THE MARATHONER'S CARB-LOADING PLAYBOOK

Optimized, Low-Fiber Fueling Strategies for Peak Race-Day Glycogen

Why Carb-Loading Works (And How to Do It Right)

Carbohydrate loading saturates your muscle and liver glycogen stores, delaying the onset of severe fatigue ("hitting the wall"). In the 36 to 48 hours prior to race start, target **8 to 10 grams of carbohydrates per kilogram of body weight** daily. The key is reducing fat, protein, and dietary fiber to prevent GI distress and bloating while keeping stomach volume manageable.

CORE RULES OF PRE-RACE NUTRITION

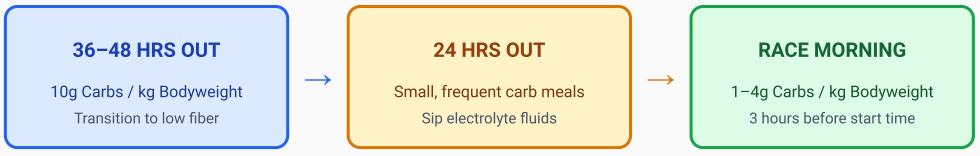
1. Swap for Simple Carbs

Switch from whole grains to white rice, white bread, and refined pasta 36 hours out. Lower fiber means faster gastric emptying and zero race-day stomach cramps.

2. Keep Fat & Protein Moderate

Fat slows digestion dramatically. Keep meals lean using chicken breast, egg whites, or tofu, saving high-fat celebratory meals for post-finish line.

SCIENCE-BACKED FUEL STRATEGY MATRIX



DAY BEFORE RACE: BREAKFAST & MORNING FUEL

1. Maple Banana Stride Oats

Carbs: 92g | Fiber: 4g | Protein: 12g

Prep Time: 5 mins | Digestibility: High | Phase: 24–36 hrs before race

Ingredients: 1 cup rolled oats, 1.25 cups unsweetened almond milk, 1 medium ripe banana (mashed), 2 tbsp pure maple syrup, 1 tbsp honey, pinch of salt.

- Combine oats, almond milk, and salt in a small pot over medium heat for 4–5 minutes.
- Stir in mashed banana and top with maple syrup and honey right before serving.

Why it works: Bananas and maple syrup provide fast-acting glucose and fructose, while quick-cooked oats supply steady energy without overloading your digestive tract.

2. Golden Honey Toast & Egg White Power Stack

Carbs: 78g | Fiber: 2g | Protein: 18g

Prep Time: 8 mins | Digestibility: Very High | Phase: Breakfast / Mid-day

Ingredients: 3 slices thick white sourdough bread, 2 tbsp liquid honey or seedless jelly, 4 egg whites scrambled in cooking spray, 1 glass (250ml) orange juice.

- Toast sourdough slices to light golden brown. Spread honey or jelly evenly.
- Scramble egg whites separately in a non-stick pan using minimal oil. Serve alongside OJ.

Why it works: Sourdough is easily digestible due to fermentation. High carbohydrate ratio paired with clean lean protein stabilizes insulin without lingering in the stomach.

3. Tropical Energy Smoothie Bowl

Carbs: 85g | Fiber: 3g | Protein: 8g

Prep Time: 4 mins | Digestibility: Maximum | Phase: Mid-Morning Snack

Ingredients: 1 frozen banana, 1/2 cup canned mango chunks, 1 cup coconut water, 2 tbsp agave nectar, 1/3 cup rice crisp cereal (for topping).

- Blend frozen banana, mango, coconut water, and agave nectar until completely smooth.
- Pour into a bowl and sprinkle with rice crisp cereal for texture.

Why it works: Liquid carbs bypass lengthy chewing and reduce fullness sensations. Coconut water delivers key potassium to balance hydration.

DAY BEFORE RACE: LUNCH & MAIN DINNER

4. Glazed Honey-Soy Chicken Rice Bowl

Carbs: 110g | Fiber: 1.5g | Protein: 28g

Prep Time: 15 mins | Digestibility: High | Phase: Pre-Race Dinner (5–7 PM)

Ingredients: 2 cups cooked white jasmine rice, 120g diced chicken breast, 2 tbsp low-sodium soy sauce, 2 tbsp honey, 1 tsp grated ginger, pinch of salt.

