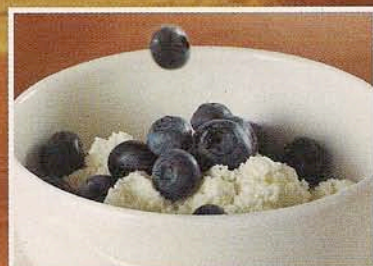


Supercharge your muscle menu, going from dull to delicious, with simple food substitutions for every meal (and snack) of the day

By Matthew Kadey, MS, RD

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**R**emember Garfield? That slothful, orange feline with an elephantine appetite? He'd wolf down anything he could get his paws on — cake, doughnuts, pizza — you name it, he'd devour it. It's not exactly a diet we'd trumpet, but at least the rascal cat's diet had one thing going for it that most bodybuilders desperately need: variety.

Every bodybuilder knows progress in the gym will be stymied if you pound out the same exercises

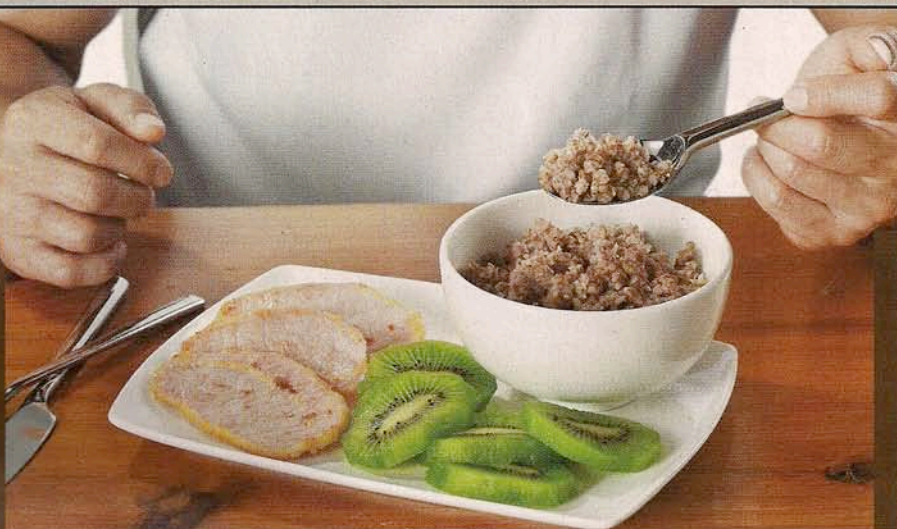
week after week and month after month. Well, the same is true for your grub. If you always eat the same edibles (chicken and broccoli, anyone?) your body and taste buds will adapt to the lack of new stimulation, slowing progression of those big guns.

"Varying your eating can shock the body, boost intake of a wider range of muscle-building nutrients and add excitement to a stale training diet," says Jim White, RD, spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association and owner of Jim White Fitness and Nutrition Studios

in Virginia Beach.<sup>1</sup> To keep your palate guessing and your muscles growing, you need to consistently make changes to your meal plan, from breakfast to lunch to dinner and any snacks in between.

Now, before you turn up your nose at the idea, let us assure you that we're not asking you to dawn a chef's hat and cook gourmet recipes. With just a few simple adjustments and substitutions, you can give your meals a full makeover. Here's how to add new life to six healthy, yet somewhat ho-hum, bodybuilding meals and snacks.

# BREAKFAST



**F**or a change of pace from oatmeal, whole-grain buckwheat groats can be cooked to make porridge with serious nutritional firepower. Also called kasha when roasted (and a relative of rhubarb), buckwheat groats are broken buckwheat seeds that contain a wealth of rutin, a phytochemical. Rutin may have a number of beneficial properties including halting the expansion of fat cells, keeping cholesterol levels in check and improving blood glucose control.<sup>2</sup> Buckwheat is also abundant in fat-obliterating fiber and in magnesium, a mineral necessary for normal muscle and nerve func-

tion. To cook a thick porridge of nutty buckwheat groats, combine 1 cup groats with 2 cups water and a pinch of salt in a saucepan. (This amount will yield about 2 cups cooked.) Bring to a boil, cover and simmer for about 15 minutes or until all the water is absorbed, stirring occasionally. Consider mixing in cinnamon and some chopped walnuts.

