



BUILT FOR THE BADGE

Women's Fitness, Nutrition & Performance Guide

PRACTICAL EDUCATION FOR

LAW ENFORCEMENT | WOMEN | PUBLIC SAFETY

CONTACT

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ABOUT KIM CAIRNS, CN, M.ED



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Kim Cairns is a functional nutritionist, health educator, and speaker who translates nutrition science into practical strategies for law enforcement, fire service, military personnel, and shift workers. With more than 300 training engagements across Arizona and a growing national presence, she is known for evidence-based education that improves energy, recovery, resilience, and long-term health without relying on perfection or restriction.

A former Division I softball catcher and experienced educator, Kim brings a performance mindset, strong classroom presence, and team-centered communication to every training. She holds a master's degree in Health Education, is certified in Functional Nutrition Coaching, and serves as the on-site nutritionist for HeartFit for Duty, a clinic dedicated to first responders and their families.

WHY THIS TRAINING MATTERS

Women in law enforcement face unique physical, nutritional and hormonal demands throughout their careers. Built for the Badge provides realistic strategies that support strength, energy, recovery and long-term health, without requiring perfect schedules, perfect meals or perfect training conditions.

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THE FOUNDATION FOR PERFORMANCE ON AND OFF DUTY

Consistent, balanced meals support strength, energy, focus, recovery and long-term health.

ADJUST THE PORTIONS TO MATCH THE DEMANDS OF THE DAY:

- High-demand shifts or intense training: Include more carbohydrates for energy and recovery.
- Regular-duty or strength-training days: Build a balanced plate with protein, carbohydrates, produce and healthy fats.
- Recovery or lower-activity days: Emphasize protein and vegetables while including a moderate portion of carbohydrates.

SUPPORT YOUR GUT

Gut health influences digestion, nutrient absorption, immune function and the connection between the brain and digestive system. Support it with:

- Fiber-rich fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains
- Probiotic foods such as yogurt, kefir, kimchi or sauerkraut
- Adequate fluids throughout the day
- A variety of minimally processed foods
- Increase fiber gradually if your current intake is low, particularly when working long shifts or wearing restrictive gear.

SUPPLEMENT WITH PURPOSE

- Supplements should fill a specific need, not replace consistent meals, hydration, sleep or recovery.

If using supplements:

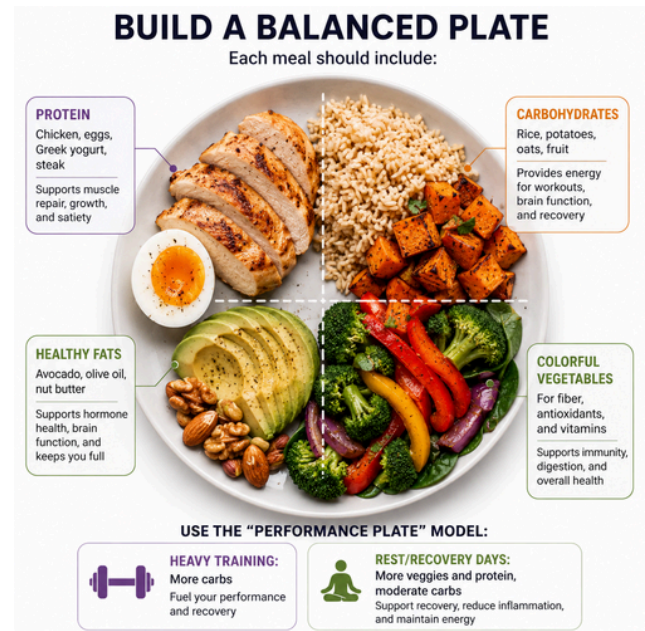
- Choose products tested by an independent organization such as NSF Certified for Sport or Informed Sport.
- Consider your health history, medications, laboratory results and individual needs.
- Common options may include creatine, collagen peptides, vitamin D, omega-3 fatty acids or magnesium.
- Discuss supplements with a qualified healthcare provider, especially during pregnancy, postpartum, perimenopause or when taking prescription medications.

