

# **THE ATHLETE'S FIX**



**A PROGRAM FOR FINDING YOUR BEST FOODS  
FOR PERFORMANCE & HEALTH**



## **PIP TAYLOR**

**DIETITIAN, SPORTS NUTRITIONIST & PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE**

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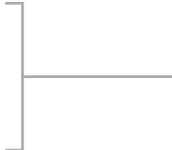
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All of these recipes support a **BASE FUNCTIONAL DIET**, meaning they contain no gluten, grains (except rice), soy, legumes, dairy, sugar, additives, or preservatives.

# INTRODUCTION



Throughout my career as a professional athlete, eating well has been key to my performance. My diet has always been composed of healthy foods, and for most of my life I have stuck to a healthy balance of the widely recommended low-fat foods, including grains, pasta, couscous, whole-grain bread, and tortillas, as well as lots of fruits and vegetables, fish, meats, and nuts. I ate very few processed or packaged foods, in part because I have always enjoyed cooking from scratch and shopping at farmers markets.

Despite my best efforts to maintain a healthy diet and compete professionally, several years ago I began experiencing problems. My fitness and preparation were as good as they had ever been, but I found myself not feeling as good come race day. I was experiencing bloating, greater water retention—giving me a heavy, puffy feeling—increased lethargy, and shortness of breath. There was no reasonable explanation, at least in my mind—my fitness, health, and mental preparation were good going into the races. Per sports nutrition recommendations, I did change up my healthy, clean diet in the days leading up to a race by eating less fiber and fat to reduce the potential for gastrointestinal issues. Instead, I ate more refined carbohydrates: sweets, breads, and sugared sports drinks.

Because the most acute problems were happening when I raced, I figured they might be related to the carbo-loading I was doing prior to race day—which was often heavy on gluten-containing breads or cereals. So I cut gluten out of my pre-race diet. Right away, I felt like I could breathe better on race day—it was somehow easier.



Because of the improvement, I didn't see a need to make additional changes to my daily diet; I simply focused on eliminating bread, pasta, and wheat-based cereals. I still ate some packaged foods with trace amounts of gluten, but I wasn't overly strict. In other words, I was confident I did not have celiac disease but understood that a low-gluten diet seemed to work better for me. As time went on, I continued to notice a difference, although it wasn't as pronounced as it had been at first. The difficult breathing episodes seemed to abate, but my on-again, off-again habits were bringing new issues to my attention. If racing was going to be my livelihood and profession, I knew I needed to figure out exactly which foods were leading to setbacks.

I began researching food intolerances and their effects on the body, eliminating specific foods in a more conscientious way, and taking note of the different impacts those dietary adjustments had on my body, mind, and athletic performance. This wasn't an entirely random process, as I drew on my scientific nutritional education and knowledge in combination with personal experience.

By strictly avoiding all inflammatory foods and my own identified "trigger foods," such as gluten and grains, and by reducing my reliance on carbohydrate-heavy foods, I found that my body weight was easier to maintain. The headaches I had endured for years lifted, along with the brain fog, which did wonders for my mood and encouraged me to continue to make better food choices. I focused more on proteins such as fish, poultry, and meats and included plenty of healthy natural fats along with an abundance of vegetables and fruits. The improvements were obvious. To my surprise, I didn't miss eating grains, and I found myself to be less hungry in general. I felt physically and mentally strong when I ate the right foods.

Looking back, I believe there were other signs of my food intolerances and sensitivities, starting with those headaches I had endured for years. I assumed everyone experienced a headache at some level from time to time, so unless the severity ramped up, headaches really didn't bother me. At one point they were so frequent, almost constant, that I couldn't remember not having one. Because I tend to hold tension in my neck and shoulders, tightness through these areas would cause my headaches to worsen. But even with massage, stretching, physical therapy, and strict attention to postural habits, the headaches persisted. I had my eyes checked, my hearing and balance checked; I even had some other scans and tests done just to make sure the headaches weren't the result of some other medical issue, but all the results came back showing nothing was wrong.

Iron deficiency was yet another issue that I dealt with from a young age. While I've never restricted meat, my iron levels have always been

quite low, sometimes reduced to trace levels. Even with prescribed supplements, it was difficult for me to maintain acceptable levels of iron. Growing up, I was consistently training with an elite swimming squad, making national age squads and collecting state junior medals, and I competed in junior running competitions too, though I spent little time actually training for running. Despite lack of run volume, I suffered from multiple stress fractures, which were quickly attributed to the process of growing. As I met with success on the track, I took a more conscientiously focused approach to my training, but the stress fractures only increased. The problem persisted as I started competing in triathlon, despite no identifiable cause. I have always had access to extremely good doctors, but they had no satisfactory explanation for my stress fractures, iron deficiencies, or any of my other symptoms. When a fit and healthy person is facing ongoing problems that the medical world can't explain, it's time to take a hard look at diet.

