Chapter 8 – Bodybuilding Nutrition the Simple Way

Most bodybuilders are aware that they have to eat a diet that is full of the right nutrition if they want the best body, but they are not always entirely sure where to begin. Nutrients appear to be somewhat mysterious and a little complex but, in all honesty, they are not. Provided you start from the top and work downwards, nutrients are very simple to understand.

Much of the confusion seems to come from people who say that you "must do it this way" or "you should be eating this and not that." Much of what you hear ends up causing confusion, and nothing seems to fit, making it very difficult to see the big picture. This is why I am going to show you the big picture and let you sort out your own nutrition to meet the goals that you have set.

Think of your nutritional plan as being something like a personal household budget. Both plans are all about making the right choice, even if it is a difficult one, and then sticking to it. Blow the budget, and disaster is waiting. The same goes for your nutrition plan – deviate from it, and everything you have done will be lost.

When you draw up a financial plan, you begin with your income. You subtract any expenses that have to be paid to work out what your spending amount is. When you draw up a nutritional plan, you begin with the number of calories you can consume in a day, subtracting everything that is needed for lean muscle growth. This will tell you the amount of cheat foods you can have.

How to Draw Up a Nutritional Bodybuilding Plan

Step 1 – Work out your calorie requirements per day

This is your starting point, and it will take you no more than a couple of minutes to work out. Use a calorie counter to work out the energy requirements of your body on a daily basis. This is your TDEE, or Total Daily Energy Expenditure. For example, a 25-year-old who weighs 160 lb,

stands 68 inches tall, and works out for three to five hours a week doing cardio will have a TDEE of 2721 calories on a daily basis.

Step 2 – Determine your caloric goal

What is your goal here? Is it bulking up, cutting out, or recompositioning? If you are cutting, your caloric goal per day will be lower than your TDEE. If you are bulking up, it will be higher than your TDEE, while recompositioning means that your caloric goal must match your TDEE exactly. Let's go back to the person in step 1. He wants to cut so his caloric goal will be a deficit of 20%; 2721 calories less 20% is equal to 2176 calories per day.

Step 3 – Determine your Macro

Macro is a shortened version of Macronutrient Ratios. In the bodybuilding world, this can be one of these nutritional pigeonholes – fat, carbohydrate, and protein. What you need to determine would be the percentages of calories that you will allocate to each of these three. Be aware that we calculate these percentages by calories, not by weight. Protein and carbohydrates are each 4 calories a gram, while fat is 9 calories. Some of the more common macros are:

- 40/40/20 – 40% protein, 40% carbohydrate, 20% fat
- 40/50/10 – 40% protein, 50% carbohydrate, 10% fat
- 50/10/40 – 50% protein, 10% carbohydrate, 40% fat

It isn't always a good idea to set your protein on a percentage level though; it is much better if you base it on your body weight. As a rule, it is recommended that you consume 1 gram of protein for each pound of body weight. A 200 lb person would eat 200 grams of protein. So, what would that be in terms of percentages? Well, that depends on how much cardio exercise you do. If you do none at all, you might have to go up as high as 40% protein to make sure you get that 1 gram per pound. On the other hand, if you do loads of cardio, you could drop to as low as 20%. It isn't as complicated as it sounds if you use the right calorie calculator. Failing that, you can sit and

work it out for yourself – once you've done it a few times, it'll become second nature to you.

Step 4 – Work out your budget

Now, with those macro percentages, you can work out your carbohydrate, protein, and fat intake in grams per day. Let's say that your caloric goals are 2176 per day. You set your ratios at 30/40/30. That means you would need to eat 653 calories of protein, 870 calories of carbohydrates, and 653 calories of fat per day. To work this out, you need to do a little bit of math. Fat contains 9 calories per gram, while protein and carbohydrates are both 4 calories per gram. To work out your grams:

- 653 calories of protein – 653/4 = 163 grams
- 870 calories of carbohydrates – 870/4 – 217 grams
- 653 calories of fat – 653/9 = 72 grams

These are your daily allowances for protein carbohydrate, and fat, and have to stick to these. With these figures, you can work out what foods you can and can't eat.