EAT TO SUPPORT FOCUS AND MOOD

Nutrition affects concentration, mood and decision-making. Long periods without food, excessive caffeine and frequent reliance on highly processed foods may contribute to energy crashes, irritability or difficulty concentrating.

Support more consistent energy with:

- Protein at meals and snacks
- Fiber-rich carbohydrates
- Omega-3 fats from foods such as salmon, sardines, walnuts or chia seeds
- A reliable meal or snack packed for the shift
- Hydration before reaching for additional caffeine



EAT ENOUGH TO MEET THE DEMAND

Your body needs adequate fuel to train, work, recover and maintain long-term health. Consistently under-fueling may contribute to fatigue, reduced strength, poor recovery, menstrual-cycle changes and increased injury risk. When possible, avoid going an entire shift without eating. Build a system that includes regular meals, balanced snacks and at least one backup option for unpredictable calls or missed meal breaks. The goal is not a perfect schedule, it is having a plan when the schedule changes.

RECOVER FOR THE NEXT CALL

Recovery nutrition helps restore energy, support muscle repair and prepare the body to perform again. After intense training, aim to consume protein and carbohydrates within the next few hours, such as Greek yogurt with berries.

PRIORITIZE HYDRATION

Even mild dehydration can affect energy, concentration, physical performance and recovery. Begin the shift hydrated and drink consistently throughout your waking period.

Individual needs vary based on body size, heat, equipment, activity level and sweat rate. Increase fluids during intense training, outdoor assignments or prolonged heat exposure. Electrolytes may be helpful when sweating heavily or working for extended periods in the heat.

LET GO OF ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING

Consistency matters more than perfection. A missed workout, interrupted meal or less-than-ideal food choice does not erase your progress.

Create a realistic "floor" for difficult days:

- Carry one protein-rich backup snack.
- Keep water available.
- Eat a balanced meal when the opportunity returns.
- Resume your normal routine with the next choice.

Fueling properly as a first responder isn't just about performance, it's about supporting your overall health, recovery, mental clarity, and long-term goals both at work and home. As a LEO, your schedule is demanding, and your body requires consistent, high-quality fuel to meet the challenges of training, family, and everyday life. The following principles are designed to provide a clear, sustainable framework for making smart, effective nutrition choices.

RECOVERY, ADMINISTRATIVE OR LIGHT-TRAINING DAYS



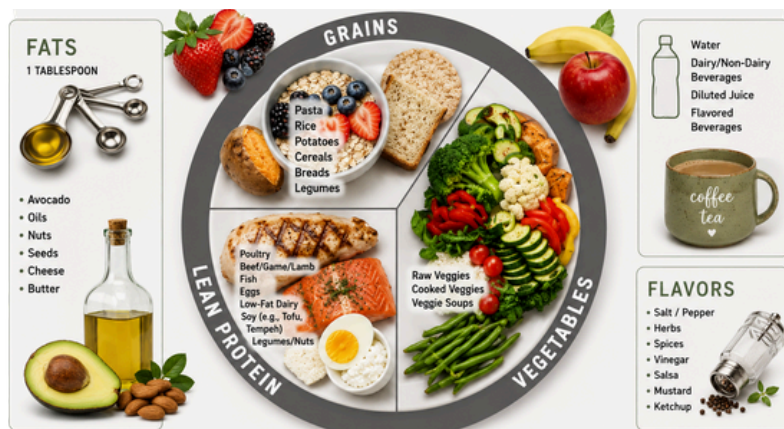
Recovery & Rest Days

Build your plate with:

- Protein: $\frac{1}{4}$ plate (4–6 oz chicken, beef, fish, eggs, Greek yogurt)
- Vegetables: $\frac{1}{2}$ plate
- Carbohydrates: $\frac{1}{4}$ plate ($\frac{1}{2}$ –1 cup rice, potatoes, fruit, oats)
- Healthy Fat: 1–2 tbsp (avocado, nuts, seeds, olive oil)

Focus on recovery and preparing your body for the next workout.