Gleaned from the loin cut, which is in the center of the pig's back, Canadian bacon is significantly leaner than conventional bacon. "The excellent protein-to-fat ratio in Canadian bacon makes it very muscle-friendly," says White.

## Menu

### TYPICAL FARE

- 2 cups oatmeal, cooked
- 3 hard-boiled eggs
- 1 orange

### NUTRITION INFORMATION

- Calories:** 681
- Protein:** 32 grams
- Carbs:** 87 grams
- Fat:** 23 grams  
(6 grams saturated)
- Fiber:** 12 grams

### MMI SUGGESTS

- 2 cups buckwheat groats, cooked
- 3 ounces Canadian bacon (3 slices)
- 1 kiwi

### NUTRITION INFORMATION

- Calories:** 540
- Protein:** 33 grams
- Carbs:** 82 grams
- Fat:** 10 grams  
(2 grams saturated)
- Fiber:** 12 grams

Under that frizzy brown peel of a kiwi, you'll find more than a day's requirement of vitamin C. This water-soluble vitamin is needed by the body to make carnitine, a compound required for proper fat oxidation.<sup>3</sup>

# LUNCH

**W**hile this meal contains 11 grams more fat, a good portion of that amount comes from the fat-burning omega-3 fatty acids DHA and EPA present in smoked salmon. "These fats also have anti-inflammatory properties and they safeguard heart health," White adds. Study findings from Austrian researchers found that vitamin D, which is abundant in salmon, can boost testosterone levels in men.<sup>7</sup> Ounce for ounce, smoked salmon also contains more protein than deli turkey meat.

Nutrient-dense arugula has a peppery kick that makes these wraps pop in your mouth, and this leafy green is a great source of fiber, vitamins A and C,



# SNACK

Cottage cheese and ricotta cheese each contain laudable amounts of protein to keep muscle growth going in full force. But no other cheese has more whey protein than the Italian favorite ricotta. "The fast-digesting branched-chain amino acids in whey are especially efficient at building muscle," says White.

## Menu

### TYPICAL FARE

1 cup 1% cottage cheese  
½ cup pineapple, cubed

### NUTRITION INFORMATION

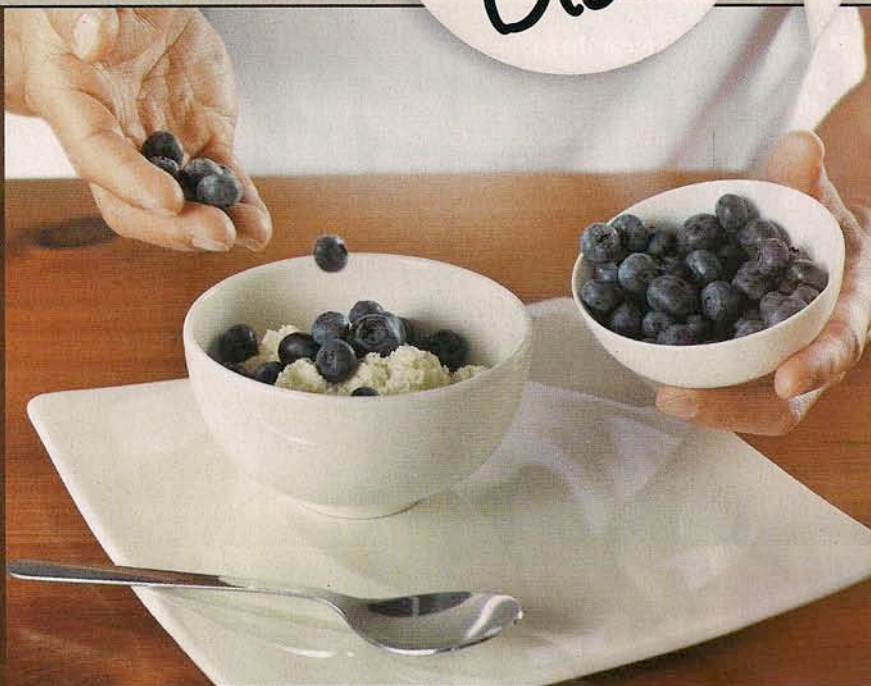
**Calories:** 217  
**Protein:** 28 grams  
**Carbs:** 20 grams  
**Fat:** 2 grams (1 gram saturated)  
**Fiber:** 1 gram

