

**Ideas, Beliefs and Rituals Regarding the  
Foodways of  
American Triathletes and Marathon Runners**

by

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By looking at the food ways of American triathletes and marathon runners—what they eat, when they eat, who they eat with, how they eat and their food-related rituals and beliefs—I hoped to explain some of commonalities and differences of each of these sport cultures and their members’ relationships to food. I utilized a materialist theoretical model using the social sciences concept of one’s unconscious habits, known as *habitus*, as developed by Pierre Bourdieu in order to describe the significance of their food ways as being influenced by their socio-economic class and aspects of the dominant American culture. Though one’s cultural *habitus* is unconscious it presupposes beliefs and daily practice. Or, in the words of Pierre Bourdieu, “The *habitus* is necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions” (Bourdieu 1984:170). I wanted to discover if these two sport cultures are significantly different from each other by looking at their food ways and uncover any influences of their participants’ socio-economic class.

## **Methodology**

For this research project I incorporated both primary and secondary research. I interviewed triathletes and marathon runners about their food ways during two episodes of participant-observation at a sprint distance triathlon and a Half-Marathon utilizing a semi-structured approach that included questions about their eating habits (where, when, how much, and to define good foods and bad foods) and their demographic profiles. I sent out an online survey for marathon and ultra runners to the memberships of two running clubs and a survey geared towards triathletes to one triathlon club where I live. My choice of respondents of my un-structured interviews of triathletes and marathon

runners was based on their availability and their typicality from the demographic information from the online media kits for *Triathlete* and *Runner's World* magazines (Triathlete 2008; Runners World 2008). My participant-observations were at the Carpinteria Triathlon on September 28, 2008 and at the Santa Clarita Half-Marathon and Marathon on November 2, 2008. I documented the material culture of those two events through photography, detailed written descriptions of the race events and interviews of race participants immediately before and after they raced at the race venues. Also, as a part of my primary research on their material cultures, I reviewed food packaging of endurance athlete food supplements, online and printed articles in *Triathlete*, *Runner's World* and *Marathon and Beyond* magazines and blog postings, and nutrition articles on Active.com.

I received 141 responses from my online surveys posted on surveymonkey.com. Of my online "Food Ways of Triathletes" survey that I sent out, I received 33 complete responses. Of my "Food ways of Marathon Runners" survey, I received 108 complete responses. I found the data from my surveys informative but, because they include only responses voluntarily given, they may not be entirely representative of the two sport cultures. Please see Appendix A (pages 19-24) for my survey questions and summaries of responses from triathletes and Appendix B (pages 25-31) for my survey questions and summaries of responses from surveyed marathon and ultra runners.

I found that the information that I reviewed online to be generally in sync with the practices and beliefs of my interviewed athletes and their food practices from what I observed at the races. The printed online sources included athlete blog postings, list-serve race reports by athletes in the Rincon Triathlon Club, books, food manufacturers' sports

nutrition articles in newsletters and sports nutrition articles in both peer-reviewed research journals and popular triathlon and running magazines (*Triathlete*, *Runner's World* and *Marathon and Beyond*) all were pretty consistent and indicative of beliefs and common dietary practices of triathletes and marathon runners that I documented with the exception of post-race celebratory meals. During those occasions food categories and habits seemed to reverse themselves from the dietary rules of these sport cultures. But I am getting ahead of myself.

To illustrate the semiotics of packaged and processed race foods and the influence of food marketing on these sport cultures, I reviewed the food packaging of several popular energy gels consumed by triathletes and marathon runners.

## **Research Results**

### ***Eating alone and with others: Social bonds and identity***

Each of the triathletes I interviewed told me they often ate alone and shared a meal only in the evening. Eating alone can connote ascetic values, spiritual purity and a social separation from others according to anthropologists (Goody 1982). Eating alone rather than with others also reflects the dominant individualist mores in America where the nuclear familial household is the most common kind (Triandis 1995). And, like people who live in other industrialized or urban communities, there is trend towards de-socialized snacking by people who demand convenience due to their work schedules and the availability of cheap calories (Mintz 1985). Sharing a meal with others is symbolic of social ties and is often practiced ritualistically before an important race (in the form of a "Pre-Race Pasta" or "Carbo Loading" dinner) by long-distance triathletes or marathon

runners and after a race (such as an organized awards dinner such as at an Ironman Triathlon or at an informal celebratory meal among friends who raced together). The commensality of these meals enforces the social bonds within the group of athletes and friends as they experience a spirit of *communitas* (a feeling of egalitarianism and connection) with each before a race and celebrating afterwards (Giulanotti 2005:6).

***When they eat: Fueling up and recovery***

The triathletes and marathon runners I spoke with about their food ways enthusiastically admitted to structuring their meals and foods around their daily and weekly workouts (Appendix A:12, 13; Appendix B: 12, 13). With gusto they told me of all the foods they “give up” in order to live what French anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu terms the “ascetic exaltation of sobriety and controlled diet” of an upper-middle class lifestyle (Bourdieu 1984: 213). Living a disciplined and ascetic lifestyle and stoically enduring physically arduous endurance training and racing gives legitimacy to their membership within the triathlon community (Atkinson 2008).

Surveyed triathletes and marathon runners generally eat according to their daily training schedule and the professional 8 AM to 5 PM work hours (Appendix A: 18, 19; Appendix B: 18, 19). The eating times of triathletes often reflect their multiple daily workouts (Appendix A: 12). Triathletes seem to eat more often during the day than marathon and ultra runners with 92% of surveyed triathletes claiming that they ate more often than three times a day (Appendix A: 18). Only 81% of surveyed marathon and ultra runners ate more often than three times a day (Appendix B: 18).