For me, this exploratory journey became both personal and professional. Through formal study, including a master's degree in nutrition and dietetics, as well as credentials in sports nutrition and dietetics, research, and experience working with others, I have found that changes in diet can have profound effects on health as well as performance. I have also discovered that sometimes the results of dietary changes can't be confirmed through definitive tests. But the proof really lies in the individual's response, whether it is a significant change in body weight and composition, reduction or complete elimination of long-term troubling symptoms, or the results chalked up on competition day.

Athletes place great demands on their bodies, and over time training and racing can expose problems that compromise performance and health. Most athletes embrace a reasonably healthy diet to support their active lifestyle, but it's easy to stop short of finding the answers to all of our questions or resolving nagging issues, however obvious or inconsequential they might seem. Chances are good that there's some room for improvement in your own diet. Ask yourself the questions on the next page to determine if your diet is helping you perform at your highest level. What you eat may have a starring or supporting role in any one of these issues. Of course all of these questions also involve other factors, but diet undeniably contributes to these problems, and it's a factor that is in our power to control and change.

When it comes to nutrition, mixed messages and confusion often go hand in hand. It's funny that we have such a hard time knowing what exactly we should or shouldn't be eating, since it's something we all do multiple times a day. An athlete's confusion over food is no different. It's widely recognized that good nutrition is an integral part of any training program and essential for helping you perform at your best, but there seems to be a lack of understanding about just what makes a good athletic diet, in addition to what makes a healthy diet generally.

The fix for athletes—and for everyone else, for that matter—is to eat as wide a variety of beneficial foods as possible while avoiding or minimizing foods that have a negative impact on health, performance, or both. Too many diets aggressively eliminate foods as a one-size-fits-all solution to better health. It's common to experience positive

## What are you **LOOKING TO FIX?**

- Are you frustrated by unsuccessful attempts to lose weight?
- Do you find yourself craving certain foods?
- Do you suffer from headaches?
- Does your skin break out in rashes, dry patches, or acne?
- Are gastrointestinal (GI) issues a daily or common occurrence?
- Do you struggle to add lean muscle and develop power and strength?
- Do you feel as though your race performance is not meeting your expectations?
- Does your training route have to take into account bathroom stops?
- Do you suffer from GI distress during competition?
- Do you feel as though your ability to recover from training is declining?
- Are you missing workouts due to frequent illnesses and nagging injuries?
- Do you struggle to make quick tactical decisions under pressure?
- Despite being fit, do you sometimes find it hard to breathe?

results from changing up your diet in this way, though you will not know exactly why the change is working. You might benefit even more by reintroducing some of those restricted foods to maximize variety in your diet. I believe that there is little point in eliminating foods without reason. Food, like life, is to be enjoyed. By the same token, you want to ensure that the foods you do eat are positively adding to your ability to play, train, or race to your best ability while also supporting a long and healthy life. To identify the foods that could be to blame for the issues you face, you will need to take a more careful approach.

A key component to any healthy diet is being able to enjoy food. Far more than simply sustaining life, food is social, and it is meant to be enjoyed. Customs, traditions, and connectivity to others

are all wrapped up in growing, preparing, and eating food. The extent to which we enjoy food and the rituals around it is also important to health. After all, you can't have a healthy body without a healthy mind. And there is no point in living a long, healthy life if it is not enjoyable too. Eating is something we need to do every day, multiple times throughout the day. I love food and I want to help you make your experience with food truly enjoyable, regardless of what food intolerances or sensitivities you bring to the table.

*The Athlete's Fix* is designed to help you become aware of your own food intolerances, be confident in making healthy food choices, and eat the foods that are optimal *for you*. Once you find your best diet, better health and performance are within reach.

# Comparing **POPULAR DIETS** to the **BASE FUNCTIONAL DIET**

In their best form, all these diets emphasize real foods: lots of fruits and vegetables, good-quality protein sources, and healthy fats. There are differences, though, in the logic behind each diet, as well as its applications. The base functional diet I propose is focused on helping athletes achieve better health and performance by identifying their own best diet.

