**Fuelling for the Comrades Marathon**

By Angela Bentley

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I would like to start off by declaring my highest admiration for all those athletes taking part in the 90th Comrades Marathon on the 31st of May. Your dedication and hard work in preparation for the world’s oldest and largest ultramarathon is incredible.

Here are some practical nutritional tips which may help you to optimise your performance on race day. Remember that you should have nutritional strategies in place throughout training and it is not advisable to try anything new on race day.

1. **Pre-event breakfast.**

With an early start and perhaps a fair amount of anxiety, many people complain about a lack of appetite or lack of time before the race. To combat these hindrances see <http://www.futurelife.co.za/strategies-eating-early-morning-race/>.  Remember, your pre-event meal is extremely important for optimising glycogen levels, thereby preventing hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) and delaying fatigue during the race. It is also of particular importance before a morning race as it is more than likely that 12 or more hours would have passed since your last meal.

A pre-event meal is ideally high in carbohydrates with moderate protein. One should be weary of fat and too much fibre.

Examples of some well-tolerated pre-event snacks for early mornings include:

* A FUTURELIFE® High Energy Smart Food or SmartOats shake or smoothie with added fruit and yoghurt (Liquid forms of foods are often better tolerated so early).
* French toast made with FUTURELIFE® Smart White Bread, coated in honey.
* Fruit and FUTURELIFE® Smart Drink or low-fat fruit yoghurt.
* FUTURELIFE® Smart White Bread sandwiches with a peanut or nut butter and banana fill.

1. **During the race**

Getting to know the route map and putting a nutrition and hydration plan in place before the race is highly advisable.

Water points are spaced roughly every 2.5-3.5km, I would advise that you try to formulate you plan around this so that you have landmarks to serve as reminders.

On average you should drink 3ml of fluid per kg of body weight every 20 minutes. Practically this can be achieved by drinking 125ml-250ml of fluids at each refreshment stop. Remember that electrolytes are required for proper hydration, if you choose to drink only water you will need to choose electrolyte-containing snacks.

You also require carbohydrates to replenish energy stores and maintain performance. Although each person’s requirements vary, a general guideline is to consume 30-60g of carbohydrates every hour after the first hour. Ultra-marathon requirements will usually be at the higher end of this guideline and may even be more later on in the race. Having between 15g and 20g of carbohydrates at each refreshment stop will help most athletes to reach their requirements

Examples of foods containing 15g of carbohydrates:

* 2/3 FUTURELIFE ®High Energy Smartbar
* 1 slice of FUTURELIFE® Smart White Bread
* ½ cup fizzy cool drink (mix with water to avoid gastric irritation)
* 220ml cup sports drink (7% carbs)
* 3 fruit jellies/ jelly babies (15g)
* 1 energy gel (varies according to brand so read labels)
* 1 small banana
* 3-5 crackers (read nutritional information on pack)
* ½ medium potato

Bear in mind: For the first half of the race the water points provide water and carbohydrate containing drinks. For the second half of the race you will find additional nutrition such as banana’s, sweets and potatoes.

1. **Recovery**

After the race your energy stores are low, your muscles are worn and your immune system has taken a bit of a beating. You need nutrition and you need it fast. In order to recover properly your major requirements are carbohydrates and protein. You should also pay careful attention to your hydration. For each kg bodyweight lost during the race try to drink between 1l and 1.5l of water or sports drink.

 Examples of good recovery meals/snacks include:

* FUTURELIFE® High Protein shake/smoothie with milk.
* FUTURELIFE® Smart Drink
* FUTURELIFE® High Protein SmartBar
* Chocolate milk
* FUTURELIFE® Smart Bread sandwiches with chicken, cheese and greek yoghurt.
* Baked beans on FUTURELIFE® Smart Bread toast.
* Spaghetti Bolognaise
* Lean burger with potato wedges
* FUTURELIFE® Smart White Bread sandwiches with a peanut or nut butter and banana fill.
* Yoghurt, fruit and nuts

On that note, best of luck!!! And may the wind be always behind you!