

FITNESS RENAISSANCE SPECIAL REPORT

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Foods That Burn Fat, Foods That Turn to Fat

This recommended list of "fat-burning foods," also known in the Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle (BFFM) program as "the terrific twelve," might be the most valuable resource you've ever laid your hands on. Although the possible variety in your food choices is nearly infinite, these twelve are the *staple foods* that should make up the foundation of your program. Variety is important, but these are the foods you can't go wrong with and the ones you'll keep coming back to time after time.

1. Oatmeal

If I could only choose one source of complex, starchy carbohydrates for a fat loss program, this would be it! Oatmeal is the one carbohydrate food that virtually 100% of all bodybuilders and fitness models eat on a daily basis. What makes it so great? Well, although it's a starchy carbohydrate, oatmeal has a nice balance between carbs, protein and good fat. A half a cup contains 3 grams of fat, 27 grams of carbs and 5 grams of protein. The low glycemic index, combined with the presence of protein and fat makes oatmeal a very slowly released carb – exactly what you're looking for when you want to get lean.

Make sure you choose the all-natural oats; either old-fashioned oats (such as Quaker) or the quick oats. Stay away from the sweetened and or flavored oatmeal packets. Oatmeal is delicious with natural (sugar free) applesauce and cinnamon. Or, try some crushed walnuts or flaxseeds in your morning oats, which will give your "porridge" a nice crunchy texture while adding those desirable "good fats" we all need. For a complete meal, try a couple scoops of Vanilla Praline flavored protein powder in your oatmeal. If you get tired of oatmeal, there are plenty of other cooked whole grain cereals in the "oatmeal family." Look in your local health food store (or a gourmet supermarket) for barley, wheat, triticale, rye, oat bran and flax cereals (or a multi grain combination of the above).

2. Yams (and sweet potatoes)

Right behind oatmeal, yams (and sweet potatoes) are probably my second favorite starchy carbohydrate. Flavorful, all-natural, low in calories, and packed with nutrients and antioxidants like beta-carotene, it's no wonder yams are a favorite

carbohydrate among bodybuilders, fitness competitors and health-seekers alike. According to Brian Rowley, science editor for FLEX magazine, "Bodybuilders use yams when cutting bodyfat because they are low on the glycemic index. Waxy white potatoes (boilers) are high on the glycemic index, so they make an excellent postworkout meal, but nothing compares with a yam the rest of the time."

Although the glycemic index is a secondary factor when making carb choices on the BFFM program, if you're carb sensitive or if you're on a very strict diet (like a contest diet), then the glycemic index should be given more weight in your choices. Yams are one of the best. Sweet potatoes are not exactly the same thing as yams (they're slightly higher on the glycemic index), but they're otherwise similar, which also makes them good choices for fat burning diets. You can identify a yam by its darker orange color, pointier ends and unusual sizes/shapes. Combine a yam with a green veggie, a chicken breast, lean red meat or fish, and you've got yourself a perfect fat-burning, muscle building, metabolism boosting meal.

3. Potatoes (white or red)

Potatoes have earned an undeserved reputation as a food to avoid on a fat loss program. But think about it; Potatoes meet every criteria of a great carbohydrate: potatoes are a complex carb. They are all-natural. They contain fiber, vitamins and minerals. They are filling. They are low in calories. So why do people avoid them? One reason is because they confuse a dry potato with a loaded potato. Smother a potato with butter, sour cream and bacon bits and then you've got yourself a fattening, calorie-dense ensemble. Eat it dry or top it with Butter sprinkles, salsa or your favorite low fat, low calorie topping and you can't go wrong.

Another reason people might avoid the potato is because they are using the glycemic index as their primary gauge for choosing carbohydrates. Potatoes are high on the glycemic index, which means they are absorbed as blood sugar very rapidly. What most people don't realize however, is that when you eat your potato as a whole meal with your favorite lean protein, the glycemic index of the entire meal is much lower. Most people also don't realize that some white potatoes are higher in the GI than others. Baking potatoes are higher in amylose, a slow releasing starch, so the glycemic index is lower. Russet potatoes are also moderate on the GI. Waxy potatoes or boilers are high GI foods. If you're extremely carb sensitive or hypoglycemic, then you might want to eat more yams than white potatoes, but generally speaking, white potatoes make a superb addition to almost any fat burning diet. I personally eat white potatoes right up until the day of a bodybuilding contest and I have no difficulty reaching 3-4% body fat.

