

Runners' Rules to Eat By

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Runner's World

If you're pretty sure your diet needs an overhaul (whose doesn't?), keep the following principles in mind. Once they become ingrained in your thinking, your food choices will improve automatically.

Quality:

Pay attention to the types of foods you eat. Are they the best quality? For fruits and vegetables, the most nutrient-packed are usually the most brightly colored. Think dark greens and bright oranges, yellows, and reds. For grains, the less processed, the better. Choose fat-free and low-fat dairy products. For meats, choose leaner cuts and smaller servings. And stock your cupboards with plenty of high-quality, nutrient-packed beans, nuts, and soy products.

Variety:

Try not to settle on the same foods over and over. Your repertoire of vegetables, for example, should not include the same four or five types every day. Branch out. For grains, move beyond wheat and rice to quinoa, barley, and millet. Try new fruits such as papaya, mango, kiwi, starfruit, or blood oranges.

Frequency:

As a runner, you need more food than the average sedentary person, so you should eat lighter meals every 3 to 4 hours. Each makeover diet contains snacks to help you maintain steady energy levels throughout the day, which helps with weight control as well.

Joy:

You should love the foods you eat. Don't eliminate the foods you love or force yourself to eat the foods you don't. Every nutrition plan has room for junk food, as long as it's the kind you love and not the kind you eat because it happens to be handy.

Adventure:

Making a change takes effort, but it's worth it. When you start a new eating plan, you'll experience different flavors and textures. Eating becomes more than something you do to pass the time or quiet a rumbling stomach. It becomes an adventure. So go ahead and experiment. Cook new recipes. Eat unfamiliar foods. Go to new restaurants. Congratulate yourself every time you move out of your comfort zone.