Is that it?

Sadly not. What would happen if you decided that you were going to stick to your macros but eat a large spoon of white refined sugar as your carbohydrate, a large bowl of isolated soy as your protein, and a big lump of margarine for your fat? This is just an example, and it is clearly not a very healthy one. There are other things that are just as important as fat, carbs, and protein when you are bodybuilding.

- **Antioxidants and Vitamins**

Vitamins are vital for muscle building and, while you can get them in pill form, you are better off getting them from your food, which is a more natural and far better source. There are those who take a multivitamin everyday as a way of kidding themselves that they don't need to eat properly, and that is a

particularly bad idea. Vegetables are the best form of vitamins, and they also contain fiber. Fiber is filling, and it contains no calories so you can cut your weight without ever having to feel hungry and deprived. Every day, eat between four and six cups of vegetables and three pieces of fruit. Go for the color – red or black grapes, berries, kale, red bell peppers, spinach, etc., to make sure you are getting the full dose of antioxidants as well.

- **Fiber**

As I mentioned earlier, fiber is an important part of any diet because it can help burn that fat off. Fiber contains absolutely no calories, but it is one of the most filling components of any diet, which means the more you eat, the less hungry you feel. This has the effect of lowering your calorie consumption. Fruits and vegetables are the main bearers of fiber, but eating those alone is simply not enough. You need to add beans and whole grains to your diet to make it up to 40 grams per day.

- **Omega-3 Fatty Acid**

We all know that essential fatty acids are good for us, and the reason they are essential is because the human body cannot make them. There are two main essential fatty acids – linoleic acid or omega-6 and alpha-linoleic (ALA), which is omega-3. Omega-3 is more important, and you can find it in oily fish, such as salmon, mackerel, herring, and anchovies, as well as in flax seed. Omega-3 fatty acids are good for helping to protect the heart from disease and for improving brain function and preventing depression. In terms of bodybuilding, omega-3 fatty acids help you to gain the muscle mass you are seeking. The recommended dose is 5 mg per day, but you should try to get it from real food sources. If you have to take it in supplement form, go for a high-quality fish oil supplement.

- **High Quality Protein**

I know I already mentioned this earlier, but I want to stress the importance of the quality of the protein you include in your diet. The most important part here is to balance out your protein needs across the food groups and your

macros. If, while you are eating your protein allowance, you blow out the other macros, then your food budget is shot to pieces. Let's say that you choose fried chicken as your main source of protein, or perhaps you went for the Big Mac. You would almost certainly destroy your allowance for saturated fat and blow your fat macro out of the water. You must stick with lean protein sources. Even if a meat looks lean, it can contain a high level of fat, so take that into account when planning your meals. The best choice, in all honesty, is the time-honored chicken breast – boneless, skinless, and grilled.

It isn't enough just to count how many grams of protein you eat. An awful lot of people believe that the bet source of protein is beef, but even quinoa has got a better quality of protein than beef has. High-quality protein is the key to growing big muscles and to getting stronger. While plant proteins are not as high in quality as that from meat source, there are other combinations that work. Milk and eggs contain the same, if not higher, quality of protein than chicken does.

- **Good Fat**s

For so long, we have been told by the medical professionals that fat is bad for us, in all its forms. It seems that now, they are coming around to a way of thinking that most of us have known for years – some fats are good for you. MUFA – monounsaturated fat – and PUFA – polyunsaturated fat – are good for you. In their oil form, these types of fat are liquid when at room temperature but, instead of going for liquid oils, look for other sources. Nuts, avocados, and olives are some of the best sources of unsaturated good fat, and you should aim to get at least 10% of your calories every day from these fats.

For many years, high cholesterol was linked to the cholesterol that you consumed, but this has now been pushed to one side because it simply isn't true. Saturated fat used to a big villain but, although you should aim to keep it down to less than 5% of your calories, it isn't as bad as it was once thought. The best place to get your saturated fats from is eggs, but be careful how many you eat. If you are eating eggs as your protein source, you must remove the yolk, as that is where the fat is.

