THE FEED ZONE
Fast and Flavorful Food for Athletes
COOKBOOK

BIJU THOMAS with ALLEN LIM
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“BIJU’S RECIPES ARE MIND-BLOWINGLY SIMPLE, BUT THEIR FLAVORS AND QUALITY ARE AS GOOD AS A FIVE-STAR RESTAURANT. ... BIJU WILL INSPIRE YOU TO WANT TO COOK.”
—Matthew Gusche, RadioShack pro cycling team

“ALLEN LIM HAS ALWAYS PREACHED EATING REAL, NATURAL FOODS AS THEY PROVIDE FAR MORE OF WHAT WE NEED FOR ENERGY AND RECOVERY THAN ANY SUPPLEMENT.”
—Lucas Euser, Team SpiderTech
OVER THE COURSE OF MY LAST 15 YEARS AS A PROFESSIONAL CYCLIST, diet and nutrition have played a significant role in my performance, but getting the right food at races hasn’t always been possible and didn’t become a serious problem for me until the 2011 season. I ended up hospitalized at the Tour of Catalunya in March due to complications that stemmed from an old stomach injury and the poor quality of food at the race.

These health problems came in the midst of early season preparation and I was concerned that I would not be at my best by the Tour of California, which was the most important race of the year for me next to the Tour de France. So I returned to the States to get some rest and to try and get my diet and training back on track. I needed some real help so I asked Allen and Biju if they would be willing to support me during a two-week training camp in Park City, Utah. They agreed and as soon as they arrived they got to work. Not knowing what might cause problems for my stomach, they took a back-to-basics approach: simple meals with minimal ingredients so I could begin to relearn what worked and what didn’t.

My mornings started with a big bowl of oatmeal with Biju’s toasted nut mix, poached eggs, and a glass of beet juice. For long training rides, I ate primarily chicken sausage rice cakes. After the ride, gluten-free pasta salad, chicken fried rice, or a hot soup. For dinner we had everything from pan-seared steak to pasta with smoked salmon, and Biju’s chicken tikka masala, followed by a beautiful salad. For dessert, a big bowl of fruit with honey and yogurt.

I felt myself getting stronger every day. I was also learning new recipes and picking up some skills in the kitchen as I watched Biju and Allen cook each day.

I FELT MYSELF GETTING STRONGER EVERY DAY. ★
By the time we were done with the training camp, I was confident that I would have decent form at the Tour of California, but I also knew that it wasn’t going to happen unless Biju and Allen came to cook for the team. The night before the start of the race, Biju and Allen showed up in a beat-up “Cruise America” RV. Using two butane burners, one propane stove, and a handful of pots and pans they began cooking the best race food our team has ever eaten. The European riders were totally unaccustomed to eating food this good at a race. They were amazed by how great their legs felt and lamented the fact that they didn’t have this advantage earlier in their career.

Best of all, when we sat down at the dinner table for a great meal it took our minds off of the race and brought us together as a team. As we dined on park benches under a borrowed tent, riders who had been on the same team for years were talking, laughing, and telling stories we’d never heard before. We had escaped the typical drudgery of eating for the sake of eating. We felt great and by the end of the race we had won the two hardest stages and finished with Chris Horner winning the overall and me in second.

Right after the Tour of California, I went on to win the Tour of Switzerland, erasing a 2-minute deficit in the final time trial to win by 4 seconds. It was the biggest win of my career and something I could have hardly imagined sitting in the hospital in Spain only 2 months before. Equally surprising was the fact that after that win, I found myself making Biju’s recipes. I even made Allen dinner one evening. It wasn’t quite as good as Biju’s cooking but it was still one of the best pre-Tour meals I’ve ever cooked. So not only did Biju and Allen help salvage a disastrous start to my 2011 season and turn it into one of my best, they actually got me into the kitchen, cooking these recipes.

**LEVI LEIPHEIMER**
RADSHACK PRO CYCLING TEAM

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**AFTER THE BIGGEST WIN OF MY CAREER, I FOUND MYSELF MAKING BIJU’S RECIPES.**

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**THE FOOD THAT FUELS ME AS AN ATHLETE** is incredibly important. On any given day I will only feel as good as the food I have eaten before, during, and after my ride. Garbage in, garbage out. Nowhere is this more evident than in the middle of a multi-day stage race. Not only is bad food poor athletic fuel, but the last thing I want to see or eat after riding hard for 5 hours for the fourth day in a row is some white bread, pasta, and flavorless boiled chicken. Putting that food into my tired body doesn’t do much good, but even more so, it just cracks me mentally.

I know that there are good, healthy, and easily accessible ingredients and dishes out there that would be much better for me in a race. But in a race a cyclist is usually limited to what the team or race organization provides, which is almost always cost-cutting, nutrient-starved dishes. So when the opportunity presented itself at a few races during the 2011 season, Allen and Biju would sneak me some real food—the good stuff—at dinnertime. I would walk past the buffet to a corner in the hallway where they would dish me up some quinoa salad, fresh berries, and a proper piece of meat. Healthy and delicious, those meals made my day and gave me confidence that I had what I needed to recover properly for the next day of racing.