REGULAR DUTY AND STRENGTH-TRAINING DAYS



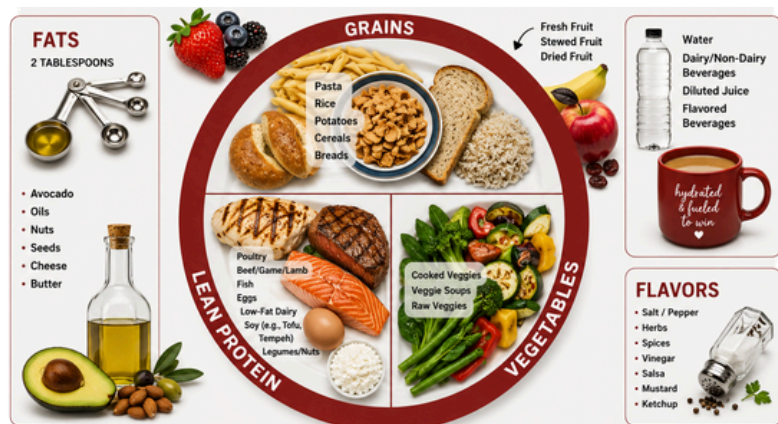
Shift & Strength Training Days

Build your plate with:

- Protein: $\frac{1}{4}$ plate (4–6 oz)
- Vegetables: $\frac{1}{3}$ plate
- Carbohydrates: $\frac{1}{3}$ plate (1–1½ cups rice, potatoes, pasta, oats, fruit)
- Healthy Fat: 1–2 tbsp

This is the plate most LEOs should focus on during the week.

ACADEMY, TACTICAL OR HIGH-INTENSITY TRAINING DAYS



High Intensity Training Days

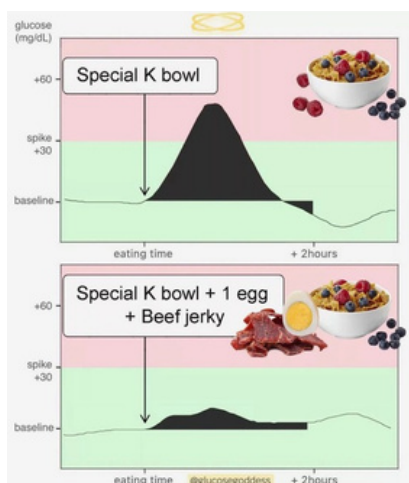
Build your plate with:

- Protein: $\frac{1}{4}$ plate (4–6 oz)
- Carbohydrates: $\frac{1}{2}$ plate (1½–2 cups rice, potatoes, pasta, fruit, oats)
- Vegetables: $\frac{1}{4}$ plate
- Healthy Fat: 1–2 tbsp

The harder you train, the more carbohydrates your body needs for energy, performance, and recovery.



Long stretches without food followed by large, highly processed meals can contribute to energy swings, irritability, cravings and difficulty concentrating. The goal is not perfectly controlled blood sugar, it is creating more predictable energy during unpredictable shifts.



Your Energy Floor

- Bring at least one protein-rich meal or snack.
- Carry an emergency food option in your patrol bag.
- Pair snacks with protein.
- Hydrate before relying on more caffeine.
- Take a brief post-meal walk when the shift allows.

HAVE A PLAN: Just like you plan out your family and shift, you should also prepare your nutrition. Pack snacks, bring a water bottle, and have a plan for meals throughout the day so you have the energy to perform your best.

BUILD A FOUNDATION: Food should do most of the heavy lifting. Focus on protein, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats, sleep, and hydration. Supplements can help fill gaps, but they should never replace good nutrition habits.

START YOUR DAY WITH PROTEIN: Begin your day with a protein-rich breakfast to support energy, focus, recovery, and muscle growth. Examples include eggs, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, protein oatmeal, or a smoothie.

ADD COLOR TO YOUR PLATE: Fruits and vegetables provide vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fiber that help support recovery, immune function, and overall health. Aim to include colorful foods at every meal. Example: blueberries + yogurt.

PAIR YOUR CARBS: Carbohydrates are important fuel for tactical athletes, but pairing them with protein and healthy fats helps provide longer-lasting energy. For example, pair an apple with peanut butter, crackers with turkey, or a banana with Greek yogurt.

