

The Best Food for Footballers

In the past, footballers might have sat down to a big fried breakfast – or even a roast dinner - before a football match. In the new era of professional football, the diet of modern players has been radically reformed. A healthy diet helps to prevent injuries and boost fitness.

The Wenger diet

Arsenal manager, Arsene Wenger, is known for his scientific approach to feeding his team. When he first came to the club in 1996, he immediately altered the players' dinner menus.

Sugar, red meat, chips, fried foods and dairy products were out. Vegetables, fish, chicken and plenty of water were definitely in.

Arsene goes even further and uses a 'pee chart' to measure the level of hydration of his players. Their first pee of the day is measured against a colour chart to make sure they are drinking enough water.

Pre-match spuds

French nutritionists heavily criticised the pre-match diet of the England players in Euro '96. Their menu of tomato soup, spaghetti Bolognese and toast was said to be more likely to produce wind than a win.

Potatoes, according to French scientists, make the best meal on the day of a game.



They contain glucides, which deliver a steady flow of muscular energy. They also contain useful vitamins. According to one piece of research, a player should consume 200-300 grams of potatoes, boiled for 20 minutes, exactly three hours before going on the pitch.

Post-match pints

The great sporting tradition of having a pint after football is a very bad idea. It actually impairs recovery from injury.

Footballers frequently lose up to seven pints of fluid during a match. This liquid needs to be replaced quickly so that sore joints and muscles can be repaired. This is known as 'rehydration'.

Alcohol is liquid, but the body only absorbs it slowly and it actually impedes rehydration. It is also a diuretic, so players lose more fluid in urine than they drink. So drinking alcohol after a match actually makes you more dehydrated.

Isotonic drinks are the best post-match pint of all. They contain small amounts of energy and salts which rehydrate the body quickly. They also provide calories to replace lost energy. Scientific studies have proved that these drinks greatly improve recovery from exercise.

Taken from "The Science of Football" by The BBC at
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/hottopics/football/index.shtml>
Please feel free to read the whole article.

This worksheet was created by Michael Gold for Lotus Sports Club
You can contact Michael at mike@lotussports.co.uk or on 07946 169 141