

Energy-dense, easily-digestible, nutrient-rich food: the secret to the diet of the world's best skiers

Local produce is central to the food eaten at the Finals as it keeps all its properties intact.

Bowls of antioxidant-rich fruit and toast with salmon, avocado and green sprouts are both favourites amongst skiers getting ready to compete.

The 'snow smoothie' has been created for the event, using energy-dense and potassium-rich banana as its main ingredient.

Andorra la Vella, 15th March 2019. What do the world's best skiers do to get their body ready in just a few minutes for a competition which is not just highly competitive, but also physically gruelling? **Diet is a key part of winning and making sure all those hours of training don't go to waste**, something **Marta Pons, adviser to the catering team at the Grandvalira World Cup Finals, knows well.** This dietitian and nutritionist is responsible for providing competitors with their nutritional requirements during the Finals. The idea has been to find food which excels in terms of **"energy, easy digestion and high concentration of nutrients"**.

The buffet for competitors is open from 7am to 2pm and is located at the Teams Hospitality building, at the summit of the Avet and Àguila slopes. Here, skiers can choose from a variety of options perfect for before and after competing. The area has different, clearly marked sections so the big names from the world of skiing know exactly what to go for. These include sections for **vitamin-dense food, food rich in healthy fats, energy-dense food and protein-rich food, the latter designed for post-competition recovery.**

What kinds of food are in each section? The vitamin-dense section mostly offers skiers fruit bowls high in antioxidants and vitamin C, as well as fresh fruit juice, including one with citrus fruits and ginger. The healthy fat section offers a range of high-quality extra virgin olive oils, nuts, seeds and avocado. The energy-dense section, "the biggest at the buffet", explains Marta Pons, has various types of bread, breakfast cereals, pulses and grains, such as wholegrain rice, fortified pasta, quinoa, etc. Lastly, the protein section offers food which is rich in both animal and vegetable-based protein (**this being designed also for vegetable and vegan competitors**), including cold meats, eggs, omelettes, tofu and humus.

In turn, a **dairy area completes the menu**, with all kinds plant milks (almond, coconut and oat) and a selection of locally sourced cheeses and yoghurts. There are also coffees, all kinds of quality teas, and sport drinks. All sugars are unrefined, such as panela, honey or pure cocoa.



The aim behind this breakfast range has been its **"functionality" rather than boosting the nutritional content**, choosing those that will give skiers a greater boost. **Àlex Orúe, the restaurant director at Grandvalira-Ensisa**, said that the feedback from skiers and the International Ski Federation (FIS) on this nutritional effort **has been "spectacular" and that Grandvalira has taken the catering offer "one step further,"** offering a comprehensive range of food and drinks so that skiers do not have any problems preparing their preferred, ideal menu.

The perfect breakfast before the race.

The ideal thing before going out to race, says Pons, would be for skiers to have **"a good breakfast two hours in advance," amounting to about 600 kcal.** It should include high-calorie foods such as bread and cereals combined with healthy fats, such as olive oil and avocados, and proteins, such as those found in salmon, tuna or Iberico ham. Fruit should also be a part of this breakfast, and, to round things off, a yoghurt topped with nuts. **A vitamin-rich, energy-giving and easy-to-digest breakfast, ideal for the type of physical exertion skiers will be called to do two hours later.**

Likewise, if a skier feels hungry shortly before the race, they should go for fast-digesting carbs, such as a fruit paste, a banana or nuts.

It is important to stress, says Pons, that this breakfast will supplement the nutritional diet the skiers will have been following the days before the race. **Skiing is an "explosive sport, which requires skiers to have the glycogen reserves in their muscles full," so it is essential for them to eat carbohydrates** – cereals, rice, pasta, legumes or fruit – on the days leading to the race.

They are, at the same time, sportspeople who do intense muscular work in the short space of time their particular event lasts. Accordingly, after they have finished **they need to recover by rehydrating properly and ensuring a proper intake of carbohydrates, proteins and vegetables.** Pulses are a good bet given the diversity of their nutrient content. To this end, the Teams Hospitality buffet showcases this food item at midday by way of lentil or humus salads.

As far as gender diet differences are concerned, **female athletes need to pay particular attention to foods rich in iron, as they are more prone to suffer from anaemia.** Indeed, iron "helps to carry oxygen in the blood", explains Pons, something you need to look after when competing at heights.

As a result of competing at heights, these are sportspeople who quite often have to cope with very low temperatures. **On very cold days, "there is no need to change your diet but you do need to aim to increase the temperature of" the dishes.** For instance, hot rice or pasta and, above all, consommés, which in addition to warming up are rich in mineral salts.

What skier diets must never contain are unhealthy foodstuffs which, apart from being difficult to digest, contain a lot of fat or excess sugar, such as fry-ups and processed foods.



The 'magic potion': the snow shake

With an eye on more complete recovery in those days after the competition, **a special drink has been created for the World Cup Finals. According to Pons the snow shake is both "restorative and energetic"**, consisting as it does of banana, coconut water and grated coconut. The banana is a potassium-rich energy food, which is perfectly complemented by the coconut, noted for its restorative properties given its high mineral salt content.

The snow shake has become one of the star items at the 2019 Finals, not to mention the preferred choice of sportspeople these days, **such as combo-bowls containing anti-oxidant fruit, yoghurt preparations with dried fruits and toast with salmon, avocado and sprouted seeds**, says Pons.

Above all, local products

The "racers look after themselves", adds Pons, even when they go for the sweet options, which include **homemade banana and nut cake as well as pancakes with honey**.

Several of these recipes are made with **local and ecological products**, as "their vitamin content is higher" and, because they have undergone less processing, they are also more digestive. The selection of products for the racers has been coordinated between Pons and the operational chef of Grandvalira-Soldeu El Tarter, Xavi Solé.

It should be noted that the nutritional balance of these Finals **has also been taken into account in the meals that are prepared for volunteers, special bodies and journalists**.

Download photos and video here: http://bit.ly/DIET_NUTRITIONIST_WCF19

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