FILL UP ON HIGH-QUALITY FOODS: Choose foods that keep you satisfied and energized, such as lean proteins, fruits, vegetables, potatoes, rice, oats, nuts, seeds, and dairy products. These foods provide more nutrition than highly processed snacks.

TAKE A 10 MIN WALK AFTER EATING: Going for a light walk after meals can help improve blood sugar regulation compared to sitting or lying down after lunch or dinner. After meals containing starches, sugar, or dessert, a short walk may help your body better regulate blood sugar levels.

RECOVER LIKE A TACTICAL ATHLETE: Recovery is where progress happens. Prioritize 6-8 hours of sleep, stay hydrated, fuel after workouts and shift, and make time for rest so your body can adapt and improve.

Hydration isn't just about water. Electrolytes like sodium and potassium are essential for nerve signaling, muscle function, and thermoregulation, all of which are mission-critical during shift. Sweat isn't just about losing water, it's about losing vital minerals. Without replacing electrolytes, even water alone won't fully restore your performance. Losing just 1 liter of sweat during workouts or during shift depletes energy reserves, making it essential to replenish electrolytes and glycogen to recharge your cells and stay mission-ready for the next call.

ARE ELECTROLYTES NECESSARY ON YOUR REST DAYS?

On off days when you're resting at home and not exposed to high heat or intense physical exertion, your need for supplemental electrolytes is typically much lower. That's because you're not losing significant amounts of sodium and fluids through sweat like you would during practice or competition. While staying hydrated with water is still important, loading up on electrolytes unnecessarily can actually lead to imbalances. Reserve focused electrolyte use for training days (especially before and after competition or heavy exertion) when your body needs to replenish key minerals like sodium, potassium, and magnesium to recover fully and prepare for the next day. Stick with your morning water, lemon, and salt drink, and consider using just ⅓ of a standard electrolyte packet to avoid overdoing it on rest days.

"PRIMING" HYDRATION DRINK

Starting your day with a ritual like this helps set a hydration habit, which can carry over into more consistent water intake throughout the day.



8-12oz room temp water + lemon + a pinch of celtic salt

HOMEMADE GATORADE RECIPE 4 cups of water or coconut water + 1/2 cup of fresh lemon, lime or orange juice + 1/4 cup of honey, agave nectar, or sugar (adjust to taste) + 1/4 teaspoon of salt (preferably sea salt or Himalayan salt) - Optional: 1/4 cup fruit juice for flavor

Mix Ingredients: In a large pitcher, combine the water, lemon juice, sweetener (honey, agave nectar, or sugar), and salt. If you're using additional fruit juice for flavor, add that too. Use a whisk or spoon to mix everything until the sweetener is completely dissolved. Taste the mixture and adjust the sweetness or saltiness according to your preference. If it's too tart, add a little more sweetener. Pour the Gatorade over ice in a glass, or store it in the fridge for later use. Store in a sealed container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

GOOD, BETTER, BEST ELECTROLYTES

 Good	• Grab & go sports drinks • Readily available and affordable • Sugar free options, but contains artificial sweeteners and dyes • Provides sodium and potassium <i>Use: Acceptable in a pinch, but not ideal for long term use</i>
 Better	• Higher sodium (ideal for heavy sweating) • More complete electrolyte profile • Less artificial ingredients • Liquid IV Includes glucose for faster absorption (great post fire) <i>Use: On high-heat days, post-fire calls, long shifts and workouts</i>
 Best	• Remond Re-Lyte, Salt Stick, and LMNT • Cleanest ingredients, no dyes or artificial sweeteners • Balanced minerals with trace elements for sustained energy and recovery <i>Use: Daily during shift work, post-call rehydration, or to replenish after heavy sweating</i>

EASY TRAINING DAYS

BREAKFAST

- Greek Yogurt Recovery Bowl: 1 cup vanilla Greek yogurt + ½ cup mixed berries + 1 tbsp chia seeds + 1 tbsp walnuts + cinnamon
- Veggie Egg Scramble: 2 eggs + ½ cup egg whites + 1 cup spinach + ½ cup mushrooms + ½ cup roasted sweet potatoes + ¼ avocado + sprinkle of cheese
- Protein Oatmeal: ½ cup oats + 1 scoop vanilla protein powder + ½ cup blueberries + 1 tbsp almond butter + cinnamon