**Paleo.** Contrary to popular opinion, the Paleo Diet is not just meat-centric but includes many fruits and vegetables. Paleo advocates will find many familiar concepts (and foods) emphasized in the base functional diet: fruits and vegetables, proteins, nuts, and natural fats. Both diets avoid sugar, processed foods and additives, wheat and other grains, legumes, and dairy. The rationale and endpoints for the two diets, however, are different. The base functional diet is not concerned with history and what was or wasn't available to our ancestors, but rather focuses on the best foods available to us now, eliminating those that most likely contribute to symptoms, in other words, the most common allergens and sources of intolerances. The base functional diet eliminates foods to begin with, but then encourages reintroduction of whole foods including dairy, whole grains, and legumes

(prepared properly), according to an individual's tolerance for them. The base functional diet also includes rice and rice products, such as rice noodles and rice flour, as low-allergenic, well-tolerated foods that help provide energy and variety to the diet. Both diets have a strong focus on real foods.

**Whole30.** This program is similar to Paleo, but goes another step by not allowing any sweet foods such as honey or desserts made with Paleo-approved ingredients. The idea is to follow the program for 30 days in an effort to heal, change tastes, and break poor habits. There are similarities with the base functional diet, such as an emphasis on whole, real foods, but the goal of the base functional diet is to promote long-term health as well as to identify individual intolerances, with the potential of reintroducing foods. Non-Whole30

foods such as desserts and flour-based foods, including baked goods, are included in the base functional diet and are more practical for the needs of high-energy, generally healthy athletes.

**Dukan.** The Dukan Diet is primarily a high-protein, low-carb weight-loss diet that takes dieters through four different stages in which certain foods are allowed or restricted. Fat-free foods are encouraged, as well as non-caloric sweeteners and other packaged foods as long as they do not breach the set caloric and carbohydrate levels. A celebration food is also scheduled in. This diet is likely not suitable for high-intensity or endurance athletes, and the focus is more on weight loss rather than long-term health or individual intolerances. *Continued*

## Comparing **POPULAR DIETS** *Continued*

**Mediterranean.** Like the base functional diet, the Mediterranean Diet emphasizes whole real foods. But whole grains and legumes are encouraged, and saturated fats (even natural ones) are discouraged. Fish, other seafood, and poultry are prioritized over red meats. The Mediterranean Diet has much to recommend it in terms of natural unprocessed foods, but no attention is paid to identification and elimination of individual intolerances.

**Detox.** Detox diets are usually followed for a short period of time and often consist of fruit and vegetable juices and little else, with the goal of fast weight loss. The human body is adept at detoxifying itself, provided that a healthy, nutritious diet is followed, so there is no evidence that a detox diet is needed. The base functional diet takes a long-term approach to health and is not just focused on weight loss or a quick fix, but rather on individual health and longevity.

**Dash.** The DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension [high blood pressure]) Diet also reduces processed and packaged foods, encouraging followers to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables as well as lean proteins, nuts, and whole grains. The DASH Diet has also helped people lose weight and increase health. Similar to the Mediterranean Diet, the DASH Diet does not allow for systematic identification of individual intolerances.

**Vegetarian/vegan.** These diets focus on plant foods, including whole grains, soy (a common allergen), and legumes, and animal products are avoided. Meeting some nutritional requirements can be challenging on a vegetarian diet, and for some athletes obtaining adequate energy can be problematic. It is also possible to follow a vegetarian diet and yet consume many processed foods. Both vegetarian diets and the base functional diet embrace plenty of whole real

foods. For more details on the base functional diet for vegans and vegetarians, see page 47.

**Raw food.** This is another diet that emphasizes natural foods; however, a raw diet is restrictive by its very nature and difficult to follow, and it's harder for most athletes to obtain sufficient energy and nutrients to sustain activity. Some foods retain all their nutrients when eaten raw, but others are actually more nutritious when cooked. A healthy diet comprises both raw and cooked foods.

**Traditional elimination.** The elimination diet echoes some of the principles of the base functional diet in that the goal is to identify intolerances through a systematic approach. Unlike the base functional diet, though, little attention is paid to inflammatory foods such as sugar and processed foods. These foods are allowed as long as they don't include the stipulated ingredients.