- Pan-sear chicken in a non-stick skillet. Mix soy sauce, honey, and ginger; pour over chicken to glaze.
- Serve hot over fluffy white jasmine rice. Avoid adding broccoli, garlic, or heavy oil.

Why it works: Jasmine rice has a high glycemic index, making it ideal for rapid glycogen storage. High sodium content in soy sauce promotes fluid retention before race morning.

5. Sweet Potato & Tender Turkey Mash Bowl

Carbs: 95g | Fiber: 3.5g | Protein: 22g

Prep Time: 20 mins | Digestibility: High | Phase: Pre-Race Lunch

Ingredients: 2 medium peeled sweet potatoes (boiled and mashed), 100g 99% fat-free ground turkey, 1 tbsp maple syrup, 1/4 tsp cinnamon, salt to taste.

- Boil peeled sweet potatoes until soft; mash thoroughly without butter.
- Brown turkey in skillet with salt. Fold cooked turkey into mashed sweet potato with maple syrup.

Why it works: Peeled sweet potatoes deliver abundant simple carbohydrates and potassium without heavy insoluble fiber skins that irritate intestines under race stress.

6. Classic Low-Fat Marinara Pasta

Carbs: 105g | Fiber: 2.5g | Protein: 16g

Prep Time: 12 mins | Digestibility: High | Phase: Pre-Race Lunch or Early Dinner

Ingredients: 150g dry white semolina pasta (penne or spaghetti), 1/2 cup simple tomato marinara sauce (no garlic, low fat), 1 tbsp grated parmesan cheese.

- Boil pasta in well-salted water until al dente. Warm marinara sauce in a small pan.
- Toss pasta with marinara sauce and top with parmesan cheese. Avoid heavy meatballs or cream.

Why it works: Traditional, reliable marathon fuel. Refined semolina wheat packs maximum carbohydrate mass with minimal digestional resistance.

RACE DAY MORNING & FINAL PREPARATION

7. Pre-Race Cinnamon Rice Porridge (3 Hours Out)

Carbs: 65g | Fiber: 1g | Protein: 5g

Prep Time: 3 mins | Digestibility: Exceptional | Phase: 2.5–3.5 Hours Before Start

Ingredients: 1 cup pre-cooked instant white rice, 3/4 cup warm almond milk, 1.5 tbsp maple syrup, 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon, 1 pinch sea salt.

- Combine instant rice and warm almond milk in a bowl. Stir in maple syrup, cinnamon, and salt.
- Eat slowly 3 hours before gun time alongside 500ml of water or electrolyte mix.

Why it works: Ultra-gentle on nervous race-morning stomachs. Restores liver glycogen depleted overnight during sleep without risking gastrointestinal distress.

RACE-WEEK CARB-LOADING TIMELINE CHECKLIST

Timeline	Carb Target	Primary Objective
36–48 Hours Out	8–10 g / kg bodyweight	Shift to white carbs, eliminate high-fiber vegetables.
24 Hours Out	8–10 g / kg bodyweight	Eat largest meal at lunch; eat a light, low-fat early dinner.
3 Hours Out	1–2 g / kg bodyweight	Top off liver glycogen (e.g., Rice Porridge or Toast).
30 Mins Out	25–30 grams	1 Gel or Chews + 200ml water at start corral line.

Golden Golden Rule for Race Day

Nothing new on race day! Test every single one of these meals during your peak long run training weeks (4 to 6 weeks before your race). Your gut responds best to familiar, predictable foods under high exertion.

PRINTABLE CARB-LOADING DAILY LOG & TRACKER

How to Use This Log

Print this sheet to track your meal intake for the 36–48 hours prior to race day. Aim to hit your target carbohydrate goal while keeping **fiber under 15g/day** and fat moderate to prevent GI issues.

Time	Food / Meal Description	Carbs (g)	Fiber (g)	Protein (g)
Breakfast				
Snack 1				
Lunch				
Snack 2				
Dinner				
Pre-Bed				
Extra/Sips				
DAILY TOTALS		**/ _____ g**	**/ < 15 g**	**/ _____ g**

Quick Target Calculator Checklist

- **My Weight:** _____ kg (or _____ lbs ÷ 2.2)
- **Daily Carb Target (8–10g × kg):** _____ grams/day
- **Fiber Limit:** Keep below 15g/day to minimize GI distress on race morning.