### MMI SUGGESTS

1 cup fat-free ricotta cheese  
½ cup wild blueberries

### NUTRITION INFORMATION

**Calories:** 242  
**Protein:** 22 grams  
**Carbs:** 32 grams  
**Fat:** 0 grams  
**Fiber:** 3 grams



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Data from the University of Connecticut (Storrs) shows that protein peptides in whey can stimulate blood flow, which could increase nutrient delivery to muscles and improve heart health.<sup>4</sup> "Ricotta also contains about half the amount of sodium found in cottage cheese," White adds.

Researchers at Cornell University (Ithaca, NY) tested 25 commonly consumed fruits for cellular antioxidant

activity and found that wild blueberries have the most absorbable antioxidants.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, a 2010 study in *Molecular Nutrition & Food Research* reported that the antioxidants in blueberries could help lessen the amount of oxidative muscle damage incurred by strenuous exercise, like a balls-to-the-wall session in the squat rack.<sup>6</sup> Plus, blueberries pack in some dietary fiber to help kill your cravings.

iron and potassium. According to nutrition experts, the No. 1 benefit of arugula is that it improves blood quality.

Roasted red peppers provide vitamin C and more of the cancer-fighting antioxidant lycopene than raw tomatoes because the application of heat, such as roasting, makes lycopene more available to the body. Italian researchers found that lycopene can reduce oxidative cell damage caused by intense exercise.<sup>8</sup>

While low-fat mayonnaise may be an okay nutritional choice, all varieties are generally a protein dud. Fat-free cream cheese, however, supplies 4 grams of high-quality protein per ounce.

## Menu

### TYPICAL FARE

Two turkey sandwiches made with:  
4 slices 100% whole-grain bread  
4 ounces deli turkey breast  
1 cup baby spinach  
4 slices tomato  
2 tablespoons low-fat mayonnaise

### NUTRITION INFORMATION

**Calories:** 494  
**Protein:** 33 grams  
**Carbs:** 59 grams  
**Fat:** 15 grams (3 grams saturated)  
**Fiber:** 10 grams

### MMI SUGGESTS

Two smoked-salmon wraps made with:  
2 large 100% whole-grain wraps  
4 ounces smoked salmon  
½ cup arugula  
½ cup roasted red pepper  
2 tablespoons fat-free cream cheese

### NUTRITION INFORMATION

**Calories:** 637  
**Protein:** 36 grams  
**Carbs:** 64 grams  
**Fat:** 26 grams (5 grams saturated)  
**Fiber:** 7 grams

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# PROTEIN SHAKE

**A**re you bored stiff of the same old blender creation? Well here's a shake you've likely never tried but already have all the ingredients for in your kitchen.

Oranges are loaded with vitamins, minerals and other nutrients your body needs to function optimally. Specifically, oranges supply the body with healthy amounts of betacarotene (an antioxidant that protects cells from damage), potassium (which benefits your cardiovascular system) and thiamin (which helps convert food into energy).

As for the spinach, don't worry; your taste buds won't know it's in the shake and this green giant contains beta-ecdysterone, a phytochemical with anabolic properties.