LUNCH

- Chicken & Veggie Bowl: 5 oz grilled chicken cooked in olive oil + 1 cup roasted broccoli + 1 cup roasted carrots + ½ cup brown rice + 1 tbsp low sugar teriyaki sauce
- Turkey Wrap Plate: 1 whole wheat tortilla + 5 oz sliced turkey + lettuce + tomato + cucumber + ¼ avocado + side of bell peppers + carrots + 1 small apple
- Bento Box: 5 oz steak or roast beef (chopped) + cucumbers + tomatoes + bell peppers + ½ cup roasted chickpeas + 5 milk chocolate covered almonds

PROTEIN SHAKE

- Recovery Smoothie: 1 scoop vanilla protein powder + 1 cup milk + ½ banana + handful spinach + ice + 2.5g creatine + 1 scoop collagen peptides + 1 tsp ground turmeric + pinch of black pepper

SNACKS

- Cookie Dough Protein Bites: 1 cup oats + 1 scoop vanilla protein powder + ½ cup cashew butter + 2 tbsp maple syrup + 2 tbsp mini chocolate chips + pinch sea salt. Directions: Mix well, form into balls, and refrigerate.
- Peanut Butter Protein Bites: 1 cup oats + ½ cup natural peanut butter + 1 scoop vanilla or chocolate protein powder + 2 tbsp honey + 2 tbsp mini dark chocolate chips + 1–2 tbsp milk as needed. Directions: Mix well, form into balls, and refrigerate.
- PB&J Recovery Bites: 1 cup oats + ½ cup peanut butter + 1 scoop vanilla protein powder + 2 tbsp chia seeds + 2 tbsp freeze-dried strawberries + 2 tbsp honey. Directions: Mix well, form into balls, and refrigerate.

DINNER

- Salmon Recovery Plate: 5–6 oz salmon + 1 cup asparagus + side salad + 1 small sweet potato with grass fed butter and cinnamon
- Turkey Taco Bowl: 5 oz ground beef + lettuce + pico de gallo + bell peppers + ¼ avocado + ½ cup black beans + sour cream (Good Culture is my favorite brand!)
- Chicken Sheet Pan Dinner: 6 oz chicken breast + 1 cup roasted zucchini and green beans + ½ cup roasted potatoes + 1 tbsp olive oil

Recovery Day Focus

- **Sleep:** Aim for 8–10 hours per night. Sleep is when your body repairs muscle, restores energy, and adapts to training.
- **Balance Blood Sugar:** Build meals around protein, vegetables, healthy fats, and quality carbohydrates. Pair carbs with protein to support steady energy and recovery.
- **Reduce Added Sugar:** Too much added sugar can increase inflammation, energy crashes, and cravings. Choose whole-food carbohydrate sources most of the time.
- **Cut Off Caffeine Early:** Avoid caffeine 6–8 hours before bed to improve sleep quality and recovery.
- **Hydrate:** Aim for at least half your body weight in ounces of water daily.

MODERATE TRAINING DAYS

BREAKFAST

- Breakfast Burrito: 2 eggs + ½ cup egg whites + whole wheat tortilla + ½ cup roasted potatoes + salsa + ¼ cup cheese
- Athlete Yogurt Bowl: 1½ cups plain Greek yogurt + ½ cup low sugar granola + ½ cup berries + 1 tbsp peanut butter
- Grab-and-Go Starbucks Breakfast: Spinach Feta Wrap + banana + water

LUNCH

- Chipotle Athlete Bowl: Chicken + white rice + fajita veggies + pico de gallo + lettuce + guacamole
- Jersey Mike's Sub Meal: Turkey Provolone on wheat + extra veggies + apple + water
- On Shift Lunch Upgrade: Grilled chicken sandwich + side salad or veggies + fruit + handful of nuts

PROTEIN SHAKE

- Training Day Smoothie: 1 scoop protein powder + 1 cup milk + 1 banana + ½ cup frozen berries + handful spinach + ice

SNACKS

Gas Station Pick Up

- Fairlife Core Power shake + banana + trail mix
- Beef stick + protein shake + fruit