Too many diets aggressively eliminate foods. It's common to experience short-term positive results from changing up your diet in this way, though you will not know exactly **WHY THE CHANGE IS WORKING.**

# SWEET POTATO HASH BROWNS *with poached eggs*

**SERVES 4**

*Make this for a weekend breakfast or on a morning when you have a little more time. If you end up with leftovers, the hash browns are still tasty the next day.*

1 lb. (450 g) sweet potatoes, peeled  
1 medium onion, grated  
2 eggs, lightly beaten  
1 Tbsp. fresh parsley or chives, chopped  
Sea salt and pepper  
2 Tbsp. coconut oil, divided

## **POACHED EGGS**

2 tsp. white vinegar  
4 eggs

Preheat the oven to 250°F (130°C).

Grate the sweet potatoes into a colander. Use your hands to squeeze out as much moisture from the grated potatoes as possible (this will prevent the hash browns from being mushy). Squeeze them again inside a few paper towels, then transfer the sweet potatoes to a large bowl. Add the grated onion, the lightly beaten eggs, and parsley or chives and mix well. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Divide the mixture into 8 equal portions and shape into round patties.

Heat half of the coconut oil in a large skillet set over medium heat. When it is hot and shimmering

but not smoking, add 3 or 4 hash brown patties. Press down on them with a spatula until they are about 1 inch (2.5 cm) thick. Fry until golden brown, about 2–3 minutes, then flip and fry another 2–3 minutes. Transfer the cooked hash browns to an oven-safe dish and keep them warm in the oven while cooking the remaining hash browns in the rest of the coconut oil.

**To poach eggs:** Fill a large saucepan a little over half full with water, add the vinegar, and set over medium heat until almost simmering—the water will have tiny bubbles rising from the bottom of the pan. Use a spoon to stir the water to create a whirlpool effect (this helps keep the egg intact). Crack an egg and place it gently into the center of the whirlpool, opening the egg as close to the water as possible. Turn off the heat, cover, and let cook without stirring for 2–3 minutes for a soft yolk and 3–4 minutes for a more solid yolk. Remove the egg with a slotted spoon and drain on a paper towel. You can cook the eggs one at a time using this method or all at once without stirring.

Place two hash brown patties on each plate and top with one poached egg. Serve immediately.



# SALMON GRAVLAX *with potato herb salad*

**SERVES** 10–12

*Gravlax is simple and versatile. It's perfect for either impressing guests or as a standby in the fridge: You can add it to salads, omelets, or scrambled eggs. The recipe calls for a whole side of salmon—perfect for a large crowd or for feeding houseguests for a couple of days. For one or two people use a single fillet of salmon—just reduce the ingredients accordingly.*

⅓ cup (100 g) salt flakes  
⅓ cup (65 g) superfine sugar  
⅓ cup (3 g) + 2 Tbsp. fresh dill, finely chopped  
1 whole side of fresh salmon, skin on

## POTATO HERB SALAD

2 lb. (1 kg) small new potatoes, halved  
Small bunch of fresh mint sprigs  
6 scallions, chopped  
½ cup (120 ml) olive oil  
1 Tbsp. lemon juice  
1 heaping Tbsp. capers  
Sea salt and pepper  
1 Tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped  
2 Tbsp. fresh mint, chopped  
1 Tbsp. fresh basil leaves, chopped

Combine the salt, sugar, and ⅓ cup of dill and mix well. Put a large sheet of plastic wrap on a clean kitchen counter. Pat down the fish with paper towels and place it on the plastic wrap, skin side down. Add the salt mixture, pressing it into the

fish. Wrap the fish tightly in several layers of plastic wrap and place in a baking dish. (Juices will be released as the salmon cures, so you'll want to catch them to avoid spoiling everything else in the fridge). Weigh down the fish with something heavy—I put a breadboard on top of the wrapped fish and use anything heavy that I already have in the fridge—and place it in the refrigerator.

The fish will be ready in 24–36 hours, depending on the thickness of the fillet. (The texture will be a little firmer, but the color will not have changed.) Drain the juices and turn the fish over every 8–12 hours, or whenever you remember. Remove the plastic wrap and scrape off the curing mixture. Sprinkle with the remaining fresh dill and slice thinly.

The salmon will keep, wrapped tightly and stored in an airtight container, for a couple of days.

**To make the potato salad:** Add the potatoes and mint sprigs to a large pot of water and simmer until tender, about 25–30 minutes. Drain and place in a large bowl with the scallions, olive oil, lemon juice, and capers. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Toss gently.

Add the herbs just before serving. (If you add them to the hot potatoes, they will turn brown.) The potato salad can be served warm or cold.

Serve slices of the gravlax with the potato salad and a simple green salad or some steamed green beans.

