



# FUELING YOUR FITNESS JOURNEY: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

*Fuel Your Best Self with Expert  
Nutrition Tips and Guidance*

**BY PAUL RICHARDS**

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# Introduction



**Paul Richards**

**CEO OF CLUB PHYSICAL**

Pictured here with a giant zucchini grown by Charles Johnson (club member)

I am not a nutritionist. The observations I'm going to share with you come from a lifelong passion for wellness and the first-hand experiences my team and I have gathered from serving over 250,000 New Zealanders at our health clubs. This also includes the practical application of what I've learned personally.

## The power of food

Have you heard about exceptional athletes like USA swimmer Michael Phelps consuming 6,000 calories a day, 100-mile ultra-marathon runners taking in up to 8,000 calories, or wrestling's Andre the Giant devouring a day's worth of groceries in one sitting? While these examples represent the extremes, they illustrate the undeniable connection between food and performance.

For those striving to improve health and fitness, what you eat accounts for at least half of your results. Your food choices can either fuel your success or hinder it. The average moderately active person requires between 1,600 and 3,000 calories daily for energy and maintenance. While it's helpful to understand calories, there are better, more sustainable ways to think about food than simply counting numbers.



***Nutrition is the backbone of fitness; it fuels your body, powers your workouts, and rebuilds your strength. Without it, you're running on empty.***



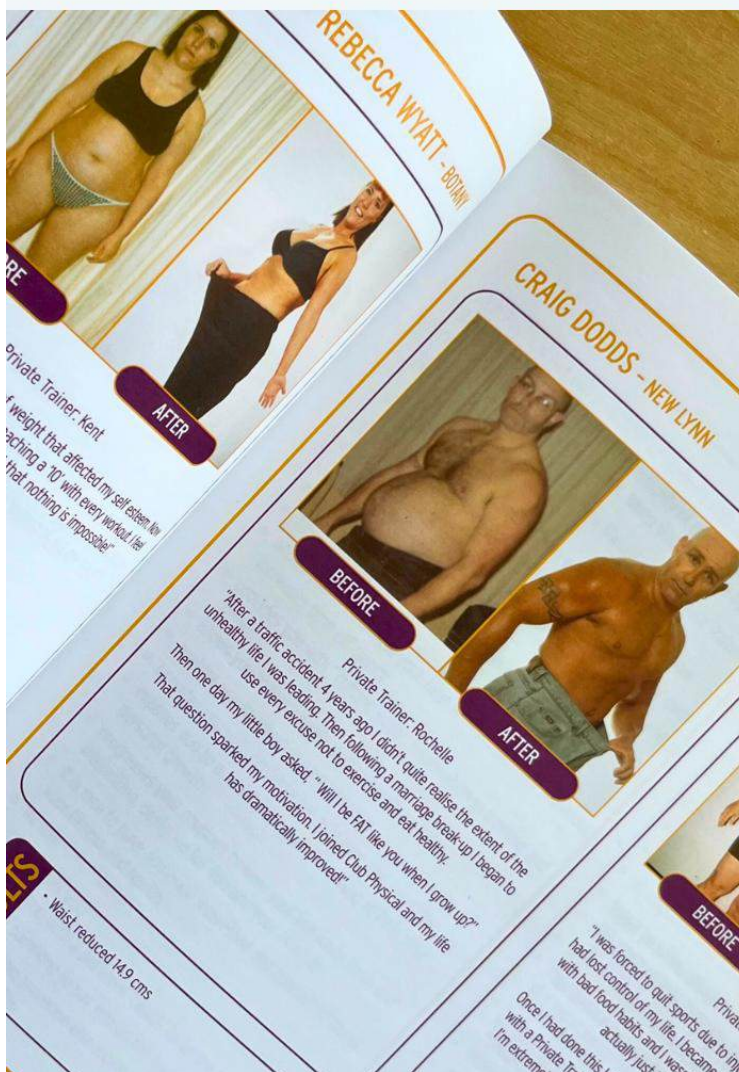


# Healthy eating plus regular exercise yields 'Life-changing results!'

In 1991 we began developing a 12-week 'Before and After' programme that quickly became known as the Club Physical 12-week Transformation Challenge. Over the course of three decades the team and I honed and developed the system to result in thousands of radical health and aesthetic transformations. So outstanding were these that some people didn't believe the 'after' photos. But they were ALL true and witnessed by thousands of other members at the time.

Perhaps the biggest 'secret' to these changes was that each 'group of people' started their 12-weeks together. They often exercised 'together' and were strongly supported by our team. On a personal basis, those with the most outstanding transformations, became disciplined in their new healthy eating regime. This was coupled with almost daily exercise, whether as a group workout, weight training, joining in with GROUPX classes or walking with their dogs.

