

Power Drinks to Fuel Summer Training

By: Heather Mangieri, RDN, CSSD

It's been quite a challenging year for student athletes. School ended abruptly, practices were put on hold, and sporting events and competitions were cancelled for the season.

That was a big blow to athletes that have trained and were prepared to dominate their sports season.

While last season didn't end as planned, it's time to get your mind and body back in the game and prepare for what's ahead. You can do that starting today, by focusing on sports nutrition strategies that will support your summer training.

NUTRIENTS TO SUPPORT SPORTS PERFORMANCE

Carbohydrates and protein are well-known for their role in supporting athletic performance. Carbohydrates provide energy, and proteins support muscle repair and recovery. Sports nutrition advice also focuses on the importance of getting adequate fluids.

Vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and phytonutrients also play a role in supporting health and providing support after intense exercise. A solid sports nutrition plan should incorporate not some, but all, of those nutrients. That can be done by eating - or drinking - a variety of foods.

POWER DRINKS TO FUEL SUMMER SPORTS

One of the easiest ways for athletes to get a wide variety of nutrients is by incorporating nutrient-rich drinks into their training plan. Some standalone beverages are packed with nutrition, while others can be complemented by adding fruits, vegetables, herbs and spices to the recipe. Here are a few power drinks to fuel your summer training, provided by several members of the American Dairy Association North East sports nutrition advisory panel.

SMOOTHIES

Smoothies can incorporate a wide variety of nutrients into one meal, and there are countless ways to make them. A smoothie that supports sports training should include both carbohydrates and protein, as well as a variety of vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients. By choosing the right combination of foods, you can turn any smoothie into a power smoothie. Here are some examples.

Orange Creamsicle Protein Smoothie

Intense exercise and training is necessary to improve sports performance, but it can also increase the production of free radicals, which can in turn damage muscle cells. Antioxidants, like vitamin C found in this [orange creamsicle smoothie](#), help protect against free radical damage. Thanks to the combination of cottage cheese and milk, this power drink also provides 19 grams of high-quality protein and 20% of the daily value for [calcium](#), as well as eight other essential nutrients athletes need. It's the perfect way to cool off on a sunny day or refuel your muscles after a hard workout.

Carrot Orange Turmeric Smoothie

Another way to boost the phytonutrients and antioxidants in your beverages is to add herbs and spices. This [carrot orange turmeric smoothie](#) combines the turmeric spice with cayenne pepper, carrots, oranges and pineapple, resulting in a beautiful, bright orange beverage that is bursting with flavor. Turmeric contains compounds known as curcumin, which is a powerful antioxidant with anti-inflammatory properties. That makes it a popular pick with athletes. And, it's blended with milk. That means you get carbohydrates, protein, fluids, vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients all in one simple-to-make smoothie. (recipe courtesy of [savorrecipes.com](#))

Want more smoothie ideas? Check out these [3 smoothies](#) to fuel your season and sports performance by Molly Morgan.



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PROTEIN SHAKE

Homemade protein shakes are another way to fuel your summer training. Similar to smoothies, homemade shakes allow you to incorporate a variety of foods and fluids into one quick liquid meal. To make it a power drink, include foods with a variety of vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients, that provide anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.

This [tart cherry and beet protein milkshake](#), developed by Leslie Bonci, is a great example. It combines whey protein isolate with a variety of other nutrient-rich foods, including two that are popular in the sports nutrition world – beets and tart cherry juice. Tart cherries are a rich source of anthocyanins, which are known for their antioxidant properties. Beets are a source of dietary nitrates, which the body can convert to nitric oxide to assist oxygen delivery to working muscles. Both add anti-inflammatory properties to your drink, too.

HOMEMADE POWER JUICE

Combining nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables together to make a power juice is another great way to pack a wide variety of nutrients into one quick meal. The tricky part is creating one that includes both carbohydrates and protein - and has the right combination of fruits and veggies so that it tastes delicious. Greens, in particular, are loaded with nutrition, but can really change the taste of homemade juice. To mask the bitterness of the greens, use sweet fruits like pineapple and mango, or incorporate sweet juices into the recipe. Just be sure not to overdo it.

This [green power juice](#) combines green apple, green grapes, pineapple, spinach, Greek yogurt and hemp seeds together with water, resulting in a super refreshing pre-workout beverage or easy breakfast.

KEFIR

Another nutrient-rich beverage that doesn't require any mixing, stirring or blending is kefir – a fermented milk beverage that is traditionally made from cow's milk. As with other fermented dairy products, kefir has been associated with many potential health benefits. The combination of carbohydrates, protein and nutrients makes it a great option for athletes. Like chocolate milk, kefir is available at most supermarkets as a ready-to-drink beverage. You can also find individual cartons at mini-marts and convenience stores. That makes it a great option for busy days when you don't have time to pack a recovery snack for after training.

Kefir is also a great liquid to incorporate into smoothies. Give this [mango kefir smoothie](#) a try and see what you think. (recipe courtesy of [savorrecipies.com](#).)

REFUEL WITH CHOCOLATE MILK


If you don't have time to blend a smoothie, no problem. Just pour a glass of chocolate milk. This power drink provides the combination of carbohydrates and protein that athletes need after exhaustive exercise, as well as fluids, electrolytes and a wide variety of vitamins and minerals. In fact, chocolate milk contains nine essential nutrients athletes need for their body to function optimally. The best part about this beverage is that it's inexpensive and found at just about any service station or convenience store. If you don't have chocolate milk at home, or you're in a rush, just stop in and pick up a bottle. Check out [this post](#) by Felicia Stoler to learn about more reasons to refuel with chocolate milk.

Incorporate one or all of these power drinks into your sports nutrition plan this summer to fuel your training. As we get back to sports and back to competitions, keep your head in the game and strive for optimal nutrition to enhance your sports performance.



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