“Sports nutrition is a practice as much as a science,” according to *Sports Nutrition: Handbook of Sports Medicine and Science* (Maughan 2002:140). Triathletes

and marathon runners are exhorted by sports nutritionists to eat the same foods as they normally do (in the evening and morning before a race or long workout) before an important race so as to not jeopardize their race outcome (Ryan 2007). Both the triathletes and marathon runners I interviewed and surveyed commonly practice eating these foods as one of their “pre-race rituals” (Appendix A: 23, 24; Appendix B: 23, 24).

***Structure of a meal: from A+ 2B to CHO + xMN***

According to sports nutritionists and my surveyed triathletes and marathon runners, a good meal can be in either a solid or beverage form but it must include carbohydrates (Applegate 2008; Fitzpatrick 2006, Ryan 2007). The traditional meal structure of British culture has influenced much of the dominant American culture according to Anthropologist Mary Douglas (Douglas 1975). The proper British meal includes an entrée of meat (A) that is accompanied by two side dishes (2B): one that is a starch and the other that is a vegetable. Triathletes and marathon runners seem to have their own “proper meal” structure: CHO + xMN (Appendix A: 23; Appendix B: 23) that they adhere to especially before an important race. The letters “CHO” is the sports nutrition chemistry denotation for carbohydrate (Maughan 2002). The denotation “xMN” is my own endurance athlete denotation that stands for macronutrients such as proteins, fats, sugars and/or micronutrients such as vitamins, electrolytes and minerals (USDA 2008).

***What they eat: Semiotics of good and bad foods***

The surveyed and interviewed athletes generally categorized foods as either “good foods” or “bad foods” most consistently by their digestibility (important for consuming

foods while training and racing), their functional ability to increase the athlete's endurance, and their healthfulness (Appendix A: 27, 28; Appendix B: 27, 28). When asked to name "good foods" and "bad foods" triathletes and marathon runners athletes alike categorized foods by the foods' perceived health, athletic and performance functions. Good foods were described as "healthy", "nutritious", "high carbohydrate", "anti-oxidant", "fresh", "whole grain", "organic", "non-processed", "vegetarian" and "raw" (Appendix A: 28; Appendix B: 28). Some of the descriptions they used for good foods seemed to be symbolic of the ideals of these sport cultures such as "lean", "in moderation", "light", "low fat" and "whole" (Appendix A: 28; Appendix B: 28). Believing that they are what they eat, triathletes and marathon runners seem to prefer eating "light", "low fat" and "whole" foods and thereby would imbue their bodies with those qualities and thus they, in turn, would seem to embody their sport cultures (Appendix A: 28; Appendix B: 28).

Bad foods were described as the very qualities triathletes and marathon runners try to avoid with their athletic performance. Symbolic of these bad qualities are their "bad" food descriptors such as "fake", "processed", "high fat", "fried" ("fried" is also a slang term for "tired"—a state these athletes avoid when training and racing), "preserved," "fat" (race times are slower generally the heavier one is), "heavy," "artificial" and "junk" (term for over-training without a specific performance goal is called "doing junk miles" in the lingo of both of these sport cultures).

The categories of foods are based on their functional attributes. These functions are perceived to be based on scientific research on exercise physiology and sports

nutrition as well as the health and fitness trend in American culture-- rather than on religious beliefs or traditions.

**Good foods–**

Moderate amounts of high carbohydrate and micronutrient rich foods were uniformly cited as generally “good foods”, a category which matched the prevailing sports nutrition discourse (Ryan 2007; Maughan 2002 ;USDA 2008). What I didn’t see that surprised me were foods being categorized “good” because they were “organic” or “natural.” Perhaps the mainstream acceptance of those labels have made them no longer differentiating or meaningful or perhaps these are just not as important to these athletes as the foods functional qualities in regards to one’s athletic performance. Though a few respondents did say that they preferred vegan or vegetarian foods. Also, many foods that were good were noted as “lean” which reflects the dominant fitness trend and embodied culture of runners as lean and athletic (Bourdieu 1984: 214). Representative examples of “good foods” for triathletes are in Appendix A: 28 and for runners are in Appendix B: 28.

**Bad foods–**

The bad foods cited by marathon runners and triathletes generally mirrored the same foods categorized as “bad” in the American media lately. Foods that contain high fructose corn syrup, MSG, too much salt, and trans fats are “bad”. These athletes usually consider fried foods and “drug foods” such as coffee, alcohol and refined sugar are as “bad”. Also, considered “bad” are red meat, processed foods, fast foods. Representative “bad foods” by surveyed triathletes are in Appendix A: 27. Representative “bad foods” according to surveyed marathon and ultra runners are in Appendix B: 27. The responses for both of these sport cultures are nearly identical.

### ***Post-race celebrations: Reversal of food categories and carnival***

Something interesting happens to the earlier mentioned food categories of “good foods” and “bad foods” when many triathletes and marathoners attend post-race awards dinners and celebrations. The categories of foods seem to get reversed. What is normally a “bad food” is now a “reward” or a “treat” and consumed with gusto (Appendix A: 26; Appendix B: 26). Once these athletes cross the finish line many of them seem to ignore their food prohibitions and go nuts. Post-race celebrations seem to function as a rite of reversal (a socially acceptable way to blow off steam) for triathletes and marathon runners who normally abide by their strict dietary and training regimes each day (Turner 1964). Many stay up late and celebrate in a hedonistic revelry that features over-indulging and consuming normally forbidden foods and alcoholic beverages in a rite of reversal. Some representative responses of what these athletes said they ate *after* they raced are in Appendix A: 26 for triathletes. The marathon and ultra runners I surveyed had similar food category reversals. For representative responses see Appendix B: 26.

### ***How they eat***

Packaged and processed foods are denoted as “bad foods” in the surveys. So are fast foods. However, marathon runners consume processed and packaged foods in the form of energy bars, drinks and gels (Appendix B:19):

- Energy or nutrition bars: 26.4% eat them “frequently”
- Energy or sport drinks: 50% consume them “frequently”
- Energy gels: 45.8% consume them “frequently”

Practices that may signify their relative affluence includes the time to cook and eat at home “frequently” for 76.6% of marathon runners (Appendix B: 19). The triathlete

responses were similar to those made by the runners (Appendix A: 19). However, significantly more triathletes than marathon runners ate home cooking. Of triathletes surveyed, 91.7% of them said they ate home cooking “frequently” (Appendix A: 19).

