

an official publication of FITNESS PROFESSIONALS
fitpro
network

www.fitpro.com

DECEMBER/
JANUARY 2007

XMAS
SURVIVAL GUIDE
Pig-out or workout?

MOTIVATION

How to achieve your goals

PRICE VS QUALITY
Do you really get what
you pay for?



JOIN PRUHEALTH

FREE FITBUG
(PEDOMETER) &
£50 fitproshop.com
voucher with
a PruHealth
policy

See page 17 for details

PLUS TRAINING OLDER ADULTS HEALTH RESEARCH REVIEW EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Just the phrase "Christmas time" brings back memories of celebration, laughing, excitement, presents and, of course, great food. It is typically the time of year when we all want to kick back, relax and get away from the stresses of the daily rat race. So often the need to let go runs over into many areas of life, not just a turning away from the pressures of employment. For many this wave of release over the festive period can cause a few backward steps in our clients' nutrition and fitness objectives too. I am not suggesting that we should all be purist and deprive ourselves of any celebrations, but I don't think the festive season is an excuse for an almighty blowout either. The results of such a blowout are usually seen a few short weeks later when a client somewhat sheepishly returns to the gym dragging a few extra pounds around their middle, trying to downplay the amount of food and alcohol they have consumed. Surely we need to allow some room for holiday time, a short respite from the constant need to achieve more, to look better, to have more possessions and to account for our eating and exercise habits.

Taking a respite

In the world of elite training, athletes need to train to a very high level of performance, to become the best in their field. Almost without exception, a period of time is devoted each year to the "off season", where they take a break from training. This is not seen in any way by the athlete or coach as a complete falling apart, as a matter of fact it is an essential part of achieving their goals. It seems strange that at an elite level it is recognised that a break in training is necessary, but with the recreational exerciser a break is often seen as being lazy or lacking commitment. An elite athlete does have awareness that the break, although necessary, is really a preparation for the early season training to follow. This lets them drop the stringent standards required for performance and allow a period of respite.

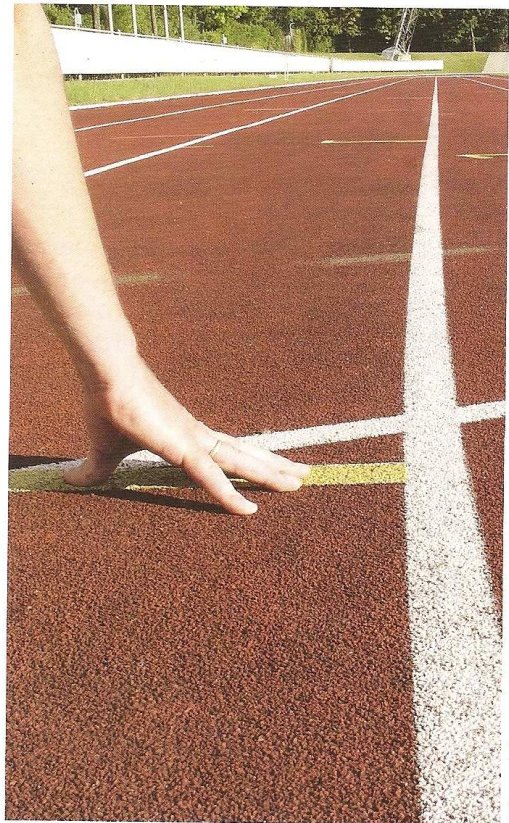
Should your nutrition suffer?

If training dictates the need for an occasional break to ultimately move forward towards reaching our objectives, then surely it makes sense that we can occasionally let the guard down a bit with our nutrition. So, over the Christmas period we should be happy to celebrate, relax and eat well, but just be sensible about it. With the current over-industrialisation of the British food chain being dictated to us by the supermarkets, it seems that the final haven for home-cooked food, the Christmas roast, is being systematically gnawed away. As the jingling, festive melodies sound throughout the aisles, shopping has been simplified because many foods have already been prepared for us to make our busy holiday just that little bit easier. The impression is that they have removed the hard slog of preparing a large roast meal without compromising upon quality, taste or nutrient value. Such examples include "pigs in blankets" or sausages ready-wrapped in bacon, the ready-made Christmas pudding, the large-breasted turkey bred especially to meet demands for fat-free white meat, roast potatoes right out of the freezer that only need heating, and finally stuffing from a packet, powdered mashed potato and instant gravy granules, each reconstituted with boiling water, which nicely tops off the other traditional foods. So does the dream match the reality? Do these convenience-based options provide us with a celebratory meal that is nutrient-dense at the same time?

How can our clients enjoy the Christmas season and let their hair down without a huge shift away from achieving their ultimate objectives?