**LEVI LEIPHEIMER**
RADSHACK PRO CYCLING TEAM
Allen’s Rice Cakes

I started making these rice cakes at training camps and races to give riders something savory and fresh to eat while on the bike. They became a huge hit since almost everything the riders ate was pre-packaged and sweet. Not only are these rice cakes delicious, they also provide a consistent energy source that doesn’t upset the stomach.

2 cups uncooked calrose or other medium-grain “sticky” rice
1½ cups water
8 ounces bacon
4 eggs
2 tablespoons liquid amino acids or low-sodium soy sauce
brown sugar
salt and grated parmesan (optional) 

1. Combine rice and water in a rice cooker.
2. While rice is cooking, chop up bacon before frying, then fry in a medium sauté pan. When crispy, drain off fat and soak up excess fat with paper towels.
3. Beat the eggs in a small bowl and then scramble on high heat in the sauté pan. Don’t worry about overcooking the eggs as they’ll break up easily when mixed with the rice.
4. In a large bowl or in the rice cooker bowl, combine the cooked rice, bacon, and scrambled eggs. Add liquid amino acids or soy sauce and sugar to taste. After mixing, press into an 8- or 9-inch square baking pan to about 1½-inch thickness. Top with more brown sugar, salt to taste, and grated parmesan, if desired.

Cut and wrap individual cakes. Makes about 10 rice cakes.

PER SERVING (1 cake) >

| Energy | 225 | Fat | 8 | Sodium | 321 | Carbs | 30 | Fiber | 1 | Protein | 9 |

We always use calrose rice, a strain of medium-grain rice common in Asian cooking. This variety cooks fast (in 20 minutes or less), retains a nutty flavor, and is just sticky enough to hold our cakes together. If you can’t find it, use another medium-grain rice or any kind marked “sushi rice.”

TIP We always use calrose rice, a strain of medium-grain rice common in Asian cooking. This variety cooks fast (in 20 minutes or less), retains a nutty flavor, and is just sticky enough to hold our cakes together. If you can’t find it, use another medium-grain rice or any kind marked “sushi rice.”
Chicken Tacos

Lightly warmed corn tortillas stuffed with spiced chicken and cool salsa are the perfect après-ride food. Bursting with bright flavors and a hint of salt and citrus, these tacos are just what your body craves. To speed things up, prep the chicken in advance.

1. Add a splash of water to the cooked rice and warm in a sauté pan over medium-high heat. Put rice aside.
2. Bring a lightly oiled sauté pan to medium-high heat. Add chicken, onion, and chiles. Sauté, sprinkling with spices as desired, until chicken is cooked through and onions have softened and browned, about 10–15 minutes.
3. Add lime juice and salt to taste.
4. Warm the corn tortillas in a dry pan or in the oven, about 3–5 minutes. Stuff each warmed corn tortilla with a few spoonfuls of cooked rice, chicken, and salsa.

**NOTE:** Thigh meat will give you a bit more fat and flavor in the summer when you’re racking up the training miles. At other times of the year, use chicken breasts.

**SERVINGS:** 4
**TIME:** 15–20 minutes

**Ingredients:**
- 1 cup cooked rice
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken, cut into small chunks (see note)
- 1 onion, cut into strips
- 2 mild green chiles, cut into strips
- ½ teaspoon chili powder and/or ground cumin
- fresh lime juice
- 4–6 corn tortillas
- Roasted Salsa (page 286)
- Spicy Cabbage Slaw (page 284)

**Per Serving:**
- Energy 274 cal
- Fat 2 g
- Sodium 244 mg
- Carbs 24 g
- Fiber 1 g
- Protein 36 g

**Tip:** Feel free to use purchased salsa to save time. But if you want to impress your friends, our fresh option is a great accompaniment.

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Tacos can be wrapped and stored in the fridge for up to 3 days. When you get an urge for a snack, reheat one of these tacos in the microwave and you’ll be glad you took the time to make them.
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THE FEED ZONE COOKBOOK
Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I’d like to thank Allen Lim for bringing me along on this ride; Renee Jardine, Kara Mannix, and Ted Costantino at VeloPress for their patient care and support through the process; and Caroline Treadway, Megan Forbes, Vicki Hopewell, and Jeanine Thirion for their vision and many long hours.


Special thanks to Michelle and Corrina at Praia Apartments for letting us take over the building during our long photo shoot days. I’d also like to thank Mike Keeske and Sassy and Deborah Perry for their kitchens and a special thanks to Gloria Borglum and Alex E’Aton for all of the years and countless meals.

Finally, a great big thanks to Robin at MapMyRide, Levi Leipheimer and Team RadioShack, and the athletes, friends, and family who have endured many strange meals and ideas, a small portion of which is here.