### **Why triathletes and marathon runners eat what they eat**

The demanding training schedules, belief in science, socio-economic class and the internalization of the values of the dominant culture have determined much of the food ways of triathletes and marathon runners according to my research (Appendix A; Appendix B).

#### ***Socio-economic class and dominant class values***

As it matures in an industrialized society, a sport with humble beginnings can evolve into a highly commercialized sport that reflects the dominant group’s value system and profit motives with material and social barriers to entry for both participants and spectators (Giulianotti 2005). Today, triathlon seems highly commercialized despite its modest beginnings as an “anything goes event” among lifeguards and Navy Seals determined to see who was the toughest athletes in California and Hawaii. A typical triathlon race entry fee has escalated from free to around \$100 per person—what I paid to enter the Carpinteria Triathlon’s Sprint Distance event. The Ironman triathlon entry fee is \$300 (World Triathlon Corporation 2008). The average Triathlete Magazine subscriber spends \$24, 408 each year on triathlon-related purchases (Triathlete 2008). In addition to the nutritious, home cooking and packaged carbohydrate supplements triathletes routinely eat, their socio-economic class indicators seem to be congruent with their upper middle class food habits (Appendix A: 8, 9, 10, 13) and include these demographic indicators:

- 71% are professionals such as doctors, lawyers, accountants, environmental engineers, computer engineers, teachers, college professors, scientists, etc.
- 50% have an annual household income of \$80,000 or more
- 53% have earned a bachelors degree
- 33% have post-graduate training, certification, a masters or a doctorate degree
- 42% have the leisure time to train 10 hours or more a week

Most marathon and ultra runners also come from a nearly identical socio-economic class of the triathletes. The socio-economic class indicators of surveyed marathon and ultra runners that correlated with their upper middle class diets (Appendix B: 8, 9, 10, 13) and include:

- 81% are professionals such as doctors, lawyers, accountants, environmental engineers, computer engineers, teachers, college professors, scientists, etc.
- 56% have an annual household income of \$80,000 or more
- 87.5% have earned a bachelors degree
- 49% have post-graduate training, certification, a masters or a doctorate degree
- 50% have the leisure time to train 10 hours or more a week

Triathletes' and marathon runners' food choices of "what to eat" reflect the resources and ideals underpinning the dominant culture dictated by professional socio-economic class (Bourdieu 1984). According to sport anthropologist and marathon runner Charles Prebish, like religion, a sport is both reflective of the dominant culture and supports the maintenance of the social status quo over time as it becomes commoditized and institutionalized (Prebish 1993). Individual achievement, self-discipline, sacrifice and unremitting work using ones "God-given ability as a way of glorifying God" is a core

Protestant value that has dominated American culture since this country began (Prebish 1993:100).

Mastering fatigue and hunger, many triathletes and marathon or ultra runners wake up “dark-thirty” (a term meaning “before dawn” according to one of my Ironman triathlete informants) each morning in order to get in an early morning run, bike ride or Master’s swim workout before they go to work. Again denying their hunger pangs they may skip the 12 o’clock lunch break with their co-workers in order catch a noon workout and then snack alone at their desks later (Appendix A: 18; Appendix B: 18).

***Scientific research is authority on the food ways and the quest for self-improvement***

Triathletes and marathoners most often cite scientific research to support their eating habits. When asked, “What is the most important factor in choosing your food?” “health and athletic performance benefits” was the most common response for both triathletes (70%) and marathon (34%) (Appendix A: 14; Appendix B:14).

Science is upheld as the ultimate authority in their food choices according to 92% of the surveyed triathletes who answered “yes” to the question if their athletic performance would improve with “scientifically advanced equipment, training aids or nutrition products.” (Appendix A:15) Slightly less marathon runners, 83% , said “yes” to that question (Appendix B:15).

None of the triathletes surveyed chose “low cost” as the most important factor in their food choices (Appendix A:14) and only 1% of the surveyed marathon and ultra runners did so (Appendix B:14).

The surveyed athletes responses are congruent with the dominant American cultural and the sports nutritionist view of the importance of basing one’s diet on

nutritional guidelines that are based on scientific research in maintaining a healthy lifestyle (Hab 2008; USDA 2008; Maughan 2002, Ryan 2007). In my secondary research, articles and papers written by athletes, coaches, sports editors, exercise physiologists and sports nutrition experts seem to conceptualize the human body scientifically as a “bio-machine” and perceive food as a fuel for the body machine (Applegate 2006, Burke 2007, Fitzgerald 2006, Maughan 2002, Ryan 2007).

### ***Food marketing***

As sports mature they tend to become more rule-bound and commercialized (Giulianotti 2005). Much of what these athletes eat is based on marketing messages of food companies’ capitalizing on the commercialization of the sports of triathlon and marathon running. According to anthropologist Sidney Mintz, who connects the influence of food production over food consumption in the *Sweetness and Power*, “we are *made* more and more into what we eat, whenever forces we have no control over persuade us that our consumption and our identity are linked” (Mintz 1985: 211).

Energy bar, beverage and gel manufacturers foster the belief that their products are superior and science-based sources of fuel for endurance athletes. They do this with the symbolic words and images present on their packaging that resonates with a triathlete or marathon runner’s identity as healthy, strong and educated. Below is a review of some energy gel products’ packaging laden with symbolic terms and graphics that aid the perception that their brands are high-quality sources of racing fuel backed by science:

- Hammer Gel: “Hammer” connotes a hard steel tool for pounding nail, “Rapid Energy Fuel” emphasizes the mechanistic bio-medical view of the human body with power and speed; packaging artwork is of a bike crank

stylized to look like electricity (power) shooting from it. Using cyclist lingo, “to hammer on the bike” means to go very fast with extreme effort.

