiber, iron and Vitamin B.

How to enjoy: Mix in casseroles, combine with beans, stir-fry with veggies, include as side dish or substitute for oatmeal.

### 4. Eggs

Packing a quality protein punch, a single egg provides 6g of protein and over 15 vitamins and minerals. You can't go wrong with eggs.

How to enjoy: Scramble or make an omelet with veggies, hard-boil and refrigerate for a breakfast on the go or add to salads for an extra dose of protein.



## 5. Tomato Paste or Canned Tomatoes

Bursting with the cancer-fighting antioxidant lycopene, tomatoes offer a blast of flavor and a variety of meals without piling on the calories.

How to enjoy: Great for soups, pizza and pasta sauce, fresh salsa and chicken Parmesan. For a longer-lasting ingredient, go with tomato paste in a tube. Simply use what you want and save the rest for another time.

Chef tip: Tomato paste adds a deep flavor to sauces and braised meats and stews. Canned tomatoes, especially fire-roasted tomatoes, offer a more complex flavor as opposed to other canned options. Canned tomatoes often contain sodium, so keep this in mind before adding salt to a dish.

## 6. Bananas

This widely available, cheap and travel-friendly fruit is a favorite among triathletes as a pre- and post-workout treat or on-the-go snack. A large banana has 30g of carbohydrates, less than 1g of protein and no fat.

How to enjoy: Peel and eat or smear with nut butter, include in a banana or peanut butter sandwich or add to smoothies or yogurt.

## 7. Nut Butter

Another cost-effective food, nut butter offers a healthy fat source and 7-8g protein per 2 tbsp. serving.

How to enjoy: Whether it's almond, cashew or peanut butter, smear it over a rice cake, apple or banana pre- or post-workout or make a childhood favorite: a PB&J sandwich.

## 8. Ground Chicken or Turkey

With less saturated fat than ground beef, simply thaw and cook when ready to eat. A 3oz serving offers 21g of protein.

How to enjoy: Substitute for beef or pork in casseroles, meat sauces, tacos, enchiladas, rice bowls or chili.

Chef tip: Generally speaking, ground chicken tends to provide a moister cooked product than ground turkey.

## 9. Sweet Potatoes

One of nature's unsurpassed sources of beta-carotene and Vitamin A, this is a great carbohydrate choice year-round. One medium sweet potato delivers 24g of carbohydrates and 4g of fiber.

How to enjoy: The versatile sweet potato goes well in casseroles, pie or on its own. Sprinkle some cinnamon and honey on top for a sweet treat.

Chef Tip: To prep sweet potatoes pronto, simply pierce the skin with a fork and microwave for 6-8 minutes.

## 10. Frozen Berries

This sweet fruit delivers a long list of nutritional benefits including antioxidants and polyphenols, which fight cancer and chronic disease, fiber and Vitamin C. Opt for blackberries, blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, Acai berries and cranberries.

How to enjoy: Straight from the freezer, they make the perfect addition to Greek yogurt, smoothies, fruit tarts, muffin mix, used atop a salad or on their own.

Chef tip: If you plan to decorate a dish with berries, use fresh fruit, as frozen berries will lose their shape as they thaw.

## 11. Herbs and Spices:

Adding spices not only adds flavor without loading on the calories but also offers potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

How to enjoy: Turmeric works well with curries, stir-fried vegetables and rice. Ginger pairs well with soy sauce, citrus, chili peppers, garlic and in tea. Sage complements squash, apples, sausage and a variety of cheeses.

Rosemary is great with potatoes, tomatoes, spinach, mushrooms and in marinades for meats and poultry.

Oregano and basil are ideal for pesto on white meats and in stir-fry. Cinnamon pairs well with cloves, nutmeg, allspice, chocolate, fruit, nuts and in oatmeal. Cilantro is a must for salsa, guacamole and southwestern dishes,

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and it combines with lemon and lime in marinades. Garlic adds complex flavor, while black pepper and Kosher or sea salt are important for bringing out the natural flavors of food.

## **12. Dark Chocolate**

Solid dark chocolate and unsweetened cocoa powder provide powerful disease-fighting antioxidants and are the perfect go-to foods when a sweet craving hits.

How to enjoy: Choose a dark chocolate with at least 70% cocoa and enjoy in small portions (about one ounce/day).

Chef tip: Add cocoa powder to smoothies, or add it to dry rub seasonings for chicken, beef, or pork.

## **13. Oatmeal**

With a reputation for lowering cholesterol, this is a must for any athlete who needs a quick, filling, yet nutritious meal. One serving (1/2 cup) offers 27g of carbohydrates, 5g of protein and 4g of fiber.

How to enjoy: Cook with water or milk, nuts, sprinkle with cinnamon and drizzle with honey. Oatmeal is also ideal for granola, cookies and added to pancakes and waffles for breakfast.

## **14. Cooking and Baking Oils**

Olive and canola oil provide a healthy source of fat while adding texture and flavor. Cold-press and unfiltered extra-virgin olive oil are best. Be aware that some products sold as olive oil are not 100% olive oil. Canola oil provides a neutral flavor, and is high in mono-unsaturated fat.

How to enjoy: Use canola oil for baking and stir-fry and olive oil for grilled veggies, meat and eggs. Organic-virgin coconut oil and extra-virgin avocado oil are two other healthy, delicious options.

Chef tip: Consider purchasing a reusable spray bottle to avoid the propellants and additives in store-bought cooking sprays.

## **15. Vinegar**

An essential ingredient in a wide range of dishes, vinegar adds complexity and pizzazz. Choose white, red wine, apple cider, balsamic, aged white, sherry and rice vinegar.

How to enjoy: Add to salad dressings, soups, sauces, pickled foods and salsas.

## **16. Broths**

This must-have ingredient comes in a variety of different options, such as low-sodium, organic vegetable, mushroom and chicken. Broths are not prepared from bouillon or other reduced bases but are from actual stock.

How to enjoy: Use high-quality broth to create delicious sauces and soups, and use it to braise meats (wet roasting) quickly and easily.