4. Brown Rice

Brown rice is another staple food of bodybuilders and you often see the “muscled ones” chowing down platefuls of rice, both in season and out of season (in smaller quantities during the “cutting-up” season). Prior to contests, bodybuilders sometimes reduce the amount of rice (starchy carbs) and add in more green veggies (fibrous carbs), but rice is a solid year round staple, as long as you keep your calories in check. Obviously, this means avoiding fried rice or other rice dishes that have added fat and calories. Steamed or boiled rice is the way to go.

Of the many types of rice, slow-cooked brown rice or basmati rice are your number one choices. Instant (pre-cooked) rice is fine when you’re in a crunch for time, but the instant rice burns much more quickly and is processed in the body more like a simple carbohydrate. The same goes for white rice, especially the sweet variety that’s usually served in Chinese and Asian restaurants (including sushi rolls). White rice is the processed version of brown rice. Although it’s still technically a starchy complex carbohydrate, the white rice burns faster and has been stripped of much of its nutritional value. When you’re on a very strict fat loss diet, stick with the slow-cooking brown rice for best results.

5. 100% whole wheat and whole grain products

The “baseline diet” can and should contain a wide variety of bread products with one condition: They must be made from 100% whole grains (and the label must say, “100% whole wheat” or “100% whole grain” as the first ingredient). White bread and anything made out of white flour is not allowed in any quantity on this program (except the occasional planned “cheat meal”). If you’re particularly carb-sensitive, then bread – even the whole wheat variety – is one of the first things to go.

A small handful of people – usually one in 200, depending on what source you listen to – have sensitivity to the gluten in the wheat. Gluten is a protein found in wheat products and, much like lactose intolerance from dairy products, gluten intolerance can cause digestive difficulties and bloating in certain individuals. Most competitive bodybuilders drop out all the pasta and bread products for the 12-16 week dieting period before a contest, then usually put them back in for off season maintenance. On very strict fat loss diets, wheat and bread products are usually eliminated completely. Generally speaking, however, 100% whole wheat and other whole grains are perfectly acceptable additions to a healthy diet for long term body composition control, it just depends on how “strict” you want or need to be with your nutrition.

6. Green fibrous vegetables (broccoli, green beans, asparagus, lettuce, etc)

Fibrous carbs are your number one choice for fat burning carbohydrates. Green vegetables, also known as fibrous carbs, hardly contain any calories (they have a low calorie density). It's virtually impossible to overeat green vegetables. Eat them liberally and eat more of them late in the day. A diet of green vegetables combined with lean proteins is one of the best methods of getting lean as quickly as possible.

7. Fresh Fruit

Whole fruits are a fantastic, healthy food suitable for nearly any fat loss program. Although there are some "guru's" in the bodybuilding industry who claim, "fruit is fattening," this statement is somewhat misleading. It's true that a diet of mostly complex carbohydrate will give you better results than a diet of mostly simple carbohydrates, but that's not the same thing as saying "fruit is fattening." Although fruits are simple carbohydrates, they are *natural* simple carbohydrates. Most fruits are low in calories, low in carbohydrate grams (compared to starches) and high in fiber.

Some fruits such as raisins are extremely calorie dense and best avoided when you're on a strict fat loss program and your calorie allotment is small. Fruits like apples, peaches, grapefruits, and oranges, at only 60-80 calories apiece (or less), are a great addition to almost any nutritional plan. Just make sure the majority of your carbohydrates are of the complex type. An all-fruit or mostly fruit diet won't be as effective for fat loss as one that is mostly green fibrous carbohydrates with lean protein.

8. Skim milk & nonfat dairy products

"Dairy products" cover an entire category of foods including milk, cheese, yogurt, sugar free frozen yogurt, and cottage cheese. To make it on the BFFM "approved" list, a dairy product must be labeled "fat-free," "skim," or 1% lowfat. Whole milk dairy products are not allowed, as they are high in fat. Even 2% low fat milk is still 37.5% fat by calories.

Dairy products are a "combination food" – they contain carbohydrates *and* proteins. Because the protein found in dairy products is high quality, complete protein, a high protein dairy product can count as an exchange for a protein food. For example, you could have non-fat cottage cheese as a protein instead of a serving of lean meat. Non-fat cheese can also boost the protein content of a meal. Yogurt tends to have

less protein than cottage cheese, so a single container of yogurt wouldn't count as a full protein serving. In fact, yogurt would count more as a simple carbohydrate exchange than a protein (although, you could mix in a scoop of protein powder into your yogurt to make it "high-protein yogurt").

