



OREGON TRAIL PREPARATION WEBINAR #1

Nutrition with Alex Larson

May 18, 2026

Presented by: Special Blend Gravel & Breakaway Promotions



Hosted by: Serena Bishop Gordon, Founder of Special Blend Gravel, 6 x Oregon Trail Alumni, and Colleen Quindlen Cook, Breakaway Promotions, Oregon Trail Gravel Logistics Director

Featuring: Alex Larson, Alex Larson Nutrition, Sports Dietitian Nutritionist, Endurance Athlete, Gravel Rider



Webinar Notes:

1. Nutrition Philosophy for Stage Racing:

- a. Traditional healthy eating guidelines are secondary to the fueling requirements of a stage race,
- b. Eating contest within a bike race
- c. The primary challenge is managing cumulative fatigue, as the fueling choices made on the first day directly impact performance on subsequent days.

2. Physiological Fueling Basics:

- a. Role of glycogen, the body's preferred energy source, which is stored in the liver (limited storage) and muscles (larger capacity)
- b. Because intensity influences energy usage, maintaining high glycogen stores is critical, even during lower-intensity efforts, to ensure performance and enjoyment throughout the race.

3. Carb Loading Strategies:

- a. To optimize glycogen, Alex Larson recommends a strategic carb-loading phase two to three days before the race, aiming for 70% to 80% of calories from carbohydrates.
- b. The recommended intake is 8 to 12 grams of carbohydrates per kilogram of body weight, though a more modest approach of 5 to 6 grams per kilogram is acceptable.
- c. Adding some protein is suggested to prevent blood sugar instability, and participants are warned not to weigh themselves during this phase due to expected water weight gain from glycogen storage.
- d. Liquid Carbohydrates and Ingredient Ratios:



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- Some individuals experience stomach issues with liquid carbohydrates, making it essential for them to test products before the event.
- Alex Larson advises checking labels for both glucose and fructose.
 - Relying solely on glucose can lead to fermentation and a bloated abdomen, as the body has a limited absorption rate for glucose.
 - Incorporating fructose allows for a dual absorption rate through the liver, which aids in tolerating higher carbohydrate intake. Tailwind Nutrition and GU have both sugars.

4. Fueling During the Race:

- a. Consume 60 to 90 grams of carbohydrates per hour on the bike
- b. While elite athletes may consume up to 120 grams, this is only recommended for those who have practiced and developed the necessary gut tolerance.
- c. Participants should plan their fueling strategy months in advance. Use bike computer alerts every 15-30 minutes to stay on a consistent schedule rather than relying on hunger cues.
- d. Carbohydrate Intake Strategy: Athletes should practice fueling during training rather than waiting until the race to test their strategy.
 - For rides exceeding 90 minutes to two hours, the target is 60 to 90 grams of carbohydrates per hour, though individuals currently fueling at lower amounts should start where they are currently at and gradually increase their intake.
 - Proper carbohydrate intake prevents energy deficits, helping riders feel better both during and after their rides.

5. Aid Station Supplies:

- a. Aid stations will be stocked with [Tailwind Nutrition Endurance Fuel](#) (caffeine-free). Fuel will not be pre-mixed, so riders scoop to their desired taste and needs.
- b. Various GU Nutrition gels and chews (standard gels, Roctane gels, mostly caffeine-free, some caffeinated options).
- c. "Real Food" will include fruit, pickles, salty chips, Rice Krispies treats, granola bars, pretzels, peanut butter, Nutella, squeeze apple sauce, Pop-Tarts, and other snacks.
- d. Coca-Cola is typically at the final aid stations.
- e. Participants were advised to test these specific products during their training to ensure gut tolerance.
- f. There will be no bottle drops at aid stations.

6. Caffeine, Hydration Needs, Hydration Testing and Electrolyte Management:



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- a. Caffeine dosage should be 3-6 mg per kilogram of body weight, but cautioned against excessive intake in the afternoon to avoid disrupting sleep.
- b. For those using hydration vests, Alex Larson recommended counting gulps to track fluid intake,
 - Each gulp typically equates to one ounce.
 - Calculated the needed “gulps” every 15 min to reach the overall hydration need
 - The use of hydration vests is recommended for the Oregon Trail to allow for consistent access to fluids in technical terrain.
 - A mixture of carbohydrates and electrolytes in hydration packs increases the efficiency of fuel intake on the bike.
- c. Participants are encouraged to conduct a home sweat test to estimate their individual fluid loss, with a goal of replacing at least 75% to 80% of those losses during the race.
- d. Electrolyte Management: Sodium is identified as the primary electrolyte to manage, with requirements varying greatly between individuals.
 - For hot/humid rides or athletes who are heavy sweaters: Pre-load of 500-1500 milligrams an hour before starting a ride.
 - Consuming only plain water during a race can lead to dangerous hyponatremia (low sodium blood plasma levels).

