

Who's Who In The Kitchen!

Marathon Runner Ahmad Daniels Seeks Calories With Nutritional Value

By Audrey C. Lodato
Post Staff Writer

Many of us, especially after holiday binging, look for ways to cut down on calories and lose the few or more pounds acquired so painlessly. For some, however, the search is in the other direction.

"Being a marathon runner, I look for calories," remarks Ahmad Daniels, lifestyle consultant. He quickly adds, however, that he seeks calories with nutritional value, and not simply the empty calories that candy bars provide.

Breakfast is an important meal, insists Daniels, and one that too many people skip. He typically starts his day with oatmeal, not the instant ("just add boiling water" sort), served with honey and raisins, toast with Smuckers strawberry preserves and orange juice. "This keeps me going 'til around noon," he attests. Such a breakfast is high in fiber, carbohydrate and protein, and low in fat and is a far cry from the standard high in cholesterol breakfast of bacon or ham and eggs which many people indulge in. Too, Daniels points out, "Oatmeal stays with you longer than bacon and eggs."

He provides simple breakfast dishes among the recipes that follow.

Daniels admits he eats so-called junk foods, "but I always eat nutritionally first." Often, he'll snack on peanut butter, a source of protein.

Daniels recalls that he first began running 24 years ago, after watching the Rome Olympics on television. He was 12 at the time. "Some friends and I began running around



Marathon runner cooks nutritious meals with simple ingredients.

the track," he recounts. "It just felt good; there's something so natural about it." He went on to run in the Police Athletic League, the Marine Corps, and in college. His first marathon came in 1977. He ran it in three hours and 20 minutes. Now he tries to run three or four a year.

A native New Yorker, Daniels came to Charlotte by way of Durham. "I was traveling with a friend to Atlanta from New York City. We

stopped in Durham to get gas and heard about this black university, N.C. Central." They went to see the campus and liked what they saw. Daniels was working for Equitable Insurance in New York and going to school part time nights. He decided he could go full time to N.C. Central, which is what he did. (They never did get to Atlanta.)

In 1979, Daniels came to Charlotte to work for Aetna Insurance. Se-

veral years later, he started Alternative Lifestyles, which he describes as a dietary program (he's quick to say this refers to a qualitative style rather than a "diet" as most people mean it). He also helps people work out for fitness. A lot of his clients had been members of some spa "but lost their initiative."

Although an avid runner himself, he admits running is not for everybody. Any aerobic activity, he believes, will do. An aerobic activity is one which elevates the heartbeat for at least 30 minutes. This would include biking, running, swimming, and cross country skiing, all activities which involve the major muscle groups. As Daniels explains it, once you begin using large muscles, they require more oxygenated blood, which in turn makes them become stronger and larger, as well as strengthens the heart. Too, the arteries become cleaner, he states, because more blood is passing through them.

Exercise by itself, however, is not the entire answer; rather, it is an adjunct to proper diet. "If the body is properly tuned, it will do things in order," he advises. "The body tells us what it needs. It could be giving you signals but you don't know it."

Noting that the most popular books are exercise books and cookbooks, he believes that "staying healthy is an art form. It becomes a balancing act. Most people lack the self-discipline to balance properly."

Following are several of Daniels' "nutritional calories" recipes.

AHMAD'S SPAGHETTI SAUCE
2 celery stalks, chopped
2 carrots, chopped
1 onion, chopped
1 med. zucchini, chopped
1-2 bell peppers, chopped
Fresh tomatoes, chopped
Any other fresh vegetables you have on hand
Handful of hulled, unsalted sunflower seeds
24 oz. jar spaghetti sauce
6 oz. can tomato paste

Saute vegetables in olive oil 'til soft. Add remaining ingredients and season with salt-free Mrs. Dash Seasoning. Simmer half an hour, stirring occasionally. Serve over cooked spaghetti, preferably whole wheat.

FRENCH TOAST
1 egg
Skim milk
Ground cinnamon
Vanilla extract
Whole wheat bread

Beat egg with milk and "a touch of real vanilla extract." Sprinkle with cinnamon. In shallow dish or bowl, dip bread in egg mixture. Brown on both sides in margarine. ("I have this with oatmeal.")

AHMAD'S OATMEAL
Oatmeal, cooked
Sunflower seeds
Raisins
Banana, sliced

Stir together and serve hot. ("Breakfast is my main meal.")

SALMON AND BROWN RICE
1 large can pink salmon
1 green pepper, chopped
1-2 carrots, shredded
Other fresh vegetables as desired
Brown rice, cooked

Steam vegetables. Mix with salmon and cooked brown rice. Heat through. Serve with spinach salad. ("Since you're not boiling the vegetables, the nutrients are locked in. The purpose of eating is to refuel the body.")

BROCCOLI AND SHELLS
Fresh broccoli
Green pepper
Seashell macaroni
Parmesan cheese
Cheddar cheese, shredded

Saute cut-up broccoli in olive oil. Add remaining ingredients and season to taste. Stir in mix ingredients. Cover and simmer 'til cheese melts through. ("Serve with whole wheat bread on the side. Apply juice rounds everything out really well.")