- Cliff Shot: “Shot” connotes a fast bullet projectile shooting from a weapon; Cliff Shot is named for the company founder’s dog and a wall climb for a hard core climber; the packaging also includes the words “90% organic entirely natural” to emphasize its purity and healthfulness.
- PowerBar Gel: “Power” means power and energy obviously, and the word “gel” sounds more athletic than alternatives such as “pudding”; however this company goes a step further towards emphasizing its science-based authority with “C2 Max higher octane carb blend.” “C2 Max” is a play on the term “VO<sub>2</sub>” max—an expensive aerobic test for elite endurance to determine the upper limit of their performance (Maughan 2002).
- Gu Roctane: “Gu” is similar to “gel” as a descriptor and doesn’t have the sweet leisurely connotations as “pudding”. “Roctane” seems to be a made up word that connotes “rock”—a very hard and inert substance that doesn’t deteriorate with time. The package emphasizes this symbolism with the words “Race with the Roc”.

### ***Body culture and “Gaunt is beautiful”***

My field research at the triathlon and marathon races confirmed my suspicions that the bodies of endurance athletes such as marathon runners and triathletes are embodiments of their culture as their daily training and eating regimes inevitably sculpt their bodies in distinctive ways. This was confirmed by my review of the advertising and articles in three popular magazines for these sports: *Triathlete*, *Runner’s World*, and

*Marathon and Beyond*. As Dr. Jason Friedman writes in *Marathon and Beyond Magazine* and quoting the author of the novel *Once a Runner*, “‘Gaunt is beautiful,’ and we agreed” (Friedman 2008).

The appearance of one’s body is primarily culturally determined according to Susan Brownell who studied internationally ranked female gymnasts in China (Brownell 2000). According to Pierre Bourdieu, “the most sought after bodily properties, slimness, beauty etc.) are not randomly distributed among the classes..” and are embodied bourgeoisie aspirations to appear elite (Bourdieu 1984:207). However, when I asked in my surveys, “An athletic, lean and tanned body is essential for achieving my goals and mirrors my values,” 63% of surveyed triathletes (Appendix A:7) and 62% (Appendix B:7) of surveyed marathoners responded “False” to this question. If having a slender and muscular body is goal and an essential part of one’s identity in these sport cultures, then most of my surveyed athletes either are not aware of it or don’t admit to it.

Having the desire for self-improvement, the aesthetic discipline to regulate their diet and the means to do the daily practice of being a triathlete or marathon runner are reflective of the participants’ relatively privileged middle class position and attitudes (Bourdieu 1984:213). According to Pierre Bourdieu, one’s class position is revealed by more than economic capital but is also conveyed by one’s cultural capital that includes one’s ability to participate in a leisure activity and to appreciate certain sports over others (Bourdieu 1984:211).

### ***Individualism, asceticism and the right to happiness***

The sports of triathlon and marathon running both reflect the dominant individualistic culture in the United States where pursuing happiness is a right.

(Csikszentmihalyi 1990) According to my triathlete and runner informants' responses, the reason why they live this way is for self-improvement (Appendix A: 3; Appendix B: 3)--with the exception of only 2 of the 133 the survey respondents. The sports of triathlon and marathon running also profoundly reflect the Protestant value system that has dominated American culture since America's beginning. According to anthropologist and marathon runner Charles Prebish, the value orientations underlying individual competitive sports such as triathlon and marathon running are "more or less secularized versions of the core values of Protestantism" (Prebish 1993:97). The assumptions held by the Calvinist doctrine of Protestantism, as interpreted by sociologist Max Weber in his influential book "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism", is cited by Prebish to be nearly identical to the values held by marathon runners (Prebish 1993:98). A marathon runner's disciplined diet and daily training regime, his "hard work", is believed to be a necessary part of his success. To the Calvinists: "Work per se was exalted; indeed, it was sacred. The clearest manifestation of being chosen by God was success in one's work." (Prebish 1993:98) This individual drive for success ("Winning is everything"), self-discipline ("No pain, no gain") and hard work ("God helps those who help themselves.") are some of the most valued qualities in an athlete—and are the original tenants of Protestantism (Prebish 1993:99). According to Prebish this congruency between the Protestant religion and individual competitive sports in the United States is not coincidental. Like religion, a sport is both reflective of the dominant culture and supports the maintenance of the social status quo over time as it becomes commercialized and institutionalized (Prebish 1993:101).

The rules and strict codes of behavior, dress and ritual for a sport often reinforce

class divisions and may create financial barriers to participation according to anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1984:212). Bourdieu mentions the high membership fees, strict dress codes and rules enforced at private tennis clubs that effectively keep out the masses and reserve participation in these sports at these exclusive venues for the elite few. Bourdieu avows that tennis played in a municipal club with non-traditional attire of swim-trunks and running shoes, for example, is “indeed another tennis, both in the way it’s played and in the satisfaction it gives” (Bourdieu 1984:212).

Racing in a long-distance triathlon or ultra race *without* consuming expensive and processed packaged-for-convenience carbohydrate supplements is a different kind of race. In the old days before endurance food supplements, Ironman triathletes such as Dave Scott relied on a support crew who carried his rack of 10 bananas while he raced (Scott 2008). The modern Ironman triathletes now must carry their own energy supplements and depend on their special needs bags to carry them for hours of bike racing. Consuming raw fruit such as bananas instead of the triathlete-marketed packaged food supplements of energy gels and carbohydrate replacement drinks, pegs one as an amateur according to several of my interviews with my informant triathletes. These items are more than status markers however. Not using them puts one at a material disadvantage when racing long distances according to my interviewed informants.

