

## Energy Bars: Which ones are best?

Written by Nancy Clark, MS RD CSSD  
Monday, 10 December 2018 10:23 -

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Runners have many questions about energy bars:

*Q. Which ones are best?*

A. That depends on your taste buds. The best energy bars are the ones you enjoy eating, settle well for a pre-exercise energy booster, and fulfill your dietary needs.

*Q. Are they better than Fig Newtons or other traditional foods?*

A. Like Fig Newtons, they are a source of carbohydrate to fuel your body and nutrients to invest in your health. They are pre-wrapped and convenient to toss into a gym bag or backpack without crumbling.

*Q. Are they just glorified cookies?*

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A. For the most part, yes. For runners, little is wrong with a few (sugar-containing) cookies/energy bars when balanced into an overall healthy eating pattern. Sugar (carbohydrate) in a sports diet fuels muscles. As a runner, your muscles take up the sugar and use it to power your workouts. Please focus more on what comes with the sugar: whole grains? protein? fiber?

Today's overwhelming assortment of energy bars offers an option for every dietary niche, be it vegan, kosher, low FODMAP, nut-free, etc.. Below is a list that categorizes the bars and might help you find ones that suit your dietary preferences. The key is to remember that energy bars are not meal replacements, but rather emergency food that comes pre-wrapped. Be sure there are some banana peels and apple cores in your wastebasket, and not just wrappers.

**Additive-free** (*that is, no added vitamins or minerals*):

Clif Mojo & Nectar, Epic, Good Greens, Gnu, Honey Stinger Waffle, Kashi, KIND, Larabar, Optimum, Peak Energy, Perfect 10, PowerBar Nut Naturals, ProBar, Pure, Raw Revolution, Red Square Power-flax, RX, thinkThin, Trail Mix Honey-bar, Zing

**Budget-friendly:** Nutri-Grain, Nature Valley Granola, Kashi Chewy, Quaker Chewy

**Caffeine-containing:** Better than Coffee, Clif CoolMint Chocolate, Clif Peanut Toffee Razz, Honey Stinger Caffeinated, Peak Energy Plus, Picky Bar Game-Set-Matcha, Verb

**Dairy-free** (see also *Vegan*): Bonk Breaker, Bumble Bar, Clif Builder's & Nectar, Enjoy Life, GoMacro, KIND, Larabar, Perfect 10, Picky, RX, thinkThin Crunch, Vega Endurance

**Enriched/Fortified with added vitamins:** Balance, ZonePerfect

**Fiber, high** (*grams fiber*): Fiber One Chewy (5-6g), Gnu Flavor & Fiber (12g), NuGo Fiber d'Lish (12 g), Oat-mega (7g), Quest (13-14g), thinkThin Protein and Fiber Bar (5g)

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**GUT-Friendly, Low FODMAP:** Fody, GoMacro Peanut Butter Protein Replenishment, EnjoyLife Dark Chocolate (and some other flavors), GoodBelly, Happy

**Gluten-free:** Bonk Breaker, BumbleBar, Elev8Me, Enjoy Life, Enjoy Life, EnviroKidz Rice Cereal, Fody, Good Belly, GoMacro, Hammer, KIND, Lara, Picky, PowerBar Protein Plus, Pure Protein, ProBar, RX, Quest, Raw Revolution, That's It Fruit, thinkThin, Truwomen, Zing, 88 Acres Seed and Oat.

**Low-carb:** OhYeah! One, Pure Protein, Quest, Keto

**Kosher:** GoMacro, Extend, Larabar, Pure Fit, ReNew Life Organic Energy, thinkThin, Truwomen

**Nut-free:** Don't Go Nuts, Enjoy Life, Freeyumm, Go Raw, Honey Stinger Waffle, Jumpstarter Bodyfuel, Luna Bar Lemon Zest, That's It, 88 Acres Seed & Oat

