Most of us know about periodization of our running training program, whereby you break the year into four large segments and proceed through a series of steps within each that help you reach certain fitness goals.

In his excellent book *Food for Fitness*, Lance Armstrong trainer Chris Carmichael applies the principles of periodization to nutrition as well. Carmichael reasons that every phase of training ought to work in tandem with dietary changes supportive of them.

The largest segment divisions in periodization are called mesocycles, and they are each several months long. Within them are approximately one-month chunks known as macrocycles. Each macrocycle is composed of weeklong microcycles.

Different training periods require different fuel mixtures, and when the fuel matches the demands, you may reap huge rewards.

In this article, we’ll examine the first mesocycle of your training, known as the Foundation period.

In the roughly four-month long Foundation period, you are starting fresh from an off-season rest or are simply getting back to basics after a period of inactivity.

Regardless of how much you are currently eating, you can select a goal weight (as long as it is within reason), and assume the dietary requirements for the Foundation period of an athlete of that weight.

The Foundation period consists of moderate intensity exercise several times a week.

This means in the 40- to 65-percent range of maximal effort, perhaps starting with three times a week and working up to five times somewhere in the second or third month.

A good rule of thumb is to run at a pace that you can sustain for one hour, and not much more.

Carmichael divides his athletes into those exercising less than eight hours a week and those who do more than that.

Most of us probably fall into the former category, which puts us at the low end of the caloric spectrum he recommends for a given body weight.

Whatever your goal weight, the percentages of carbohydrate, healthy fats, and protein in the Foundation period diet are the same.

These percentages are: 65 percent carbs, 22 percent fat, and 13 percent protein. By counting the gram amounts of each of these nutrients rather than merely overall caloric intake, you will maximize your chances of meeting your training goals because you will be serving the exact right combination of nutrients daily to facilitate muscle repair, aerobic energy availability, and greater energy storage.

You need not keep a detailed food diary over the course of four months. But by taking the time to count both calories and these gram amounts in the initial week or two of your Foundation period, you’ll get a great feel for approximately how much
overall you ought to be eating, the portions of each nutrient, and when you should be eating.

If when you log your portions you find a dietary overhaul necessary, Carmichael recommends changing the composition of your diet gradually to ensure the change sticks.

Try focusing on modifying breakfast one week, lunch the next (while sticking to the breakfast change as well!). Take two weeks to tackle and sustain the breakfast change if you find it necessary before moving on to lunch.

Table 1 represents total calories and gram amounts for nutrients in the Foundation period for a 180-lb. runner on a given training day. On off days, reduce your calorie intake by 10 to 15 percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calories</th>
<th>Carbs - 65 %</th>
<th>Fat - 22 %</th>
<th>Protein - 13 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>450 g</td>
<td>65 g</td>
<td>90 g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 represents total calories and gram amounts for nutrients in the Foundation period for a 150-lb. runner on a given training day. On off days, reduce your calorie intake by 10 to 15 percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calories</th>
<th>Carbs - 65 %</th>
<th>Fat - 22 %</th>
<th>Protein - 13 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>375 g</td>
<td>55 g</td>
<td>75 g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 represents total calories and gram amounts for nutrients in the Foundation period for a 120-lb. runner on a given training day. On off days, reduce your calorie intake by 10 to 15 percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calories</th>
<th>Carbs - 65 %</th>
<th>Fat - 22 %</th>
<th>Protein - 13 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>300 g</td>
<td>45 g</td>
<td>60 g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most food labels contain gram information, but there are many reliable sources online to help you figure out the exact caloric and carb, fat, and protein content of almost any food you could imagine.

The government has many foods listed in the USDA Nutrient Database, at [http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/search](http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/search). If you can’t find it here, a simple Google search of your favorite foods usually lists the most reliable nutrition information in descending order.

It might be a good idea to cross reference a few sites. Don’t be surprised if in your research you learn that you are close to the 65-22-13 values already.

Athletes have a way of self-regulating their dietary needs, in the same way that we learn to perceive exertion and monitor pain during workouts, separating “good” pain from “bad” pain.

As exercise intensity increases, so does the amount of carbohydrate you burn. In later issues, we’ll examine the following diets:

- Three-month Preparation period
- The three-month Specialization period
- Two-month Transition period

Adjust the percentages of these vital nutrients to keep you fuel efficient and working toward a winning competitive season.


The World's Leading Sport Resource Centre www.sirc.ca