## **Conclusion**

The deliberative and structured food ways of triathletes and marathon runners are a significant element of cultural behavior. The food ways are a product of the athletes training schedules and physical demands, true, but they are also products of the athletes’ belief in the supremacy of science and their position in the economic system.

“All strictly health-orientated practices such as walking and jogging” are in the “ascetic dispositions of upwardly mobile individuals who are prepared to find satisfaction in effort itself and to take the deferred gratifications of their present sacrifice at face value” (Bourdieu 1984:214).

From reviewing the material culture of the typical triathlete’s or marathon runner’s diet, it became clear to me that food was considered more as a “fuel” for the “body machine.” Also, science in the form of sports nutrition articles and scientific sounding food packaging claims, seems to be the authority dictating much of the foodways of triathletes and marathon runners (Leslie 2001) and eating certain foods before races where one of several “pre-race rituals” practiced by most triathletes and marathoners. Meals and snacks are considered more as a means to an end (Appendix A: 22; Appendix B: 22) with the end being health and an optimal race performance. The exception to this is the post-race celebratory meals that clearly seem to function as a rite of reversal--a socially and culturally acceptable means for these athletes to relax their food rules and eat for taste, pleasure and commensality rather than for their individual health and athletic performance goals.

The food ways of triathletes and marathon runners are chosen for their functional attributes in helping them pursue their individual goals of self-improvement. The semiotics of their food choices, influenced by food marketing and the fitness trend, are at the same time, symbolically maintaining their self-identity as being members of these sport cultures--along with their daily practice of workouts, pre- and post-racing rituals and material culture.

## Appendix A: Foodways Survey for Triathletes (*n*=29)

1. How many triathlons have you done (of any distance)? (29 answered)

3.4% (1)	None yet (zero)
6.9% (2)	1
6.9% (1)	2-4
27.6% (8)	5-10
13.8% (4)	11-25
20.7% (6)	25-50
17.2% (5)	50-100
0.0% (0)	100-200
3.4% (1)	200+

2. How many Full Ironman distance triathlons or longer races have you finished?  
(29 answered)

62.1% (18)	None
20.7% (6)	1-2
10.3% (3)	3-5
0.0% (0)	6-9
6.9% (2)	10+

3. I train and race triathlons primarily for (choose best answer) (29 answered)

93.1% (27)	self-improvement
6.9% (2)	to help others (wish to support my team, work, country, family, charity or group)

4. Many of my current friends are triathletes. (29 answered)

58% (17)	True
41.4% (12)	False

5. Age (29 answered)

0.0% (0)	Under 20
10.3% (3)	20-29
27.6% (8)	30-39
31.0% (9)	40-49
24.1% (7)	50-59
6.9% (2)	60-69
0.0% (0)	70-79
0.0% (0)	80+

6. Gender (29 answered)

31.0% (9) Male  
69.0% (20) Female

7. An athletic, lean and tanned body is essential for achieving my goals and mirrors my values. (29 answered)

37.9% (11) True  
62.1% (18) False

8. What do you do for a living? (25 answered)

0.0% (0) Student  
4.0% (1) Retired  
12.0% (3) Caregiver or homemaker  
(of your own children or elderly parents)  
84.0% (21) Work or profession (fill in below):

About 57% of the respondents who work are employed as professionals such as accountants, medical doctors, engineers, and teachers.

9. Annual Household Income (28 answered)

3.6% (1) 0-\$40,000  
42.9% (12) \$40,000-\$80,000  
35.7% (10) \$80,000-\$120,000  
3.6% (1) \$120,000-\$160,000  
3.6% (1) \$160,000-\$200,000  
3.6% (1) \$200,000-\$240,000  
7.1% (2) \$240,000 +

54% of the triathletes had over \$80,000 in household income  
18% of the triathletes had over \$120,000 in household income.

10. Highest level of education (28 answered)

0.0% (0) High School  
14.3% (4) AA or some college  
53.6% (15) Bachelor's degree  
14.3% (4) Some graduate study or certification  
17.9% (5) Master's degree  
0.0% (0) Doctorial in law degree  
0.0% (0) Medical doctor, Ph. D, other doctorate degree

11. Do you train and race on your own or with friends? (28 answered)

35.7% (10) Alone (I train and race mostly on my own)

64.3% (18) Communal (I train and race with friends or family)

12. On a good training day, about how many times do you work out physically? (28 answered)

17.9% (5) 1 time or activity  
71.4% (20) 2 times or activities  
3.6% (1) 3 times or activities  
7.1% (2) 4 or more times or activities

13. How many hours per week do you normally physically workout (during race season or when actively training)? (20 answered)

Average: 14.2 hours  
Men's average (5): 14.8 hours  
Women's average (15): 13.5 hours

14. I can improve my race times and/or my performance with scientifically advanced equipment, training research, training aides, private coaching or nutrition products. (28 answered)

92.9% (26) True  
7.1% (2) False

15. Why do you eat what you eat? For example, what is the most important factor in choosing your food? (27 answered)

70.4% (19) Nutrition, health and/or athletic performance benefit  
11.1% (3) Convenience, ease of preparation or availability  
0.0% (0) Low calorie  
0.0% (0) Low cost  
0.0% (0) Habit or tradition  
18.5% (5) Fine ingredients and preparation, excellent quality and taste  
0.0% (0) Sustainability, organic, and/or animals rights factors

16. Where did did you get most of your current knowledge and beliefs about nutrition? (Check all answers that apply.) (27 answered)

14.8% (4) My parents or other family members  
0.0% (0) My religious, spiritual or moral beliefs  
0.0% (0) Environmental, sustainability and animal rights information  
44.4% (12) Written sports nutrition and scientific research information  
11.1% (3) Trial and error  
22.2% (6) Word-of-mouth from friends, athletes or coaches  
7.4% (2) Other