DINNER

- Chicken Rice Bowl: 6 oz grilled chicken + 1 cup rice + roasted vegetables + ¼ avocado + salsa
- Steak & Potato Plate: 6 oz steak + medium baked potato + side salad or other veggie + 1 tbsp olive oil dressing
- Pasta Night: 5 oz ground turkey or beef + 1½ cups pasta + marinara sauce + side salad + scoop of cottage cheese

Reminder for training days

- Training and strength days require fuel. Don't skip meals before or after a workout. Aim to eat protein every 3–4 hours and include carbohydrates to support energy, performance, and recovery. The goal isn't eating less, it's eating enough of the right foods to perform your best.

HARD TRAINING DAYS

BREAKFAST

- Game Day Oatmeal Bowl: 1 cup oats + 1 scoop vanilla protein powder + 1 banana + 1 tbsp peanut butter + cinnamon
- Tactical Athlete Breakfast Sandwich: 2 eggs + 2 slices turkey bacon + whole wheat English muffin + side of berries + 8 oz Fairlife milk
- Greek Yogurt Performance Bowl: 1½ cups plain Greek yogurt + 1 cup berries + ½ cup granola + 1 tbsp honey

LUNCH

- Chia Berry Almond Butter Sandwich: 2 slices whole grain bread + 2 tbsp almond butter + 1 tbsp chia seeds + sliced strawberries + drizzle honey + side Greek yogurt + banana
- Chipotle Performance Bowl: Chicken + double rice + fajita veggies + pico de gallo + lettuce + guacamole
- Turkey Athlete Sack Lunch: 2 slices whole grain bread + 5–6 oz turkey breast + lettuce + tomato + mustard + 1 slice cheese + 1 apple + almonds + string cheese

PROTEIN SHAKE

- Game Day Smoothie: 1 scoop protein powder + 1 banana + 1 cup milk + ½ cup frozen berries + 1 tbsp honey + ice

SNACKS

- **Performance Snack Ideas:** Banana + peanut butter, applesauce pouch + beef stick, graham crackers + string cheese, pretzels + turkey slices, rice cakes + almond butter + honey, granola bar + Greek yogurt, banana + Fairlife milk, toast + peanut butter + sliced banana.
- **Recovery Snack Ideas:** Protein shake + banana, chocolate milk + beef stick, Greek yogurt + berries, cottage cheese + pineapple, turkey sandwich, protein bar + fruit, Fairlife Core Power shake, overnight oats + protein powder.
- **Grab-and-Go Snack Ideas:** Trail mix + fruit, Chomps meat stick + applesauce pouch, RX Bar + banana, string cheese + crackers, pistachios + dried fruit, peanut butter sandwich, protein oatmeal cup, Greek yogurt drink, beef stick + apple, cottage cheese cup + berries, hard-boiled eggs + pretzels, Fairlife shake + granola bar, banana + handful of almonds, Greek yogurt + granola + berries, turkey roll-ups + crackers, apple + almond butter, cheese stick + grapes, protein waffle + peanut butter, Kodiak oatmeal cup + Fairlife shake.

DINNER

- Turkey Pasta Bowl: 6 oz lean ground turkey + 2 cups cooked pasta + marinara sauce + side salad with cucumbers and tomatoes + 1 tbsp parmesan cheese
- Chicken Teriyaki Rice Bowl: 6 oz grilled chicken + 1½–2 cups cooked rice in bone broth + steamed broccoli + shredded carrots + teriyaki sauce + sesame seeds
- Steak & Potato Dinner: 6 oz grilled steak + 1 large baked potato + roasted green beans + side salad + 1 tsp butter or olive oil

QUICK SNACK IDEAS

BUILT FOR THE BADGE

Not all processed food is bad, washing, freezing, cooking, canning, and packaging are all forms of processing. On shift, choose convenient foods that are:

1. Nutrient-dense: Provide protein, fiber, healthy fats, vitamins, or minerals.
2. Less ultra-processed: Contain recognizable ingredients with less added sugar and fewer unnecessary additives.



