

## 3 Key Strategies for a Winning MMA Nutrition Plan

MMA athletes are constantly looking for the next miracle supplement or food product that is going to deliver peak performance. Unfortunately, big companies that sell such products are more concerned with profit than the overall well-being of the consumer. They spend big bucks on marketing the “health benefits” of their supplements because people continue to fall into the trap. For example, “In 2000, approximately 158 million Americans consumed \$17.1 billion worth of dietary supplements of dubious benefit, while exercising on \$2.4 billion worth of equipment ranging from abdominal ‘slimming’ boards, stationary bicycles, beltless treadmills and ‘gliders,’ to face and neck ‘shapers.’”<sup>1</sup>

The goal of this article is to arm you with three successful strategies for a winning MMA nutrition plan that will improve performance and develop better decision making when purchasing food and supplements.

### 1. Avoid exaggerated marketing claims and focus on Nutrition

Unfortunately, there are some loopholes in the labeling laws that make it difficult to figure out what’s in a package or food product. Many of the claims on the front of the box or wrapper are nothing more than exaggerated marketing claims. Here are some important things to keep in mind when trying to decipher the nutrition facts:

- **Look at the ingredients**-Ingredients are listed in order of descending abundance. Therefore, harmful or less nutritious ingredients may be listed first and ingredients with the most benefit may be listed at the end.
- **Check the serving size**- Many times companies put ridiculously small serving sizes that can be misleading. These companies rely on consumers to take a brief look at the nutrition facts such as salt, sugar, and fat and realize they may be quite small. However, these ingredients are quite high when viewing the total amount of servings the food product provides.
- **Check the amount per serving**-Reviewing the amount per serving relative to the total amount of servings of the food product can give you the total amount of calories. For example, if a product has 120 calories per serving and there are 2.5 servings, the total amount of calories for the food product is 300.

### 2. Make smart choices for your MMA nutrition plan when on the road

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Using what I call the 3 P method is one of the best things one can do in regards to your MMA nutrition plan. The 3 Ps refer to planning, preparing, and packing you meals. People are more likely to eat healthier foods by planning what they are going to eat, preparing the foods themselves, and packaging them so that they are ready to eat; as opposed to relying on eating out at a nearby food establishment when hungry. Chances are that the most available food outside is junk food.

However, if a person decides to dine out, he or she must choose foods wisely. Order foods that are broiled, steamed, roasted, or baked. Avoid foods that are fried. Also, choose leaner meats like low-fat poultry and fish rather than fatty sausage or prime rib.

### **3. Believe in yourself, not a supplement**

Supplementation, if you choose to use it, should be exactly what the word implies. It should be part of a larger MMA nutrition plan. If you are looking for more energy, burning fat, and developing peak performance, than your first priority is choosing supportive foods that supply the vitamins and nutrients you need as well as a disciplined and continuous exercise regiment. Supplementation comes second.

Certain supplements, such as vitamins, meal replacement formulas, protein powder, fish oil, creatine monohydrate, and recovery formulas do have merit. It's when supplementation takes the place of solid nutrition and hard work that it becomes a problem.

When in the supermarket, focus on the perimeter of the store. This includes fresh produce, meats and seafood, and the dairy case. If possible, shop at a natural market. Be proactive and plan your nutrition. Work hard, believe in yourself, and the rest will fall into place.

<sup>1</sup> McArdle, William D., Katch, Frank I., Katch, Victor L., (2005). Sports & Exercise Nutrition 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Lippincott Williams & Williams, Baltimore, MD.

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