17. Where do you frequently eat or snack (check all that apply) (27 answered)

- 88.9% (24) Home
- 14.8% (4) In the car
- 18.5% (5) On my bike
- 18.5% (5) Restaurant/deli/fast-food place
- 48.1% (13) Work
- 3.7% (1) Fitness center, park, pool, beach or trail

18. When do you normally eat? Please check each approximate hour that you normally consume calories as a food or a beverage. (27 answered)

0.0% (0)	1 AM	25.9% (7)	1 PM
0.0% (0)	2 AM	22.2% (6)	2 PM
0.0% (0)	3 AM	37.0% (10)	3 PM
3.7% (1)	4 AM	29.6% (8)	4 PM
0.0% (0)	5 AM	3.7% (1)	5 PM
14.8% (4)	6 AM	33.3% (9)	6 PM
55.6% (15)	7 AM	59.3% (16)	7 PM
25.9% (7)	8 AM	14.8% (4)	8 PM
14.8% (4)	9 AM	0.0% (0)	9 PM
40.7% (11)	10 AM	3.7% (1)	10 PM
14.8% (4)	11 AM	0.0% (0)	11 PM
59.3% (16)	Noon	0.0% (0)	Midnight

19. How often do you eat (consume calories as a food or a beverage)? (27 answered)

- 0.0% (0) 1-2 times a day
- 7.4% (2) 3 times a day
- 40.7% (11) 4 times a day
- 44.4% (12) 5 times a day
- 3.7% (1) 7 times a day
- 3.7% (1) 8 + times a day

20. Do you normally prepare most of your food or do you buy it pre-made or packaged? (27 answered)

- 66.7 % (18) Make it or eat it un-prepared (raw)
- 33.3% (9) Buy it prepared or packaged

21. How regularly do you consume the items listed below? (25-26 answered)

	Never	Sometimes	Often
Energy or nutrition bars	11.5% (3)	34.5% (9)	53.8% (14)
Energy or sport drinks	24.0% (6)	36.0% (9)	40.0% (10)
Energy gels	28.0% (7)	40.0% (10)	32.0% (8)

Vitamin/mineral supplements	7.7% (2)	42.3% (11)	50.0% (13)
Caffeine (coffee, tea, etc.)	4.0% (1)	40.0% (10)	56.0% (15)
Low alcoholic beverages (beer/wine)	8.0% (2)	76.0% (19)	12.0% (3)
High alcoholic beverages (shots/mixed drinks)	68.0% (17)	28.0% (7)	0.0% (0)
Anti-inflammatories (Advil, Motrin, etc.)	20.0% (4)	68.0% (17)	12.0% (3)
Electrolyte replacement pills	54.2% (13)	8.3% (2)	37.5% (9)
Fast-food or take out	54.2% (13)	41.7% (10)	4.2% (1)
Restaurant food	4.0% (1)	88.0% (22)	8.0% (2)
Home cooking	0.0% (0)	7.7% (2)	92.3% (24)

22. Do you eat to train and race? Or, do you train and race so you can eat what you want? (27 answered)

- 51.9% (14) I eat to train and race better.
- 48.1% (13) I train and race so I can eat what I want.

23. Night before an important race: Do you eat a certain food, food category or supplement the day before an important race? If so, please explain. (25 answered)

Only one of the twenty-five respondents said that they didn't eat anything special the night (or 2-3 nights) before an important race. The other twenty-four respondents to the triathlete foodways survey mentioned eating special foods such as these: high carbohydrate foods or "carbs" such as pasta, rice, potatoes and moderate amounts of foods that are not spicy and are easy to digest. My triathlete informants told me that they try to eat the same foods before a race so as to better their chances for a good race.

24. Race morning: What do you normally ingest before an important race? How long before the race? (23 answered)

Typical "Race Morning" foods eaten by triathletes were: energy bars, bananas, oatmeal, Gatorade, water, bagels, peanut butter and honey (or jelly) sandwiches. The triathletes were pretty precise not only what food was eaten, but the quantities eaten and the period of time they ate before the race start. A typical response was this one: "1/2 banana, 1/2 energy bar; coffee; energy drink. 2-3 hours before; energy drink right before race."

25. During a race: What do you normally consume while racing? (23 answered)

The triathletes' "During Racing" foods most commonly mentioned were packaged carbohydrate supplements such as energy gels, energy beverages and

energy bars such as PowerBar. A typical response was this one: “I keep hydrated with Cytomax and water. Half Ironman=12 gels, Ironman=12 gels, Half Marathon=4 gels. I take a couple of PowerBars on the bike for the half and full Ironman. Ironman I always take a couple of Hostess fruit pies and a package of fig Newtons.”

26. Celebrating after a race: What do you normally consume the evening after you finish an important race? Is it different than your pre-race diet? Explain please. (18 answered)

The triathletes I surveyed wrote responses such as these:

- “anything/everything and beer”
- “love burritos and margaritas!”
- “French fries, burger, salty foods. Wine or beer. Treat foods.”
- “whatever I'm craving at the time, frequently something full of fat and salt (like pizza) after a long race.”
- “A big fat steak!”

27. Please name some "bad foods". For example what foods and/or beverages are bad for you and may hinder you achieving your athletic, health or philosophical goals if consumed too often? (24 answered)

Representative responses of “bad foods” for triathletes:

- “simple carbs, alcohol, processed food”
- “Alcohol, preservative laden foods, ice cream”
- “fried foods, lots of meat, lots of alcohol, soda!”
- “CHOCOLATE, COFFEE, SUGARS, STARCH”
- “anything with fake sugars desserts fast food of any kind”

28. Please name some "good foods". For example what foods and/or beverages are good for you and may help you achieve your athletic, health and philosophical goals? (24 answered)

Representative responses of “good foods” for triathletes:

- “carbohydrate foods like bagels, oatmeal, energy gels, bars like PowerBar.”
- “I find whole foods are best and I also try and avoid a lot of dairy ...”
- “high carbohydrate foods like bagels, oatmeal, energy gels, bars like PowerBar”.
- “fruit and vegetables and juices. Yams/sweet potatoes for high carb content.”
- “WHOLE GRAIN BREAD, BANANAS, PASTA”