The bad fats – the ones you really must avoid at all costs – are the ones that are factory-produced and those with long, complicated, chemical-like names. If you saw an ingredient called “partially hydrogenated vegetable oil,” it’s bad for you. Virtually any fried food you get from a fast food joint is bad because they are fried in that type of fat, and virtually all snacks and junk food also contain these types of fat.

- **Cheat Meals**

So, what’s left? We’ve got all the good stuff, so what you can have for your cheat meals? There is some good news and some bad news here. The good news is for those who are bulking or who have a surplus of calories over their TDEE – you have quite a bit of room to have some of those cheat meals. A candy bar, a beer, cake, and cookies are all okay so long as they fit in with your daily budget. The bad news is for those who are cutting. You have very little room left for cheats once you have satisfied all of your daily nutritional needs. In the example above where the person is at a 20% deficit, your cheat meal would be something worthless like half of a candy bar.

The truth about cheat meals and snacks is that a bodybuilder can actually lose fat and make muscle gains by incorporating a cheat meal into his or her diet. This is because if you followed your bodybuilding diet perfectly all the time, your body would become used to the caloric intake and, as a result, lowers its metabolism (caloric burning ability) in an effort to maintain the status quo. There are a couple of ways you can avoid this.

Caloric Cycling: This method allows you to keep your healthy eating habits intact. Simply up the calorie intake over the weekend, mainly in the form of good carbohydrates, before and after your work out to spike your metabolism.

Once a Week Cheat Meal: Another way you can avoid the slowing of your metabolism is to introduce a cheat meal into your diet. If you constantly crave a specifically forbidden food, this may be a good way to satisfy those cravings while accomplishing the goal of increasing your metabolism. The keys to making a cheat meal work are to plan ahead on what you’re going to eat and to employ portion control measures. For example, your cheat meal cannot be three gallons of ice cream topped with hot fudge. Also, limit the

cheat meal to one hour, unless it is Thanksgiving or Christmas, in which case a cheat day is acceptable.

Keep in mind that if you eat everything you can see without restraint, the chances are that any benefit you could have gained from the cheat meal will be lost, as it may take a whole week to burn off all the calories you have consumed. In this case, your fat loss results will also be compromised. Therefore, you must use common sense and self-control for you cheat meal to work.

Anyone with 20% body fat or higher should use extreme caution when meal cheating. If you fall into this category, the size and frequency of your cheat meal should be very minimal. This is because if you are overweight, there is a good chance that your metabolism is much slower than that of your thinner counterparts, which means that you have a greater probability of having most of those extra calories from your cheat meal converted into body fat.

So hopefully, you've got the idea and can now work out your own daily nutritional budget. For every single calorie that you need to eat, ask yourself how to get the most for it. Instead of eating the empty calories in a candy bar, go for an apple that contains vitamins and fiber, as well as a small handful of peanuts for the good fats. Nutrition is all about making the small decisions on what to eat and all of them add up.

What is a Good Snack?

Basically, anything that works with your daily plan and does not put you over or destroy your macros is a good snack. You know how many grams of protein, fats, and carbohydrates you can eat in a day and, provided your snack doesn't put you over on any of those, you are good to go. It's that simple.

The following is an example of a good nutrition plan based on the example we used earlier:

	UNIT	PROTEIN	CARBOHYDRATE	FAT	FIBER
Daily Budget		163 g	217 g	72 g	40 g
Apple	Whole	0	17	0	3
Orange	Whole	0	21	0	4

Banana	Whole	0	51	0	6
Spinach	1 cup	5	7	0	4
Kale	1 cup	2	7	0	3
Beets	1 cup	2	16	0	4
Broccoli	1 cup	6	10	0	6
Rolled Oats	1 cup	11	56	5	8
Salmon	250 g	70	0	20	0
Grilled chicken	200 g	62	0	8	0
Nuts	28 g (1 oz.)	5	0	14	0
Olives	84 g (3 oz.)	0	3	12	0
Egg	1 whole	6	0	5	0