**Organic:** Cascadian Farm, Clif, Pure, GoMacro, Red Square Powerflax

**Peanut-free:** Clif, Truwomen (some flavors), Enjoy Life

**Protein Bar** (Your choice of soy, whey, egg, or blended protein source) (grams protein): Clif Builder (20g), Gatorade Whey Protein Bar (20g), GoMacro Protein Replenishment (10-12g), Honey Stinger Protein (10g), Lenny & Larry's Muscle Brownie (20g), NuGo (10-12g), Oatmega (14g), PowerBar ProteinPlus (30g), PowerCrunch (13g), Pure Protein (20g), Quest (21g), RX (12g), thinkThin Protein (20g)

**Raw:** Good Greens, Pure, Raw Revolution, Vega Whole Food Raw Energy Bar

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**Recovery bar** (3-4 g carb to 1 g protein ratio): Clif, KIND Breakfast Protein, PowerBar Performance, Picky, RX

**Soy free:** BumbleBar, Clif Nectar, Enjoy Life Chewy, GoRaw, KIND, Larabar, NuGo Fiber d'Lish, Oat-mega, Picky, ProBar, Pure, Quest, Raw Revolution, Vega Endurance, Zing

**Vegan:** (grams protein) Clif (most flavors; 11g), Clif Builder's (20g), Go Macro (11g), Good Greens (10g), Hammer Vegan (15g), Larabar (5g) Picky (7g), Pure Organic (4g), ProBar (8-11g), thinkThin High Protein (some flavors are vegan; 13g), Truwomen (12g), Vega (10g), 88 Acres Seed & Oat (6g)

**Women's bars** (fewer calories, added calcium, iron, and folic acid): Healthwarrior Chia, Iron Girl Energy, Larabar, Luna, PowerBar Pria. Truwomen

**40-30-30 Bars:** Balance, ZonePerfect

**My suggestion for the best bars:** Google *homemade energy bars* and you will see many yummy, healthy, cook-free and simple-to-make options. These are likely the best bars, in terms of taste, positive ingredients, and lack of litter. Enjoy!

Nancy Clark, MS, RD counsels both casual and competitive athletes in the Boston area (Newton, 617-795-1875). Her best selling *Sports Nutrition Guidebook* and food guides for marathoners, cyclists and soccer players offer additional information. They are available at [www.NancyClarkRD.com](http://www.NancyClarkRD.com)

. For her popular online workshop:  
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### Recipe for Homemade Energy Bar from *Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook*

#### Sweet and Crispy Nut Bars

These bars can be made with almonds, peanuts, sunflower seeds, or other chopped nut or seed of your choice. Whether eating them for breakfast on the run, a preexercise snack, or an afternoon treat, you'll enjoy these crispy bars.

When measuring the honey, add a little more than the 1/2 cup, so the mixture sticks together better. You'll need to pack the ingredients firmly into the pan; otherwise the bars will fall apart (but the crumbs are tasty—especially in yogurt or sprinkled on top of your morning bowl of cereal).

2 cups uncooked oats

2 cups Rice Krispies or puffed brown rice cereal

1 cup peanuts ((preferably chopped briefly in a food processor)) or slivered almonds

1/2 cup (heaping) honey

1/2 cup peanut or almond butter

Optional: 1/2 teaspoon salt

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1. Lightly coat a 9 by 13-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
2. In a large bowl, combine the oats, Rice Crispies, and peanuts or slivered almonds.
3. In a medium microwavable bowl, combine the honey and nut butter. Microwave for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. Slowly pour the nut butter mixture over the cereal, stirring until all the ingredients are well coated.
5. Transfer the mixture into the prepared pan and press firmly while still warm. (Butter your fingers so the mixture does not stick to them.) Cool to room temperature.
5. Cut into 20 bars and store them in an airtight container. (If you keep the bars in the refrigerator, they will be sturdier.)

Yield: 20 servings

Nutrition information: 3,400 total calories; 170 calories per serving; 24 g carbohydrate; 5 g protein; 6 g fat

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Sports nutrition counselor

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Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook

[www.nancyclarkrd.com](http://www.nancyclarkrd.com) (Books, presentations)

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