HOLIDAY CPR

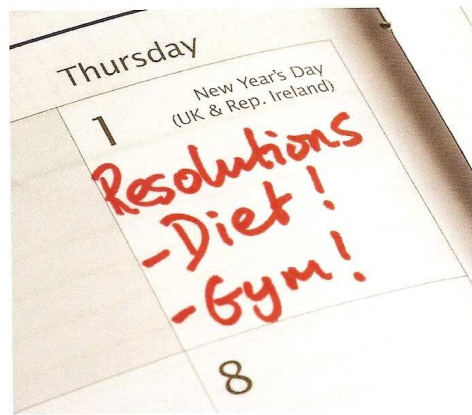
Christmas Pig-out or Respite





It would be appropriate to highlight a few examples. Sausages wrapped in bacon are an old Christmas favourite, but have many drawbacks. The current legal guidelines state that meat can be composed of up to 25% connective tissue such as tendons, ligaments, fascia or bone. Many products have a minimum legal level of meat to be constituted as a sausage, burger, or pie; the current requirement for a sausage is 26-32% meat to be identified as a pork sausage (FSA, 2003). This means that the remaining 68-74% can be composed of other things such as animal fat, bulking agents, fibre, water and preservatives. This is concerning enough, but to find out the meat used is often the dregs from the carcass or the meat reclaimed from the teeth of the cutting machines adds an extra incentive to change. Perhaps we should leave them off the Christmas menu altogether? In my household they are an essential part of the Christmas meal, so the answer is a resounding "no"! However, we need to consider the quality and find a nutritious alternative. Sausages from a local, organic farm shop, which are often 95% or more top grade meat, sourced from local free range farms, made to a traditional recipe, sound much more appealing. Add organic free range bacon from the same shop and you can make your own outstanding "pigs in blankets".

For "supposedly" perfect mashed potato, a well-known powdered brand has become a household name, reportedly selling over 140 million servings every year in the UK. But despite the catchy jingle and robotic Martians that promoted it, the convenience it provides destroys the nutrients it should be supplying. Potatoes are naturally a very rich source of vitamin C, but during the drying process vitamin C is quickly oxidised, so it needs to be added back into the product. Most often, synthetic vitamins are added that are not used well by the body. Man-made salt, sodium chloride, is also added for flavour, but because it is lacking natural minerals the body seeks those minerals and it creates a craving for more. Exploring the additives used is enlightening. Sodium metabisulphite (E223) has been shown to react negatively in some people, causing reactions like asthmatic episodes, anaphylactic shock, diarrhoea and nausea. Mono- and di-glycerides of fatty acids (E471) in some circumstances have been found to contain trace levels of trans fatty acids which have been heavily linked to heart disease. Butylated hydroxyanisole (E320) has been shown to cause damage to the liver and kidneys (thebigcarrott.ca/additives). So despite the marketing hype that states it is 99% fat-free, enriched with vitamin C and made with real potatoes, it is obvious that it is far from nutritious, and in fact may have negative health effects. Why not boil some organic potatoes and mash them with



generous helpings of grass-fed organic butter and raw cream? It will taste significantly better and be rich in many nutrients such as natural vitamin C and fat-soluble activators like vitamins A and E, as well as useful short-chain fatty acids and omega 3 fatty acids. This is a simple, tastier, healthy alternative.

The turkey roast is probably the one true item that needs to be home prepared – well, at least roasted in the oven. Often we detach ourselves from what the food actually is, not thinking what it was a short while earlier, an actual bird that lived and breathed. It is a logical process to think that a healthy bird will pass on a better supply of nutrients than an unhealthy bird. Most turkey production is done through intensive farming. Some 25,000 birds at a time are kept in large, windowless barns. The darkness helps to reduce aggression that is common with so many birds confined in such a small place. Turkeys have been genetically bred to quickly produce high meat yields and are usually fully grown and slaughtered between 12-26 weeks. In this short period of time they can grow to twice the size of turkeys bred 25 years ago. This often means they cannot support their larger frame or move properly. These cramped conditions mean that diseases are difficult to control, causing over 2 million birds to die in their sheds every year. They also end up with ulcers and burns from constant contact with urine and faeces (animalaid.org.uk). Is this a picture of a healthy bird that is likely to provide our bodies with high levels of nutrients? We can simply make a better choice by purchasing a turkey that is at least organic and free range that was allowed to roam outside during daylight hours and was not genetically selected for pure size. These healthier living conditions and better care will immediately transfer over to a more wholesome, nutritious bird that will likely have better substance and flavour. So, as was mentioned earlier, the Christmas period is indeed a time to unwind and help the body recover from the stresses of the daily grind. But let's remember that once Christmas is past the new season starts and we want get back on board without a sluggish, guilt-ridden start. Be happy, relax and eat WELL this Christmas time! 🍷



Ben, a fitness professional with over 10 years' experience, works for Premier Training International. As a sports scientist, advanced personal trainer and master trainer of Premier's progressive Resisted Movement Training course, Ben continues to motivate and inspire fitness professionals around the UK. For more information about Premier Training contact 01225 353 535 or visit www.premierglobal.co.uk