QUICK GRAB N GO PROTEIN



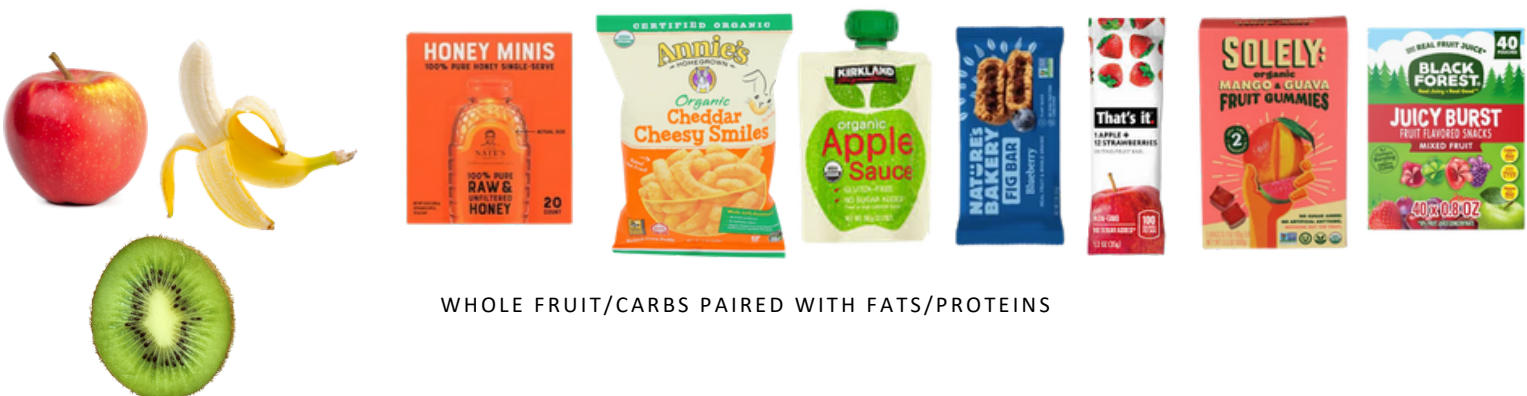
IN BETWEEN CALLS BRAIN FOOD (PROTEIN + FAT)



NUTRIENT DENSE SNACK TIME



QUICK BREAKFAST OPTIONS



WHOLE FRUIT/CARBS PAIRED WITH FATS/PROTEINS

Smoothie Prep Tip: Add fruit, greens, and other smoothie ingredients to individual freezer bags. Freeze them flat, then grab one, add your liquid and protein, and blend for a fast meal or snack.

HORMONE-BOOSTING SMOOTHIE

- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk
- ½ frozen banana
- 1 scoop whey or plant protein
- ½ avocado
- Cinnamon

BERRY BLAST

- ½ cup berries
- ½ cup Greek yogurt
- 1 scoop whey protein
- 1 tbsp peanut butter (no sugar)
- 1 scoop collagen
- 1 cup milk or nut milk

ORANGE CREAMSICLE

- Flesh of ½ large orange
- ½ frozen banana
- ½ cup frozen cauliflower rice
- ½ cup Greek yogurt
- 1 scoop vanilla whey
- 1 scoop collagen
- 1 cup 1% milk

CHOCOLATE SHAKE

- ½ frozen banana
- 1 Tbsp natural peanut butter
- 1 scoop chocolate whey
- 1 Tbsp cacao
- ½ cup Greek yogurt
- 1 cup almond milk

PUMPKIN SPICE

- 1 scoop vanilla whey protein
- ½ tsp pumpkin pie spice
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 Tbsp almond butter
- 1 cup milk or unsweetened nut milk
- Ice, if desired

GLORIOUS GREEN SMOOTHIE

- ½ cup frozen pineapple
- 1 handful spinach
- ¼ avocado
- 1.5 scoops vanilla whey protein
- 1 scoop collagen
- ½ cup almond milk + ½ cup water

MANGO SMOOTHIE

Great on shift or post workout, higher in carbs

- ½ cup frozen mango
- 1 handful spinach
- ¼ avocado
- 1 scoop vanilla or unflavored protein
- ½–1 cup unsweetened nut milk



Grab and go option or mix 1 scoop protein + water



My favorite collagen and whey protein options



non dairy