

SPOTLIGHT

on

Eating To Perform

by Clint Hamblin

"You are what you eat," especially if you're a hockey player, a dancer or a chef, three occupations where attention to food is a serious responsibility.

The Hockey Player

A Boston Bruins hockey player needs to be in top shape, and consistently maintaining the absolute highest level of performance is a career battle. Ask Don DelNegro, the athletic trainer for the Bruins.

"We just played eight games pre-season, 82 games in our regular season and 11 games post-season," DelNegro said. "It's a long season, so nutritional needs are more serious."

The team eats well, often chicken noodle soup, salad, grilled chicken, salmon, whole-wheat pasta with plain or meat sauce, rice, baked potatoes, broccoli and steamed vegetables, desserts including frozen yogurts, Fig Newton bars, Snackwells, fruit with low-fat vanilla yogurt, lots of water, juices, Gatorades and sodas.

"Athletes know what they want at this level. They eat to perform," DelNegro said. "These are the top hockey players on the planet. They respect what they need."

Boston Bruins captain Zdeno Chara is 6 feet 9 inches tall, weighs 255 pounds and eats about 8,000 calories a day.

"Players require from 5,500 to 8,000



Boston Bruins team captain Zdeno Chara

calories every day, and they need food that won't cause heartburn or digestion problems," DelNegro said.

Occasionally, they fall off their eating routine. Former Bruin Hal Gil told a waitress that he wanted to start with appetizers. When the waitress asked which one, Gil responded, "All of them."

Like eating machines, Bruins players are

constantly burning calories between practice workouts and games. Food is part of the never-ending goal of winning games until retirement.

The Ballet Dancer

Unless the ballet dancer has a metabolism that doesn't allow weight to accumulate, dieting can be a major trauma. They need fuel to do the amazing things that they do, but beautiful lines require slender limbs, and you can't hide a fat bottom in a unitard. If the costume doesn't fit, you don't work.

"If I put you out on stage in a white unitard and put 20,000 watts of light on you, you'll look much bigger than you really are," Mikko Nissenen, artistic director of Boston Ballet, warned. "So, weight is very important, and a unitard ballet can be mentally distressing for females. They are very aware of the costume and often worry if they'll be trim enough to appear on stage next to a dozen other trim dancers in the same unitard. I've had dancers fake an injury just because they don't feel as though they look good."

When it comes to dieting, "They find their own thing that works for them," Nissenen said. "Some believe in loading protein, some do carbs and some are vegetarians."

Dancers spend much of their lives perfecting and maintaining their technique, line and choreographic interpretation. An eight-hour day can include a morning ballet class followed by hours of rehearsals – all in front of an unforgiving mirror.

Boston Ballet is starting a new program designed to educate their dancers on how to manage health through food. Working with doctors and nutrition specialists, the company intends to arm their dancers with the information that will help them understand the role of food. Dancers want to

give the best performances possible throughout what is typically a very short career.

The Chef

Barry Edelman has been Aquitaine Bar à Vin Bistrot's chef de cuisine for 18 months. Located at 569 Tremont Street, Aquitaine is a neighborhood restaurant featuring a diverse menu Edelman has inherited and created, and despite the economy, business is good.

"We're doing better this year than the same time last year," Edelman said.

Every week, Edelman cooks for hundreds of people, tasting whenever necessary.

"I rarely eat a whole meal," he said. "I eat all day, from tasting sauces to cooking a few pieces of meat when I have the time." Edelman is not the stereotypical stocky chef. He's in shape and is determined to maintain that status.

Working 12 hours a day, Edelman said, "I live on the stress diet, which includes the stress of life, children and cooking. It keeps me in shape, and there's not much time to eat. When I'm at home, I eat healthy. I don't eat like I like to cook," he said. "I'll cook the restaurant's salmon dish, but I would never ever order the sole on our menu, because it's a butter sauce."

Eat to live – live to eat. Food is a partner in life, so choose well. Bon appetit!



Boston Ballet's Pavel Gurevich and Heather Myers



Chef Barry Edelman