In short, the secrets were; Healthy eating, daily exercise, the support of others and a 12-week deadline to stick to. These are the hallmarks of the power of GOAL SETTING.



The outcome of running this programme hundreds of times is that we now have more than a meter high pile of outstanding transformation records and before and after photos. At one stage we printed a glossy 'Training and Nutrition Diary' (pictured below) that included 50 testimonials and eye catching before and after photos along with the most inspirational accounts.

We've since revised our thinking about 'radical' transformations and believe that, when 'weight-loss' is the goal, it would be better to be settle for an achievable and manageable 500 grammes a week. It's important to have an eating plan and routine that you can happily maintain all year!





# A Smarter Way to Eat

Early in my fitness journey, I learned that many athletes thrive on eating smaller, balanced meals throughout the day. Think: breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner, and supper. This approach ensures consistent energy levels and supports a leaner, stronger physique. Lean proteins and salads often take center stage in these meals, with protein shakes as convenient substitutes.

Crash dieting, skipping meals, or excessively reducing calories may seem like quick fixes, but they're unsustainable and can harm long-term health. Instead, focus on nutrient-rich foods that promote satiety—like salads, vegetables, rice, grains, and fruits—and minimise fast and processed foods that can derail your goals.

## **NUTRITIONAL HACK:**

*I prefer to make the effort to construct a delicious Latvian salad. Ask me and I'll share the ingredients. It takes about 15-20 minutes. If you place your laptop nearby you can listen and learn from a complete TED TALK at the same time!*

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***Fuel your body with balance, not shortcuts. Consistent, nutrient-rich meals are the secret to lasting energy, strength, and health—because fitness is a lifestyle, not a quick fix.***

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# Thirteen Secrets to Transforming Your Health and Fitness

- 1** **Snack smart and often - Think of meals as energy boosters! Eating nutrient-packed mini-meals throughout the day keeps you fueled and unstoppable.**
- 2** **Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water. Keep your bottle handy and sip often. Water keeps your mind sharp and your body ready for action.**
- 3** **Sip strategically - Coffee and green tea aren't just morning saviours—they're antioxidant-packed performance enhancers.**
- 4** **Crush evening cravings with intention - Skip the sugar bombs (wine, chocolate, ice cream) and opt for a satisfying snack like Greek yogurt or almonds.**
- 5** **Make your plate a power-packed masterpiece - Lean proteins and vibrant salads are your secret to feeling full and energised.**
- 6** **Own your mornings with breakfast wins - Kick-start your day with a combo of protein, carbs, and healthy fats that'll keep you going strong.**
- 7** **Cut the processed junk, not the flavour - Choose whole foods that make you feel alive, not sluggish. Your taste buds (and body) will thank you.**
- 8** **Spot sneaky sugars - Check labels like a detective, and swap out sugary surprises for natural sweetness like fresh fruit.**
- 9** **Ditch calorie obsession for nutrient passion - Focus on feeding your body with quality fuel, not just numbers.**
- 10** **Celebrate your cravings—guilt-free - Life's too short to skip the pizza or cake. Plan your treats, enjoy them fully, and get back on track.**
- 11** **Work out like a boss - Find the movement you love, whether it's lifting, dancing, or hiking, and aim for 4-5 sweat sessions a week.**
- 12** **Sleep like it's your superpower - Prioritize 7-8 hours of solid rest to recharge and rebuild for the day ahead.**
- 13** **Embrace the journey, stumbles and all - Progress isn't a straight line. Fall? Dust yourself off and keep moving forward—your future self will thank you.**



# The Science of Healthy Eating

## Microbiome and Gut Health

Your gut microbiome—the trillions of bacteria living in your digestive system—plays a crucial role in overall health. Foods rich in fiber, such as whole grains, vegetables, and fermented options like yogurt or kimchi, promote a thriving gut microbiome. This can boost immunity, enhance digestion, and even improve mood and mental clarity.

## Protein Timing and Recovery

Recent research shows that spreading protein intake evenly across meals aids muscle repair and growth. Consuming a protein-rich snack post-workout, like a shake or a boiled egg, can further enhance recovery and performance.

## Debunking Food Myths

- **Myth: All Calories Are Equal:** Calories from sugar don't provide the same satiety or metabolic benefits as those from protein or fibre-rich foods.
- **Myth: Carbs Are Bad:** Whole carbs like sweet potatoes, oats, and quinoa are essential for energy and should not be avoided.
- **Myth: Fats Make You Fat:** Healthy fats from sources like avocado, olive oil, and nuts support brain function and hormone balance.

