

Putting the IRON in IRONMAN

Professional IRONMAN competitor Hannah Berry talks about the physical demands of life as an elite athlete, the importance of nutrition, and her partnership with ANZCO Foods.

How did you get into IRONMAN in the first place?

Until my last year of Uni, I was always involved in team sports. Then I got injured, and during the rehab, I started to get more into biking and swimming. Before I knew it, I was doing adventure races and tackling the Coast-to-Coast, which then led into triathlon. I turned professional in 2017 and initially started out with a number of half IRONMAN events, before taking on the full distance course at Nutri-Grain IRONMAN New Zealand 2021. I ended up winning that event, and it's fair to say I was well and truly bitten by the IRONMAN bug.

What does your training schedule look like at the moment?

Every day is different. But, on average, I'm training for 6-7 hours a day, split between swimming, biking and running. When an event is getting closer I taper off a bit to ensure I'm fresh for race day - down to around 20 hours a week, with a bit of intensity thrown in to keep the legs firing.

What role does nutrition play in all of that?

My calorie expenditure is huge - upwards of 5,000 on the bigger days - and sometimes it feels like all I do is train or eat. But it's critical to get those calories in, and it's so important that they come from good food sources.

While having the energy to train is obviously critical, recovery is just as vital. That's where protein comes in. Muscle and bone repair rely on protein, which is why I'm always looking for quality sources following training sessions and races.

Where does beef and lamb fit into your diet?

I'm a big red meat eater - always have been. I make sure I eat a good amount of quality beef and lamb every week to ensure I'm getting enough protein and other essential nutrients on board.

As a female endurance athlete, I also need to make sure I'm getting enough iron and B12. Females can become depleted in both of those really quickly, which makes red meat even more valuable.

What excited you about the brand ambassador position with ANZCO Foods?

As a professional athlete, I'm incredibly interested in performance and how we get the most out of our bodies. That relates not only to elite sport, but to every-day life in general. The opportunity to work with ANZCO Foods was exciting because it gives me the chance to share my passion for healthy living, spreading the message of good nutrition to fellow athletes and, well, everyone else too.

What advice would you give readers about nutrition?

Keep it simple and concentrate on good, whole food sources. Everyone should ensure they get quality protein in each and every day - we need it for muscle mass and bone density, particularly as we age. Do that, and you'll be setting yourself up for a long, happy and active life.

Any favourite recipes to share?

Moroccan lamb wraps with red onion, seasoned with Moroccan spices, lemon juice and zest, and olive oil. Throw in some salad fillings and tzatziki in a wrap and you're good to go. I love it because it's so easy to whip up after training, and it ticks all of the nutritional boxes.

When it comes to beef, you can't beat a good steak on the barbie. I like mine cooked medium-rare and will often cook some veges like asparagus or sweet corn on the grill beside it.

Lastly, what's on the cards for the year ahead?

Lots. My main priority right now is getting ready for Taupō and Nutri-Grain IRONMAN New Zealand in March. I'd love to defend my title there and, if things go well, that could see me qualify for the World Champs at Kona, in Hawaii. I'm also aiming to spend our winter offshore, training and competing on the international stage.

Photo Credit:
Jemma Wells

"Beef and lamb is quite simply the best source of protein. And protein is one of the key ingredients for a long, healthy and active life."

Hannah Berry

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