9. Chicken Breast (and Turkey Breast)

Chicken and turkey are probably the number one most popular protein sources among bodybuilders and fat loss seekers. Remove the skin and get the light meat found in the breasts. The thighs are higher in fat and calories. Naturally, your poultry should be broiled, grilled, or roasted and not fried.

Also, we're talking about the real bird here, not the sliced lunch meat you find at deli's or pre-packed in supermarkets. Lunch meats are processed proteins. Some nutritionists call them "fabricated foods" because they are made from a mix and poured into a mold before being cooked and wrapped. While these are acceptable occasionally, don't make them a staple in your regular daily diet. Lunch meats are loaded with sodium, preservatives, binders, fillers and other nasty chemicals that you don't want floating around in your body!

10. Egg whites

The name of the game in fat-burning, muscle-building nutrition is to eat a lean protein with every meal. With zero fat, egg whites are as lean as lean proteins get. Egg whites are right up there with chicken breasts as one of the top three lean proteins of choice for losing fat and gaining muscle. Eggs are a super-high quality protein. The problem with whole eggs is the high fat and calorie content. Fortunately, 100% of the fat is in the yolk, while the protein is split evenly between the yolk and the white. This doesn't mean you have to throw out all your yolks, but it does mean you should limit your yolks. I'd recommend one yolk for every six whites you eat. Just crack them open, and separate the yolk from the white using the edge of the shell. Or, even easier, simply use "Egg Beaters" or another packaged egg white product. There must be hundreds of ways to make eggs, so use your imagination: Omelets, frittatas, scrambled, fried (in nonstick spray), over easy, sunnyside up, hard-boiled or any other way you like them, use egg whites liberally!

11. Fish and shellfish

Many people complain about the lack of variety in a bodybuilding-style fat-burning diet, which typically has you eating egg whites, tuna and chicken day in, day out.

What most people don't eat enough of is fish and seafood. By using different types of fish and shellfish as protein sources, you can add an incredible amount of variety as well as getting those valuable good fats. Here is just a partial list of fish to consider: salmon, tuna, haddock, flounder, mackerel, trout, snapper, sea bass, swordfish, mahi mahi, perch, orange roughy, marlin, sole, Halibut, herring cod and catfish.

As with other meats, eat your fish baked, grilled or broiled and avoid fatty, high calorie sauces and butter. Most fish are very low in fat and high in protein. Some fish, such as salmon, mackerel, sardines, herring and trout, are high in fat. However, because fish is so high in Omega 3 fatty acids, these fish can and should be used liberally. Shellfish have many of the benefits that fish have and it can add some variety to your diet if you're getting bored of egg whites and chicken. This category includes shrimp, crab, lobster, mussels, etc. By the way, when you're eating in restaurants, fish is a great choice, as long as you make sure there are no hidden bad fats or extra calories.

12. Lean red meat

Bodybuilders are quite famous for loving their red meat. Many bodybuilders believe that red meat helps muscle growth, and there may be much truth in that statement. Red meat is high in protein, B-12, iron and creatine. The problem with most cuts of red meat is the high fat content. However, not all cuts of red meat are the same. It's a mistake to label the entire red meat category as a no-no because of high fat content. If you carefully choose the leanest cuts possible and keep your portion sizes small, red meat can be a great addition to a fat burning program. For example, a 6 oz serving of lean, trimmed top round steak has only 9 grams of fat, while a 6 oz of untrimmed porterhouse has 37 grams of fat (and the 18 oz porterhouse you're often served in a steak house has over 100 grams of fat!)

About the Author:

Tom Venuto is a lifetime natural bodybuilder, personal trainer, gym owner, success coach, freelance writer and author of "[Burn the Fat, Feed The Muscle](#)" (BFFM): Fat Burning Secrets of the World's Best Bodybuilders and Fitness Models. Tom has written over 140 articles and has been featured in IRONMAN magazine, Natural Bodybuilding, Muscular Development, Muscle-Zine, Exercise for Men and Men's Exercise. Tom is the Fat Loss Expert for [Global-Fitness.com](#) and the nutrition editor for [Femallemuscle.com](#) and his informative and inspiring articles are featured on literally dozens of other websites worldwide. You can visit Tom on the web at [www.fitren.com](#) or [www.burnthefat.com](#)