## **NUTRITIONAL HACK:**

*Have a protein shake within 60 minutes of your workout to help maximise results from your efforts. Nutra-Bullet blenders are low-cost and convenient.*



# Master Meal Prep: Simplify Your Week

Meal prepping saves time, ensures portion control, and supports healthy eating habits. Here's how to get started:

- ✔ **Plan: Set dietary goals, choose recipes, and make a shopping list.**
- ✔ **Shop: Focus on fresh, whole foods.**
- ✔ **Prepare: Batch-cook recipes, portion meals, and store them in glass containers.**
- ✔ **Schedule: Dedicate specific days to meal prep.**
- ✔ **Reheat: Safely reheat meals and enjoy.**

## **Tools and Essentials:**

- Stainless Steel or Cast Iron Cookware – Choose these for safe, long-lasting cookware that avoids the health risks associated with non-stick surfaces.
- Glass or Stainless-Steel Containers – Store meals in these to minimize microplastic exposure and keep food fresh with airtight seals.
- Sharp Knives and Cutting Board – A good-quality knife and sturdy cutting board make meal prep quick, safe, and precise.
- Instant Pot or Slow Cooker – Perfect for making large batches of nutritious meals with minimal effort, saving you time throughout the week.

## ***NUTRITIONAL HACK:***

Around 2004 the much promoted non-stick pans coated with TEFLON were found to have cancer causing chemicals. My parents had these pots and pans like numerous other Kiwi families. Be suspicious of 'black coated pots .....I've thrown ours out.





# Foundations of Healthy Eating

**Energy-Giving Breakfasts:** Start your day with oatmeal topped with nuts and fruit (frozen blueberries are great) or a smoothie with spinach, banana, and almond or peanut butter.

**Salads as Powerhouses:** Combine leafy greens with raw veggies and healthy fats like avocado for a nutrient boost.

**Hydration:** Drink plenty of water and consider green tea for antioxidants. I've noticed several leading nutritionists and researchers have been recently praising the power of Green Tea!

**Avoid Processed Foods:** Replace sugary snacks with natural alternatives like nuts, dates, or fruit.

## **NUTRITIONAL HACK:**

Better to fill your gut with a lean protein and a high quality nutritious salad than with highly processed calorie dense food.

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*Healthy eating is the cornerstone of overall well-being. It's about fueling your body with a variety of nutrient-dense foods that provide the energy, vitamins, and minerals necessary for optimal performance. The foundation lies in balance—choosing whole foods, embracing natural ingredients, and listening to your body's hunger cues. It's not about perfection or restriction, but about making mindful choices that nourish and sustain you, so you can feel your best every day.*

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# Some healthy ideas for your menu

Tailor your menu to health goals, such as strength improvement, anti-inflammatory benefits, or weight management.

## Ten of the Best Protein Food Sources:

1. Chicken breast
2. Eggs
3. Salmon
4. Greek yogurt
5. Lentils
6. Chickpeas
7. Tofu or tempeh
8. Quinoa
9. Cottage cheese
10. Whey or plant-based protein powder

## Twenty of the Most Powerful Energy Foods:

1. Bananas
2. Blueberries
3. Oats
4. Sweet potatoes
5. Almonds
6. Avocado
7. Spinach
8. Dark chocolate (moderation)
9. Chia seeds
10. Eggs
11. Greek yogurt
12. Lentils
13. Walnuts
14. Apples
15. Oranges
16. Carrots
17. Beets
18. Salmon
19. Olive oil
20. Brown rice





## Continued...

- **Breakfast:** Energy-Boosting Oatmeal
- **Lunch:** Rainbow Salad with Quinoa
- **Dinner:** Herb-Crusted Salmon with Steamed Broccoli
- **Snack:** No-Bake Energy Bites

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*Every bite you take is an opportunity to nourish your body, fuel your goals, and honor your health. Choose wisely, because food is the foundation of a vibrant life.*

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### Fast and easy lunches

If you can get lunch prep right, you'll often save yourself from the temptation to join your mates at the takeaway bar!

- Cook extra the night before and pack leftovers.
- Prepare a muesli bowl with dried apricots and unsweetened yogurt.
- Try a healthy, high-protein ready meal available at Club Physical.

### Pre-Workout Energy

Nothing saps your strength before a workout more than lost sleep, a stressful day, lack of good hydration, or energy giving food. However, a BIG part of pre-workout-low energy could be just a cruel illusion. You can overcome this. Virtually EVERY time I've felt this way, but hammered on regardless, things have come right within the first 15-minutes. And whether it's a psychological prop or not, I've since found energy drinks (sugar -free) actually do supply that extra oomph!

