

# The New Superfoods

## ADD THESE FIVE FOODS TO EVERY MEAL TO FLATTEN YOUR BELLY — AND RIDE LONGER AND STRONGER

By: Selene Yeager

Monounsaturated fat, or mufa, has been the cornerstone of Mediterranean diets for centuries, and is gathering space on the American table. Evidence shows that MUFAs may offer a host of important health benefits, including the ability to crank up your fat-burning metabolism and shrink your midsection. In one study, Harvard researchers put 101 men and women on either a low-fat or moderate-fat diet that included about 20 percent of calories from MUFAs. After 18 months, the MUFA-eating group dropped an average of nine pounds and shed nearly 3 inches from their waists, compared with the low-fat group, which gained an average of six pounds and added nearly an inch around their middles. Research from Spain yielded similar results--people eating carb-enriched diets gained belly fat during a four-week study, while those eating more MUFAs (but the same number of calories) lowered their belly-fat levels. This is important because high levels of belly fat, even in people who are otherwise a healthy weight, have been linked to a host of diseases including heart disease, diabetes and even Alzheimer's.

"MUFAs are particularly good for athletic people," says Cynthia Sass, M.P.H., R.D., C.S.S.D., author of Flat Belly Diet (\$32; [rodalestore.com](http://rodalestore.com)). "Your arteries are like tunnels that carry oxygen and nutrients to your cells, including your muscles, nervous system and brain, which are all essential for optimum athletic performance," she says. "MUFAs are fluid fats that flow easily through those tunnels and keep them flexible. Solid fats like butter and shortening clog the tunnels, impede circulation and create inflammation that leads to hardening of the arteries." MUFA-rich foods also tend to be high in antioxidants, which protect your cells from stress, aging and disease.

Scientists are still unraveling exactly how MUFAs work their metabolic magic, but some of it is pretty basic. "They slow digestion, prolong fullness and create more time-released, sustained energy," says Sass. That's good news for an ever-hungry cyclist during prime riding season, because it prevents succumbing to I-can't-believe-I-ate-the-whole-box carb binges and the roller-coaster ups and downs that follow.

Here are five MUFA food groups that Sass suggests eating every day, several times a day. Have a serving with each meal. But remember, these are still fats, so the calorie counts aren't low. For many cyclists, the best approach may be replacing some refined carbs or less-healthy fatty fare with MUFA-rich foods.

**NUTS AND SEEDS:** Everything from pecans to pine nuts, almond butter to tahini. Serving size: two tablespoons, or about a handful

**OLIVES:** Black, green or blended in a tapenade. Serving size: 10 large olives or two tablespoons of tapenade

**OILS:** Choose from MUFA-rich oils such as canola, flaxseed, peanut, safflower, walnut, sunflower, sesame or olive. Serving size: one tablespoon

**AVOCADO:** There are two basic types, Florida and Hass. Either will do. Eat in guacamole or just slice and serve. Serving size: 1/4 cup

**DARK CHOCOLATE:** As long as it's dark or semisweet, it counts. Serving size: 1/4 cup