END OF FOODWAYS OF TRIATHLETES SURVEY

## Appendix B: Foodways Survey for Marathon Runners (n=117)

1. How many marathons or ultras (races over 26.2 miles) have you finished? (117 answered)

6.8% (8)	None yet (training for my first!)
5.1% (6)	1
15.4% (18)	2-4
22.2% (26)	5-10
22.2% (26)	11-20
18.8% (22)	21-50
4.3% (5)	51-100
5.1% (6)	100+

2. Based on your training and racing, what would you call yourself if asked? (117 answered)

20.5 % (24)	Marathon runner
43.6% (51)	Ultra runner (runs distances longer than the 26.2 mile marathon)
23.9% (28)	Runner
3.4% (4)	Formerly competitive runner
6.8% (8)	An athletic person
1.8% (2)	Other

3. Most of the time I train for, and sometimes race in, marathons primarily for (choose best answer) (115 answered)

98.3 % (113)	self-improvement
1.7% (2)	to help others (wish to support my team, work, country, family, charity or group)

4. Many of my current friends are runners. (117 answered)

79.5% (93)	True
20.5% (24)	False

5. Age (114 answered)

0.0% (0)	Under 20
8.8% (10)	20-29
27.2% (31)	30-39
32.5% (37)	40-49
23.7% (27)	50-59
6.1% (7)	60-69
0.9% (1)	70-79

0.9% (1) 80+

6. Gender (113 answered)

52.2% (59) Male  
47.8% (54) Female

7. An athletic, lean and tanned body is essential for achieving my goals and mirrors my values. (113 answered)

33.6% (38) True  
66.4% (75) False

8. What do you do for a living? (111 answered)

5.4% (6) Student  
8.1% (9) Retired  
5.4% (6) Caregiver or homemaker  
(of your own children or elderly parents)  
81.1% (94) Work or profession (fill in below)

55% of those who work were professionals such as attorneys, accountants, scientists, teachers, physicians, engineers, writers, and managers.

8. Annual Household Income (110 answered)

10.9% (12) 0-\$40,000  
32.7% (36) \$40,000-\$80,000  
21.8% (24) \$80,000-\$120,000  
20.0% (22) \$120,000-\$160,000  
8.2% (9) \$160,000-\$200,000  
3.6% (4) \$200,000-\$240,000  
2.7% (3) \$240,000 +

56% of the runners had a household income of \$80, 000+  
35% of the runners had a household income of \$120,000+

10. Highest level of education (115 answered)

1.7% (2) High School  
10.4% (12) AA or some college  
37.4% (43) Bachelor's degree  
11.3% (13) Some graduate study or certification  
25.2% (29) Master's degree  
5.2% (6) Doctorial in law degree  
8.7% (10) Medical doctor, Ph. D, other doctorate degree

92% of the runners held a bachelors degree or higher.

11. Do you train and race on your own or with friends mostly? (112 answered)

- 51.8% (58) Alone (I train and race mostly on my own)
- 48.2% (54) Communal (I train and race with friends or family)

12. On a good training day, about how many times do you work out physically? (115 answered)

- 54.8 (63) 1 time or activity
- 39.1% (45) 2 times or activities
- 3.5% (4) 3-4 times or activities
- 2.6% (3) 5 or more times or activities

13. How many hours per week do you normally physically workout (during race season or when actively training)? (111 answered)

- Average: 11.6 hours
- Men's average (57): 11.7 hours
- Women's average (52): 11.5 hours

14. I can improve my race times and/or my performance with scientifically advanced equipment, training research, training aides, or nutrition products. (115 answered)

- 84.3% (97) True
- 15.7% (18) False

15. Why do you eat what you eat? For example, what is the most important factor in choosing your food? (111 answered)

- 34.2% (38) Nutrition, health and/or athletic performance benefit (Females responded higher: 40%, than males 29%)
- 21.6% (24) Convenience, ease of preparation or availability (males responded a higher percentage with 31%)
- 8.1% (9) Low calorie (females responded higher: 14%, than males 4%)
- 0.9% (1) Low cost
- 9.9% (11) Habit or tradition
- 14.4% (16) Fine ingredients and preparation, excellent quality and taste
- 10.8% (12) Sustainability, organic, and/or animals rights factors

16. Where did did you get most of your current knowledge and beliefs about nutrition? (Check all answers that apply.) (110 answered)

- 5.5% (6) My parents or other family members

- 0.9% (1) My religious, spiritual or moral beliefs
- 7.3% (8) Environmental, sustainability and animal rights information
- 38.2% (42) Written sports nutrition and scientific research information
- 25.5% (28) Trial and error
- 13.6% (15) Word-of-mouth from friends, athletes or coaches
- 9.1% (10) Other

17. Where do you frequently eat or snack (check all that apply) (111 answered)

- 86.5% (96) Home
- 22.5% (25) In the car
- 3.6% (4) On my bike
- 26.1% (29) Restaurant/deli/fast-food place
- 59.5% (66) Work
- 5.4% (6) Fitness center, park, pool, beach or trail

18. When do you normally eat? Please check each approximate hour that you normally consume calories as a food or a beverage. (111 answered)

- |            |       |            |          |
|------------|-------|------------|----------|
| 0.0% (0)   | 1 AM  | 32.4% (36) | 1 PM     |
| 0.9% (1)   | 2 AM  | 18.9% (21) | 2 PM     |
| 0.0% (0)   | 3 AM  | 28.8% (32) | 3 PM     |
| 1.8% (2)   | 4 AM  | 24.3% (27) | 4 PM     |
| 6.3% (7)   | 5 AM  | 16.2% (18) | 5 PM     |
| 15.3% (17) | 6 AM  | 36.9% (41) | 6 PM     |
| 47.7% (53) | 7 AM  | 31.5% (35) | 7 PM     |
| 26.1% (29) | 8 AM  | 28.8% (32) | 8 PM     |
| 19.8% (22) | 9 AM  | 18.0% (20) | 9 PM     |
| 33.3% (37) | 10 AM | 8.1% (9)   | 10 PM    |
| 14.8% (20) | 11 AM | 2.7% (3)   | 11 PM    |
| 42.3% (47) | Noon  | 2.7% (3)   | Midnight |