- A banana with peanut butter sandwich or a coffee can do wonders. Ensure good hydration and bring water or an electrolyte drink or energy drink.







## 20 Healthy Dinner Recipes

1. Chicken Parmesan Meatballs: A lighter twist on the classic, combining lean ground chicken with Parmesan and herbs.
2. Black Bean Sweet Potato Chili: A hearty vegetarian chili packed with fibre and protein.
3. Easy Chicken Fajita Bowls: Grilled chicken with sautéed peppers and onions over brown rice.
4. DIY Chipotle Burrito Bowl: Customise your own bowl with lean proteins, brown rice, and plenty of veggies.
5. Chicken Larb Bowls: A Thai-inspired dish with ground chicken, fresh herbs, and a tangy dressing.
6. Mexican Corn and Quinoa Salad: A zesty salad featuring quinoa, black beans, corn, and a lime dressing.
7. Curry Lentil Soup: A warming soup made with lentils, tomatoes, and a blend of spices.
8. Easy Turkey Chili: Lean ground turkey simmered with beans and spices for a comforting meal.
9. Zucchini Cacio e Pepe Pizza: A healthier pizza topped with zucchini and a light cheese sauce.
10. Creamy Black Bean Soup: A smooth and creamy soup that's both filling and nutritious.
11. Easy Dahl (Dal): A simple lentil dish seasoned with turmeric, cumin, and coriander.
12. Chicken Chili Verde: Chicken cooked in a green tomatillo sauce for a tangy and spicy kick.
13. Chicken Tawook Quinoa Bowls: Middle Eastern spiced chicken served over quinoa with fresh vegetables.
14. Grilled Steak Salad with Caramelised Onion Vinaigrette: Slices of grilled steak atop mixed greens with a homemade vinaigrette.
15. Perfect Juicy Grilled Chicken Thighs: Marinated and grilled chicken thighs that are both juicy and flavourful.
16. Summer Ratatouille Pasta: A pasta dish loaded with summer vegetables in a light tomato sauce.
17. Southwestern Chicken Chopped Salad: A hearty salad with grilled chicken, black beans, corn, and avocado.
18. Steak Caprese: Grilled steak served with tomatoes, basil, and mozzarella for a protein-packed Caprese salad.
19. Grilled Corn and Zucchini Salad: A fresh salad featuring grilled corn, zucchini, and a light vinaigrette.
20. Summer Salmon Salad: Flaky salmon served over mixed greens with a citrus dressing.



# Energy-Boosting Breakfast Recipes

1. Baked Oatmeal with Pears: A comforting baked oatmeal dish that's perfect for cozy mornings.
2. Cauliflower Eggs Benedict with Turmeric Yogurt Sauce: A creative twist on the classic, using cauliflower and a turmeric-infused sauce.
3. Mocha Overnight Oats: Overnight oats flavoured with coffee and chocolate for an energising start.
4. Peanut Butter Breakfast Bars: Homemade bars combining peanut butter, oats, and honey for a quick grab-and-go option.
5. Egg-in-a-Hole Fried Quinoa: A protein-packed breakfast featuring quinoa and eggs cooked together.



*Breakfast is the most important meal of the day for a reason—it jumpstarts your metabolism, fuels your energy, and helps you stay focused and productive. A balanced breakfast with protein, fiber, and healthy fats sets the tone for a successful, energized day ahead.*

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# Monitoring YOUR Progress: The EVOLT Body Scan

Within days of starting your fitness journey, you might notice that your clothes are getting baggy or that you are receiving compliments from coworkers like “There’s something different about you!”. Aside from this, you can reach for scientific insights. A regular EVOLT Body Scan is invaluable. This advanced tool provides detailed metrics like muscle mass, body fat percentage, and metabolic rate, allowing you to track tangible progress. Seeing these results can help you refine your approach and stay motivated.

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*The EVOLT 360 Body Scan has been a total game-changer for me! Seeing detailed progress beyond just the number on the scale has kept me motivated and focused on my fitness goals. It’s amazing to track changes in muscle mass, fat percentage, and overall health—it really shows how much my hard work is paying off. I feel more in control of my journey, and having those insights helps me tweak my workouts and nutrition to get even better results!*

*-CP Member, Ludvig*



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## Wrap-Up and Encouragement

Healthy eating is a journey, not a sprint. Start small, stay consistent, and celebrate every victory. If you have questions or need guidance, the team at Club Physical Te Atatū is here to help. Let’s fuel your success together!

