

# Nutrition Mantras for Randonneurs

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After training, nutrition is the *key* factor in finishing brevets. When Warren and I were training for Paris-Brest-Paris we realized that if one of us wasn't having fun we hadn't eaten recently. If you don't eat enough and properly you bonk (your brain feels all fuzzy) and you hit the wall (your legs are dead). You are definitely not having fun! You get discouraged and consider using your cell phone to call for rescue. We are each an experiment of one. What works for one rider may not work for another rider. Use your training rides to experiment with ride nutrition and then use your *tested nutrition* on brevets.

1. **Eat carbs daily**—We burn lots of carbs when riding. To be sure that your fuel tank is full, carbs should make up 55 to 65 percent of your total daily calories. One gram of carbs contains four calories. A simple rule of thumb is to cover your plate primarily with carbs.
2. **Eat hourly on the bike**—Eat regularly on the bike to avoid swings in energy.
3. **Know your hourly burn rate**—Figure out how many calories per hour you are burning riding at brevet pace. On the [Resources page](#) of my website see:
  - Eating For Events—Table on calories per hour for different size people riding at different speeds.
  - Calorie Estimator—A spreadsheet to calculate calories based on speed, rider weight, distance and climbing.
4. **Eat ½ your burn rate every hour on the bike**—Once you know your burn rate, try to eat about half of those calories every hour on the bike.
5. **Eat primarily carbs on the bike**—You're burning both glycogen (from carbs) and fat for energy. We all have enough fat to fuel a brevet, but we can run out of glycogen within a few of hours. Your brain can only burn glycogen. Avoid the bonk by eating mostly carbs.
6. **Calories or convenience**—While sports bars, gels and drinks may be more convenient, they provide no better nutrition than eating real food and they cost more.
7. **Drink when thirsty**—Drink enough so that you aren't thirsty, but don't over drink, which can cause hyponatremia (low blood sodium), a potentially fatal condition.
8. **Eat salt**—You can sweat out 1 liter (35 fl. oz.) per hour in hot weather. A liter of sweat contains 500 – 1000 mg of sodium!

9. **Calories in = calories out**—Over a 24-hour cycle on longer brevets, calories in should equal calories out. Eat ½ your calories hourly on the bike and eat the rest at controls, especially before a sleep break.
10. **Eat for recovery**—As soon as you get off the bike start eating several hundred calories of carbs / hour and drinking to satisfy your thirst.
11. **One-way principle**—Finally, what goes down should stay down!

**More information:**

Clark, Nancy and Hegmann, J. (2005). *[The Cyclist's Food Guide](#)*. Sports Nutrition Publishers, West Newton, MA

Hughes, John. (2011). *[Nutrition for 100K and Beyond](#)*. RoadBikeRider.com, Atlanta, GA.

Nutrition articles in Resources section on [coach-hughes.com](http://coach-hughes.com).