7. Post-Race Recovery Protocol:

- a. The first hour after finishing a stage is designated the "magical hour" for recovery as the body is primed to reload glycogen stores.
- b. Consume liquid carbohydrates and protein within the first 30 minutes to facilitate muscle repair and glycogen restoration.
- c. Tailwind Nutrition will provide [recovery drinks](#) at the camp finish line.
- d. The "snack shack" will offer additional food options such as sandwiches with lunch meats, cereal, cup-o-noodle, salads, chips, honey, peanut butter, etc.
- e. Nighttime Recovery- To support recovery overnight, Alex Larson suggested slow-release protein like casein or milk protein concentrate (both casein & whey)
- f. Breakfast: Morning breakfast should be carbohydrate-centric, low in fat and fiber, and accompanied by habitual caffeine and a potential sodium preload.
- g. To support early morning starts, hot, freshly brewed coffee will be available every morning at the MiiR Morning Coffee Station.

- 8. Protein Intake and Stage Race Realities:** While daily protein needs are generally higher, aiming for 1.2 to 1.5 grams per kilogram is a reasonable target during a stage race to balance recovery needs without overwhelming the appetite.



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9. Fat Consumption Guidelines:

- a. Participants do not necessarily need to avoid fats at aid stations, though they should be consumed in moderation.
- b. During high-effort rides or in hot weather, it is recommended to prioritize quick, easy-to-digest carbohydrates instead.

10. Equipment Strategy for Carrying Food:

- a. There is a logistical challenge of carrying sufficient nutrition.
- b. Strategies include using a top tube or small frame bags for better accessibility.
- c. Pre-opening food packages, excluding gels, to minimize fumbling while riding
- d. Practice their specific equipment setup to ensure food is easily accessible.
- e. Inaccessibility often leads to under-eating.

11. Camping and Nutrition Logistics:

- a. Because of the [tote weight limit of 50 lbs](#), Alex Larson recommended prioritizing powdered, easy-to-mix nutrition options.
- b. Participants are encouraged to bring their own specific specialty snacks and supplements if they require them, as the race organizers cannot guarantee all personal preference items.
- c. If you have dietary restrictions such as celiac, please reach out to Colleen so we may plan appropriately (grinderinfo@breakawaypro.com)

12. Managing Flavor Fatigue and Eating Discipline:

- a. Multiple days of fueling on the bike can lead to flavor fatigue. Take advantage of savory, salty flavors during the event to keep things interesting.
- b. Despite a potential lack of appetite, maintaining consistent nutrition is a critical skill for daily performance and ensures they can complete the race feeling good.

13. Additional Notes from Participant Questions

- a. Wheelsets: Riders are allowed to bring one extra wheelset if they wish. This is separate from the 50-pound tote limit and must be packed in a protective bag or case.
- b. Bottle and Pack Cleaning Post-Ride: There will be hoses and fountains available, but participants should not expect access to hot, soapy water. Participants should rinse their hydration packs and bottles daily to avoid issues, ensuring they do not leave liquid in them overnight.
- c. Courses Available: Race courses will be posted by Bad Chad a few weeks before the race, as the timing depends on road conditions and the finalization of permits.



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- d. Shower Facilities at Camp: There will be shower trucks at each camp spot. Participants must bring their own towels, shampoo, and soap.

14. Next Webinar- Monday, June 1 at 4:00 PM, Equipment, Apparel, & Tire Choice
Featuring Sean from Schwalbe, Christine from Castelli, and Matt from Easton

15. Important Links and Information

- a. Alex Larson Nutrition- <https://alexlarsonnutrition.com/>
 - Carb Loading Strategies- Grab your free resource providing simple strategies, packable foods, and easy recipes to fuel your best race. [!https://alexlarsonnutrition.myflodesk.com/carb-loading](https://alexlarsonnutrition.myflodesk.com/carb-loading)
 - Endurance Eats Podcast- [Apple podcasts](#), [Spotify](#)
 - [Substack](#)
- b. Special Blend Gravel- <https://www.specialblendgravelcamp.com/>
- c. Oregon Trail Gravel- <https://www.oregontrailgravelgrinder.com/>
 - Gear Tote Information- https://www.oregontrailgravelgrinder.com/gear_tote
 - Camp Food & Meals- <https://www.oregontrailgravelgrinder.com/food>
- d. Tailwind Nutrition- <https://tailwindnutrition.com/>
 - Endurance Fuel- <https://tailwindnutrition.com/collections/fuel>
 - Recovery Mix- <https://tailwindnutrition.com/collections/recovery-mix>
 - Oregon Trail Discount Code - 20% OFF! **OTGG20**