



# The Real-Life Diet of the Vegan Who Can Run Hundreds of Miles, No Problem

**Meet Scott Jurek, a former "meat and potatoes" guy who slowly weaned himself off animal products**

By Luke Darby, GQ

*Professional athletes don't get to the top by accident. It takes superhuman levels of time, dedication, and focus—and that includes paying attention to what they put in their bellies. In this series, GQ takes a look at what pro athletes in different sports eat on a daily basis to perform at their best. Here's a look at the daily diet of ultramarathon runner **Scott Jurek**.*

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When you run, there's always a new target. Even if you run out of new races, you can always run old ones faster than you did before. There are personal records to beat, and then, once you knock those down enough times, world records to chase.

Take **Scott Jurek**, for example, the ultramarathoner who made headlines this summer when he ran the entire length of the Appalachian Trail in a record-setting 46 days, eight hours and seven minutes. He's also won the 135-mile Badwater Ultramarathon, the "world's toughest foot race," twice; the 153-mile long Spartathlon in Greece three consecutive times; and has taken first place in just about all the ultrarunning world's most high-profile races.

Jurek grew up in Minnesota, and paints his mother in the style of Betty Crocker. Meals were meat heavy, and everything revolved around the huge family dinners at the end of every day. While most of his diet has changed dramatically since then, dinner is still the biggest meal of the day. Food has been such an integral part of his life that his memoir is titled *Eat & Run*.

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And for almost two decades now, Jurek has been a vegan. He eased into it starting in college, cutting out meat, then eschewing fish and becoming firmly ovo-lacto vegetarian, then finally eschewing all animal products completely. The decision was precipitated by his family history of chronic disease, including his mother's multiple sclerosis. "I grew up hating vegetables, eating meat and potatoes," he says. "When I was in college I started reading more about different diets and the vegetarian and vegan diets really came up quite a bit. As I worked in hospitals through physical therapy school it became clear to me that I needed to change my diet to avoid the health problems I was seeing. It was

definitely a long-term decision rather than one made for short-term performance gains.”

Still, Jurek credits his diet for not only the length of his career—he's 41 now—but also his recovery time and lack of injuries. Contrary to what most people think about veganism, according to Jurek, the real challenge isn't making sure you've got enough protein in your diet. It's making sure you've got enough fat.

This was especially important during the Appalachian Trail run: “When I was having meals at the end of the day it was about getting extra calories, dumping extra olive oil on pasta, my wife was bringing toast lathered in coconut oil. The carbohydrate is a vehicle for fat, which is what most people who are sedentary and not as active don't want to do. But I needed to get the maximum amount of calories for the time that I had.”

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The biggest challenge with fueling during a run is to keep your food interesting. Even running a regular (tiny) 26.2-mile marathon gets monotonous with gooey gel pack after gooey gel pack. (Especially since Jurek recommends eating 25 grams of carbohydrates every half hour.) So he looks for new flavors, textures, anything that keeps eating during the race from becoming a chore. On some runs he'll eat bean burritos or pop rice balls rolled with miso paste, but for the Trail run he used Clif Organic Energy Food, which he helped design with Clif Bar. The packs are full of pureed food in flavors like “pizza margherita” and “sweet potato with sea salt,” which for Jurek are a welcome break from sweet goo.

“I love food, and most people find that the transition can be done quite easily,” he says. “A lot of athletes are definitely concerned about what they put in their bodies because it's the fuel that drives

their performance.” He’s not kidding about loving food. Cooking dinner is Jurek’s time to unwind and the vegan diet doesn’t keep him from experimenting with Thai, Mexican, Japanese and Vietnamese recipes. Outside of Eastern European-inspired cuisine, he finds it pretty easy to adjust to a meatless and dairy-less diet. Which... isn't to say it works for everyone. “If [athletes] aren’t fueled properly, they don’t have great results,” he says. “But if non-athlete individuals decide to go vegan they may have to put more effort into it.”

### **Breakfast (post run)**

Smoothie with banana, blueberries, coconut, Seven Sources essential oils blend, pea protein, brown rice protein, coconut, lacinato kale

Oatmeal with coconut oil

### **Lunch**

Green salad

Beans and corn tortilla

### **Snack**

Sandwich with nut butter

### **Mid-run snacks**

Clif Bar

Sushi rice balls with miso paste

### **Dinner**

Vietnamese vermicelli bowl with tofu, cucumbers, homemade pickled daikon and carrot, Thai basil, cilantro and green onion.

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