Have a recipe or two to share?
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Add Variety To Your Seasonal Fare

Got the winter blahs? To add variety to your seasonal fare, why not make a lovely breakfast to begin the day. With the unusual citrus flavor French toast, making the morning special is a cinch. Later on, an elegant pie is a welcome family dessert or adds that party touch to a casual gathering. This festive-looking pie is easy to make and a delight to serve. Try something a little out of the ordinary by greeting family company with a quick, warm, spicy beverage. Lemonade flavor drink mix and just two simple seasonings are all you need to entertain them with style.



Orange-flavored French toast adds zip to breakfast.

ORANGE-FLAVORED FRENCH TOAST
1 c. milk
4 Tbsp. Tang orange flavor breakfast beverage crystals
4 eggs
Butter or margarine
1 loaf French bread, sliced 1-inch thick
Log Cabin syrup

Combine milk and breakfast beverage crystals in bowl and stir until dissolved. Add eggs and beat well. Lightly butter a skillet or electric griddle and pre-heat. Dip bread slices in egg mixtures, turning to soak both sides. Fry in skillet, turning to brown both sides. Sprinkle with confectioners sugar, if desired. Serve with syrup. Makes 8 servings.

GRASSHOPPER PIE
1 package (3 oz.) JELL-O brand lime flavor gelatin
1 c. boiling water
1/4 c. cold water
2 Tbsp. green creme de menthe liqueur
2 Tbsp. white creme de cacao

Dissolve gelatin in boiling water. Chill until slightly thickened. Spoon into pie crust. Chill with additional whipped topping or

liqueur
1/2 tsp. vanilla
1 1/2 c. (4 oz.) Cool Whip whipped topping, thawed
1 baked 9-inch chocolate or graham cracker crumb crust, cooled

Add cold water, liqueurs and vanilla. Fold whipped topping into gelatin until firm, about 3 hours. Garnish with chocolate curls, if desired.

HOTSPICED LEMONADE
1 1/2 c. prepared Country Time lemonade flavor drink mix
1 stick cinnamon
4 whole cloves
1 to 2 Tbsp. brown sugar
1 tsp. butter or margarine
1/4 to one-third c. (2 to 3 oz.) rum (optional)

Heat lemonade in saucepan with spices, sugar and butter. Stir in rum. Serve hot. Makes 1 1/2 cups or 3 servings.

Nouvelle Cuisine Offers "Lighter" Cooking

It started in France, home of many of the world's great food traditions. Today, it is popular in urban areas across the nation.

It's nouvelle cuisine, that form of lighter cooking that is more adventurous, has smaller portions, and offers an interesting and flavorful combination of ingredients.

For the sophisticated palate, nouvelle cuisine may not be new, but it's becoming more of a staple of everyday dining, says Donna Higgins, director of Del Monte Kitchens. "Nouvelle cuisine still allows some sauces that helped make French cooking famous, but with a versatility and lightness that go beyond just one form of cooking."

"As a food source, pasta has become increasingly popular as people realize it is an important complex carbohydrate. Readily available everywhere, and in some areas, in a variety of flavors often sold fresh, pasta can benefit from nouvelle sauces that enhance its flavor rather than smother it." Higgins adds, "That's one of the real benefits of nouvelle cuisine."

To prove her point, Higgins offers a series of tomato sauce recipes based on one basic sauce that can be modified to a creamy sauce, or a clam sauce, for example. Although offered as a sauce for pasta, she says it is also good with light fish, chicken and vegetables.

Higgins suggests preparing a

large supply of basic sauce, and freeze it, thawing just enough to serve as is, or add a few new ingredients for variety.

BASIC CHUNKY TOMATO SAUCE
1 med. onion, coarsely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 Tbsp. olive oil
3 cans (14 1/2 oz. each) Del Monte stewed tomatoes
1 can (15 oz.) Del Monte tomato sauce
2 tsp. crushed oregano
2 tsp. crushed basil

In large saucepan, saute onion and garlic in oil until onion is soft. Place one can of stewed tomatoes in blender container. Cover and run on low 2 seconds. Add to onion and garlic. Repeat for remaining tomatoes. Add tomato sauce, oregano and basil to saucepan. Boil, uncovered, 15 minutes, stirring frequently. Serve over pasta; or make a sauce variation (see additional recipes), if desired. Makes 6 cups sauce.

Variation: To reduce sodium, substitute Del Monte No Salt Added Stewed Tomatoes and Tomato Sauce. Add 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice last 5 minutes of cooking.

CREAMY TOMATO SAUCE
2 1/2 c. Basic Chunky Tomato Sauce
1/2 c. whipping cream
Hot cooked pasta
Chopped parsley
Combine tomato sauce and cream. Heat through (do not boil). Serve over pasta. Garnish with parsley. Makes 3 cups sauce.

TOMATO SAUCE WITH CLAMS
2 doz. small fresh clams (in shell)
1/2 c. dry white wine
4 c. Basic Chunky Tomato Sauce
Hot cooked pasta
Chopped parsley

Clean clams thoroughly (+). Combine wine and clams in large pot. Cover and cook 5 to 10 minutes or until clams open; remove clams. Boil remaining broth, uncovered, until reduced by half. Reserve 1/4 cup reduced broth. Use remaining broth for other uses, if desired. Combine tomato sauce and reserved broth in clam pot. Boil, uncovered, 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Add opened clams; heat through. Serve over pasta. Garnish with parsley. Makes 4 servings.

(+) Helpful Hint: To clean clams, scrub under running water. Soak in large bowl of water for 10 minutes; drain, removing all sand from bottom of bowl. Repeat soaking until water in bowl is clear and no sand remains.

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