

CLASSIC FOOD

by Ian Hofstetter



Eating the right food during the Classic is vital for a successful race. On race day, try to eat slowly all day. I snack on sandwiches, fruit and nuts and have a bowl of pasta a couple of hours before the race is due to start. I avoid sugar and caffeine at this time as I want to be resting, not getting hyped up.

1. Aim to have **a steady intake of food** from the start right through to the end of the race. At no point should you feel hungry. It is much better to stop and eat, rather than push on to the next checkpoint. As soon as you get hungry your performance will decline rapidly and you will start to feel cold, not a good way to arrive at the next checkpoint!
2. Aim to **consume about 50 grams of carbohydrate per hour**. This is something that I read in the Hawkesbury Classic race book years ago and I have found it to be a good amount to base my food intake on.
3. All kinds of food are fine, as long as you have used them in training and know that it doesn't give you any stomach problems. However, having **a large proportion of your food in a liquid form has many advantages over solid food**. The main advantage is that you can eat while you are paddling, which means that you won't lose that wash ride just because you need to eat. It also has the advantage of allowing you to have shorter rests at the checkpoints because you have been eating while you have been on the water.
4. I find that **a 2-tube drinking system** works best. One tube is for water or an electrolyte drink and the other for your liquid food. Having 2 tubes lets you regulate how much water or food you need. In the early parts of the race when it is warm, you will find that you will be drinking quite a bit of water, but as the night wears on and the temperature drops, you will need much less.
5. **Don't have your liquid food too concentrated or too diluted**. During the race it is difficult to know how much you are actually drinking. If you have your food too concentrated you might find that you are taking in a lot more than 50 grams per hour. This might give you some stomach problems. On the other hand, if your food is too diluted, you might find that you just can't drink enough of it to get your 50 grams per hour. I work on an amount of about 250ml per hour, or 1 litre for 4 hours. So for a 12-hour race I would need 3 litres of liquid food containing at least 600 grams of carbohydrate. On top of this you will need your water or electrolyte drink and some solid food to eat at the checkpoints.
6. If you can, it is great to **have both your drinking tubes accessible** without taking your hands off the paddle. However, designing a 2-tube system can be a bit tricky and there are only a couple of races a year when you will need 2 tubes, so a good alternative is to have your water available at all times and your food in standby mode. On my first Classic I had my liquid food tube attached loosely to my PFD with a short piece of string. It was long enough so that I could have the tube in my mouth and then when I finished drinking I could spit it out and it would hang near my chest. This way I always knew where it was and could stop paddling for just one stroke, pick it up and put it in my mouth and keep paddling again. If you don't have it tethered in some way it will fall to the floor of the boat and then next time you need it you will have to search around for it in the dark. Not great if you are wash riding. Whatever you do, practice with your drinking system set up on training paddles, so you are familiar with it on race night.

7. **Have some back-up food** with you. However good your preparation, if this is your first Classic you won't know how your body will react to eating liquid food for 12 hours or more. So have some solid food in a waterproof container with you, just in case.

Some tips

- **I try to eat every 15-20 minutes.** To remind me, I have my watch set on countdown mode set to go off every 20 minutes. I sync my watch from the earlier race starts so that it goes off at my start time and then every 20 minutes after that. Not only does it remind me to eat, but I also know what time it is and if I am on schedule, without having to look at my watch.
- **Bite valves are great.** They seal when you stop drinking which stops the liquid running back down the tube. Without them you will be sucking air until the liquid gets back to the top of the tube each time you drink.
- You can **make a drinking tube holder** out of coat hanger wire and tape. Have a look at what other people are using on the familiarisation paddles and experiment a bit. Try buying a 90° angle to mount the bite valve to the tube if you are having trouble getting it right
- **Mix up your own food.** Don't give complex instructions to your landcrew on how to mix up your race food. They will be stressed enough as it is, don't give them any unnecessary pressure. Mix it all up the on the morning of the race or the night before and keep it in an esky with some ice, then you will know it is mixed right!
- **I use a mixture of endura optimizer and up&go.** I stumbled across this formula because I used to drink up&go when training. The problem was that 250ml of up&go only has 30 grams of carbo. So I wanted to "bump up" the carbos. One heaped scoop of optimizer has 20 grams of carbo, so I combined them. Don't assume that this mixture will work for you, test it first, some people hate it and some love it.

Good luck and have a great Classic.