**CURING FISH** requires a fair amount of sugar and salt, but they are scraped off before serving. If the thought of raw fish makes you squeamish, keep in mind that salmon gravlax is not raw, because the structure of the protein is changed thanks to the curing mix. Be sure to use very fresh fish.



# DIY SPORTS DRINK

## SERVES 2

*Here's an alternative to your regular sports drink—a little lighter and a lot more natural. The ratio of sugar and salt is based on the World Health Organization's recommendation for hydration solutions: 3.5 grams of carbohydrate per 100 milliliters, or a 3.5 percent solution. (The combination of sugar and salt is important because the glucose accelerates the body's uptake of the solution, speeding rehydration.)*

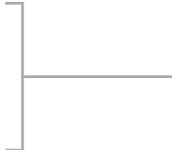
2 cups (480 ml) water or coconut water  
½ tsp. sea salt  
4 tsp. honey or white granulated sugar  
1 large slice lemon or lime

Mix all the ingredients together well, pour into water bottles, and keep chilled until you are ready to go.

*Try other flavors using 1 tablespoon fresh mint, ½ cup fresh berries, half of an orange, etc.*



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Pip Taylor is an accredited practicing dietitian, sports dietitian, and professional triathlete. She holds a master's degree in nutrition and dietetics and postgraduate certifications in sports dietetics and sports nutrition.

As a professional triathlete, Pip has competed on the international circuit for the last 15 years, winning numerous major titles including ITU World Cup and Ironman 70.3 events and representing Australia on many occasions. As an athlete, Pip has experienced firsthand how small changes in nutrition can have a significant impact on health as well as on sports performance and recovery. Her passion for sports performance and interest in the human body ultimately led her to pursue a formal education in the field of nutrition. Global travel on the pro circuit—including time spent living in the United States and Europe—as well as exposure to and collaboration with other nutrition experts deepened her understanding of issues related to food, nutrition, and health and the unique requirements of each individual.

Pip's work as a dietitian has given her the opportunity to educate, engage, and entertain a wide variety of audiences on the value of eating real, whole foods. She consults with sports teams and individual clients, from professional athletes to corporate health programs and sports nutrition product developers. As a speaker and regular contributor to various magazines, web sites, and other media, Pip takes pride in her ability to entertain and engage, thus effectively encouraging athletes to achieve greater potential in their chosen sport and encouraging everyone to take steps toward better health and well-being.

When she is not out swimming, biking, or running around the beautiful North Coast of New South Wales, Australia, Pip can be found at the farmers market, in the kitchen, or cleaning up endless happy messes created by her two young children. Feeding her own family while also fuel-

ing for the demands of training has given Pip a real appreciation for the challenges associated with eating well on a daily basis. Born out of a genuine love of good food and the difference it makes, *The Athlete's Fix* is a guide to help others enjoy good food, better performance, and overall health.



# REPAIR YOUR GUT, REDUCE INFLAMMATION & *get your diet right*

Food cravings, gut issues, stubborn body fat, chronic headaches, and brain fog are problems athletes face every day. While you might be inclined to push through pain and discomfort, you could be overlooking symptoms of food intolerance.

Popular diets that eliminate specific food groups may yield short-term results, but for most people they are overly restrictive and fail to identify the real food culprits. In *The Athlete's Fix*, sports nutritionist and pro triathlete Pip Taylor helps you find the foods that make you feel and perform your best, with a sensible, step-by-step program.

To get your nutrition on track, Taylor maps out a base functional diet that will help you identify the specific foods and ingredients that could be causing the following problems:

- > **Gluten intolerance**
- > **Lactose intolerance**
- > **Reduced tolerance for digesting specific carbohydrates, including fructose**
- > **Reactions to food chemicals such as salicylates, amines, and glutamates**
- > **Inflammation caused by poor nutrition and foods that are not well tolerated**

Once you're free of symptoms, you can start adding safe foods back into the mix until you arrive at a personalized, high-performance diet that allows you to enjoy as many healthy foods as possible. And performance won't suffer while you figure it out—you'll find guidelines on how to get enough fuel for training and recovery, and delicious recipes to ease the transition.

*The Athlete's Fix* is a program designed specifically for athletes like you. Pip Taylor shows you the way to your best diet, one that is full of flavor and designed for better performance and health.

**PIP TAYLOR** is an accredited sports dietitian and a professional triathlete. Highlights of her racing career include wins and podiums at ITU World Cup races, ITU World Team Championships, and Ironman 70.3® events.



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