19. How often do you eat (consume calories as a food or a beverage)? (109 answered)

- 4.6% (5) 1-2 times a day
- 15.6% (17) 3 times a day
- 23.9% (26) 4 times a day
- 36.7% (40) 5 times a day
- 16.5% (18) 7 times a day
- 2.8% (3) 8 + times a day

20. Do you normally prepare most of your food or do you buy it pre-made or packaged? (110 answered)

- 68.2 % (75) Make it or eat it un-prepared (raw)
- 31.8% (35) Buy it prepared or packaged

21. How regularly do you consume the items listed below? (108-110 answered)

	Never	Sometimes	Often
Energy or nutrition bars	15.6% (17)	56.9% (62)	27.5% (30)
Energy or sport drinks	12.8% (14)	37.6% (41)	49.5% (54)
Energy gels	17.3% (19)	37.3% (41)	45.5% (50)
Vitamin/mineral supplements	21.1% (23)	26.6% (29)	52.3% (57)
Caffeine (coffee, tea, etc.)	10.0% (11)	20.9% (23)	69.1% (76)
Low alcoholic beverages (beer/wine)	22.7% (25)	53.6% (59)	23.6% (26)
High alcoholic beverages (shots/mixed drinks)	65.7% (71)	31.5% (34)	2.8% (3)
Anti-inflammatories (Advil, Motrin, etc.)	28.2% (31)	56.4% (63)	15.5% (17)
Electrolyte replacement pills	41.8% (46)	30% (33)	28.2% (31)
Fast-food or take out	42.2% (46)	50.5% (55)	7.3% (8)
Restaurant food	2.7% (3)	81.8% (90)	15.5% (17)
Home cooking	0.0% (0)	23.6% (26)	76.4% (84)

22. Do you eat to train and race? Or, do you train and race so you can eat what you want? (109 answered)

- 56.0% (61) I eat to train and race better.
- 44% (48) I train and race so I can eat what I want. (Females responded slightly higher percentage: 45%)

23. Night before an important race: Do you eat a certain food, food category or supplement the day before an important race? If so, please explain. (101 answered)

The percentage of runners who mentioned they eat “carbs”, “carbohydrates” or high complex carbohydrate foods such as pasta, potatoes and rice was 55%.

Only 24% (24) of the runners said that they don’t eat anything special for dinner the night before (or 2-3 nights before) an important race. The majority, 76% (76), of the runners said they do eat special foods before an important race and many of my informants mentioned that they “try to eat the same thing” before a race—to stick to what has worked in the past and to better their chances for a good race.

24. Race morning: What do you normally ingest before an important race? How long before the race? (103 answered)

The most commonly mentioned foods for breakfast on race day morning were: bagel, banana, oatmeal, PBJ sandwich, energy bar and toast. Most common beverages were: water, coffee and an energy drink. These foods were consumed

generally 1 ½ to 2 hours before race start. Triathletes usually said they tried to “eat the same thing” before an important race.

25. During a race: What do you normally consume while racing? (104 answered)

For shorter distances such as marathons, energy gels were most commonly eaten while running. For longer distances such as ultras, foods most commonly consumed while running were less processed: baked potatoes with salt, cookies, gels, bananas, jelly beans, oranges, grilled cheese sandwiches, gummy bears, pretzels, electrolyte pills and Fig Newton’s.

26. Celebrating after a race: What do you normally consume the evening after you finish an important race? Is it different than your pre-race diet? Explain please. (102 answered)

- “... ice cold Sierra Nevada beer, big salad, maybe even some nachos. Mostly salty cravings and fat cravings”
- “very much so, often I will eat a very large, fatty, high protein dinner, like a gigantic cheeseburger, or fried chicken.”
- “1 or 2 beers, some sort of red meat. This is very different from my normal diet which is primarily vegetarian.”
- “Beer and Mexican food. Spicy.”
- “BEER OR MARGARITAS... BECAUSE I CAN!!!”

27. Please name some "bad foods". For example what foods and/or beverages are bad for you and may hinder you achieving your athletic, health or philosophical goals if consumed too often? (105 answered)

Representative “bad foods” according to surveyed marathon runners are:

- “French fries, alcohol, sweets”
- “Anything that takes a while to digest or impedes digestion. I tend to avoid: meat, friend foods, especially fried meat, cheese, anything ‘heavy’”
- “Liquor, fast foods, red meat, salt, processed foods”
- “Too much fat”
- “Processed foods tell me ‘evil’. Although I used soda in ultras, just consuming them (my big vice) is not good at all. Dairy products...Eating too much puts on fat. Take out food. Coffee...”

28. Please name some "good foods". For example what foods and/or beverages are good for you and may help you achieve your athletic, health and philosophical goals? (104 answered)

Representative “good food” according to surveyed marathon runners are:

- “lean protein sources, wild salmon, grass-fed beef, veggies, fruits, nuts, fish oil, olive oil, coconut oil, protein supplements, maldextrin for recovery.”

- “whole grains, fruits & veg[ie]s”
- “skim milk, yogurt, whey protein, bananas, apples, berries, oatmeal, lots of broccoli, olive oil, chicken breast, salmon, ... wheat breads. Water”
- “Chicken, fruits, oatmeal, salads, beans, pasta, seltzer water! ... fresh, stuff that is lower in fat content, stuff that will fill me but not fatten me...”

END OF FOODWAYS OF MARATHON RUNNERS SURVEY

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