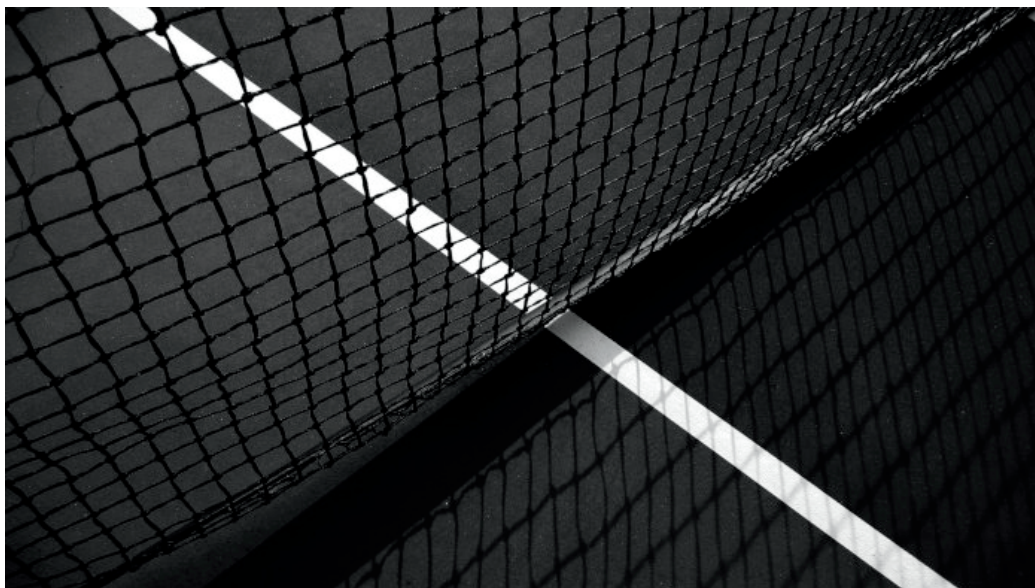


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## The Tennis Diet: How Tennis Players Should Eat

As a young man growing up watching Boris Becker, Steffi Graf, Goran Ivanisevic, Ivan Lendl, Martina Navratilova and so many other great players, I always wondered what kind of the foods and fitness regiment they complied to in order to be able to play such forceful tennis for 3, 4, and even 5 hours at a time. After speaking with many tennis players, and researching the food habits of the most prominent players in the world, I came to the conclusion that like many other athletes, they don't eat particularly healthy. Athletes need to



eat healthy foods because exercise cannot neutralize the effect of unhealthy foods in the body- although they look fit, their bodies would be that much more efficient with the correct fuel. This is why I and my HFR team created a list of the best foods in order to perform even greater tennis through healthy foods and also a list of the foods to avoid before competition:

### **Before a Tennis Match:**

A healthy breakfast on competition days is one that includes complex carbohydrates such as whole wheat, oatmeal, and low calorie fruits. These complex carbs will keep a steady energy store to power through the matches later on in the day. A small amount of protein in the form of milk, an egg white or greek yogurt is a good complement to the meal, although protein will be more necessary after the match than before.

Players should avoid high sugar breakfasts and fruits or they risk feeling an energy crash in the middle of their matches due to the initial insulin release from the pancreas in order to keep blood sugar levels down.

Breakfast should be eaten at least two hours before the start of the match to avoid intestinal cramping.

### **During a tennis match:**

During the match, tennis players use so much energy resulting in glycogen deposit depletion. The tennis diet during the match should be able to replenish the used-up energy. A perfect snack during a match is a banana, which will keep blood sugar levels steady and provide a quick energy boost.

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Players should also not wait to be thirsty in order to drink water. Often, athletes do not feel thirst when the adrenaline is pumping through their bodies- so it is important to drink water every 15 minutes to replenish the water and electrolytes lost through sweating. A good alternative to sugar filled sports drinks is coconut water which is loaded with electrolytes and potassium.

## Tennis Diet after the tennis match:

A lot of energy gets expended during a match, so it is important for athletes to refuel their bodies with a healthy balance of nutrition within 2 hours. For muscle recovery, a high amount of lean protein such as chicken or fish should be eaten as a balanced meal with some complex carbohydrates and vegetables. Whole-wheat pasta, brown rice, fitness bread (whole wheat 100% grain) with chicken breast or buffalo meat make for a great post-match recovery meal. Couple a full meal with a natural sodium source like low-fat, high protein cheese like mozzarella.

## The Tennis Diet Foods to Include Daily:

A balance diet for tennis players should include: carbohydrates, proteins, healthy fats, minerals and vitamins, and water or fluids. It is also ideal to eat fresh food rather than the readymade and processed food.

- Carrots: Promote healthy eyesight, which is important during a match.
- Foods with Zinc: Studies have shown that 20 mg of zinc a day can improve hand-eye coordination. Food that contain zinc include oysters, pumpkin seeds, whole grains, sunflower seeds, animal proteins, beans, nuts and almonds.
- Vitamin C: Found in high amounts in peppers and citrus fruits to aid muscle repair.
- Choline: Tomatoes, egg yolks and potatoes are all high in choline, a member of the vitamin B family. It feeds your brain's neurotransmitters and has been proven to improve reaction times.
- Vitamin A: because it helps to make new white blood cells. Your body is going to need these to fight off infection and recover from the intense workouts. Vitamin A helps in fixing any micro tears in your muscles.
- DMAE: Feed your brain something named dimethylaminoethanol, which is found in certain fish. This brain food is a neurotransmitter, which helps messages move across your nerves and brain. DMAE deals with the process required for remembering tactics, techniques and course sequences. Good natural sources of DMAE are salmon, sardines, and anchovies.

## Foods to Avoid Right before a Match:

- Protein shake. Try to avoid protein powders and large amounts of protein before a competition to lower the risk of digestive upset. Consume the protein shakes for post-competition when muscle recovery is key.
- Caffeinated drinks. Skip the sugary sodas and coffee before a match. Caffeine is both hard on the stomach and dehydrating.
- Whole-wheat pasta. Whole-wheat pasta can be a great pre-competition meal the night before or even 4 hours prior to the match when your body needs slow-releasing carbohydrates for long-lasting energy. However, immediately before a match, your body relies on quick energy from easily digestible carbohydrates.
- Nuts and seeds. Nuts and seeds are super healthy sources of fiber and fat. However, before a competition, it's important to focus primarily on simple carbohydrates and to limit amounts of fiber and fat to avoid any digestive discomfort during exercise.
- Salads. Leafy greens can be healthy complement to your balanced pre- or post-competition meal. However, it's best for athletes to avoid greens right before a match since they're high in fiber and not easily tolerated. They are a great addition to a healthy tennis diet.

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