BIJU THOMAS

If it were not for the unconditional support and amazing food fed to me by my parents, the seeds for this book would not have been planted. Culture is more than what your mom fed you. It’s the culmination of any meal or any recipe shared with others and it is the joy that we experienced cooking and eating with those closest to us. With that in mind, I’d like to thank those whom I have shared most of my meals with: my parents, George and Margarita, my brother Almerich, all of my cousins, aunts, uncles, friends, and athletes who took the time to cook me a meal or took a chance eating one of mine.

This book, however, would never have actually been written if it were not for the incredible work of Renee Jardine and her talented crew at VeloPress that included Kara Mannix and Ted Costantino. Because Renee’s head did not literally explode while coxing us to meet deadlines and while forcing us to actually sit down somewhere in this world and write, this book exists.

A huge thanks to Megan Forbes for all of her work on the nutritionals and for always being an invaluable sounding board when I needed someone to help me solve the most complex nutritional dilemmas.

I’d also like to give a special thanks to Dr. William Byrnes, my mentor at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Whenever I would come up with a crazy theory, Dr. Byrnes was the first to shake his head at me and challenge me with one line, “Young man, you don’t know that.” It was his critical eye and extraordinary care that provided me with the foundation for my career in professional cycling and it’s been that single line that has checked me as a simple voice of reason ever since graduating.

Of course my untold thanks and immense respect to Chef Biju Thomas for never saying no to hitting the road to cook with me in the worst possible conditions with the least possible sleep for nothing more than our shear love for food and cycling.

ALLEN LIM
About the Authors

BORN IN THE PHILIPPINES, DR. ALLEN LIM began watching and helping his parents (who are originally from China) cook in the kitchen at the age of four—the same age that he taught himself to ride a bicycle. By age eight, Lim’s affinity for food and cycling was in full bloom. He began spending hours on his dirt bike roaming the streets just outside of Los Angeles and teaching his parents classic Western recipes, like the Denver omelet, picked up at sleepover parties with his American friends. This merging of cultures eventually led Lim to search for ways to turn his love for cycling and food into a legitimate career—a search that culminated with Lim working and cooking at the Tour de France, guiding countless riders, including Floyd Landis and Lance Armstrong—controversial and inspiring winners of cycling’s most prestigious race. Through these experiences, Lim has come to know firsthand the complexity of sport—an arena where ambition, emotion, and culture can both fuel and oppose the practice of science, innovation, and fair play. These dichotomies have led Lim to look for ways to redefine his love for cycling and food as a legitimate tool for social change—a conversation he is eager to discuss on a ride or at the dinner table.

BORN IN SOUTH INDIA, BIJU THOMAS first came to the United States at the age of three. Part of a large extended family, including five siblings and several cousins, he learned to love food by watching his mother and grandmother cook for and feed large groups with ease. The entire family found joy and camaraderie in cooking, constantly upstaging one another in the kitchen. A self-taught chef, Biju soon discovered he had a deep passion for cooking. He began working in restaurants at age 15, moving quickly to the top of his field as an in-demand chef in Colorado, and then finally as an instructor and consultant to the industry, writing menus and helping to start restaurants around the country.

“I WISH BIJU HAD COOKED FOR ME ALL THOSE YEARS I RACED BECAUSE IT WOULD HAVE MADE ME FASTER.”
—Axel Merckx, former pro cyclist, Olympic medalist, and Belgian national champion

“I THINK BIJU IS THE REASON LANCE ARMSTRONG IS THE FASTEST MAN IN THE WORLD.”
—Christian Vande Velde, Team Garmin-Chervélo

SOME OF LIM’S FOODS ARE SCIENTIFIC AND OTHERS JUST FEEL GOOD, BUT ONE INGREDIENT WAS ALWAYS PRESENT: PASSION FROM THE ASIAN EQUATION.”
—Christian Vande Velde, Team Garmin-Chervélo
The Feed Zone Cookbook is a no-fuss guide to preparing good food that will change the way endurance athletes eat.

With refreshingly simple ingredients that measure up to the demands of training and racing, Biju’s recipes are easy to follow and big on flavor. His tantalizing mix of salty, sweet, and savory satisfies an athlete’s cravings and prepares the body for top performance.

EAT LIKE THE PROS. FEED ZONE MEALS ARE THE PERFECT BALANCE OF SCIENCE AND PRACTICE FROM DR. ALLEN LIM AND CHEF BIJU THOMAS.

When Dr. Allen Lim left the lab to work with pro cyclists, he found a peloton weary of food. The sport’s elite athletes were underperforming on bland fare and processed bars and gels. So Lim set out to make eating delicious and practical. His journey took him inside the kitchens of the Tour de France and delivered him to a dinner party where he met celebrated chef Biju Thomas.

Chef Biju and Dr. Lim vetted countless meals with the world’s best endurance athletes. Now they share their energy-packed, wholesome recipes to make your meals easy to prepare, delicious to eat, and better for your performance.