## Menu

### TYPICAL FARE

- 2 cups low-fat milk
- 1 scoop protein powder
- 1 large banana

### NUTRITION INFORMATION

- Calories:** 446
- Protein:** 41 grams
- Carbohydrates:** 59 grams
- Fat:** 7 grams (4 grams saturated)
- Fiber:** 5 grams

### MMI SUGGESTS

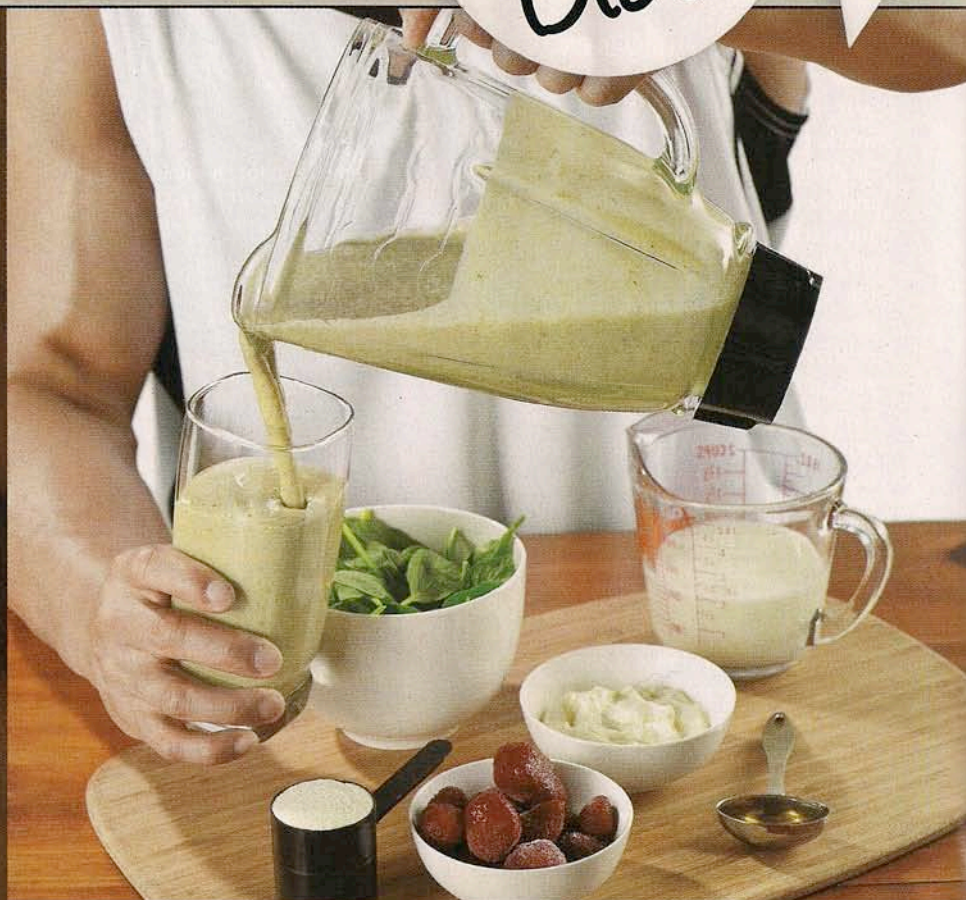
- 1 orange, peeled
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 cup baby spinach
- 1 scoop protein powder
- 1 cup low-fat milk
- 1/2 cup low-fat Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup frozen strawberries
- 1 tablespoon honey

### DIRECTIONS

In a blender, add orange segments and water. Blend until smooth. Add spinach and blend until smooth. Add remaining ingredients and whirl again until smooth.

### NUTRITION INFORMATION

- Calories:** 441
- Protein:** 44
- Carbs:** 61 grams
- Fat:** 5 grams (3 grams saturated)



Deliciously thick Greek yogurt contains more protein and fewer carbohydrates than fluid milk. It's also substantially lower in sodium when compared to standard yogurts — some varieties are 50% lower in sodium than plain, regular yogurts.

By the serving, strawberries pack a bigger antioxidant and vitamin C wallop than a banana. Strawberries also contain an abundance of phytochemicals, a wide spectrum of minerals and vitamins, and an excellent amount of fiber to aid your digestive system.

And last but not least, the addition of honey, which is a natural sweetener, can actually promote better blood sugar control and insulin sensitivity. According to the American Chemical Society, daily consumption of honey also increases the blood levels of protective antioxidant compounds. ♦♦

### References:

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