

Are almonds, grapes and cranberries the secret ingredients for cycling success?

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Off the back of the festive period, you'd be forgiven for thinking almonds only come covered in chocolate and disappear by the jarful, a familiar source of indulgent pleasure shadowed by lingering guilt.

In the context of the upcoming Tour Down Under, however, the humble [almond](#) takes on an altogether different aspect, as a study from the University of South Australia's Alliance for Research in Exercise, Nutrition and Activity (ARENA) is currently exploring.

According to lead researcher, Professor Jon Buckley, bioactive components in almonds and some dried fruits may play an important role in maintaining peak fitness in [elite athletes](#), and ARENA is putting the traditional snack foods through their paces – sans chocolate coating, of course.

"We are running a study in cyclists examining whether [bioactive components](#) of foods can improve cycling performance and recovery," Prof Buckley says.

"Almonds are a rich source of arginine and antioxidants, while grapes and cranberries are also rich in antioxidants and nitrates. Studies show dietary nitrates and antioxidants improve endurance exercise performance by improving muscle blood flow and reducing exercise-induced damage to muscle."

Prof Buckley's team are now 12 months into their study and are currently looking for SA-based cyclists who would like to be involved in the next research phase, a five-week trial designed to examine the increased benefits of combining almonds, grapes and cranberries.

Cyclists volunteering for the trial will be put through an elite cycle training program designed by the ARENA team, while being provided a daily dose of either mixed raw unsalted almonds, dried grapes and dried cranberries – known as AGC mix – or nut-free muesli bars.

"There is emerging evidence that the consumption of almonds and grapes may improve exercise performance, but there is a lack of

information regarding any benefits of cranberries or the combination of all three foods," Prof Buckley says.

"We feel like this is a fantastic opportunity for people to be involved in research that has the potential to make a real impact on exercise performance in a simple, natural way, while providing them with information on their cycling fitness through the measurement of parameters such as VO2 max that are often only available to elite level cyclists."

In order to be eligible for the study, you need to be a male [cyclist](#) or triathlete, 18-50 years old, registered with a club or competing in professional, amateur or recreational races, or performing cycling training two or more times a week.

Anyone interested in participating in the study can email Prof Buckley at Jon.Buckley@unisa.edu.au.

Provided by University of South Australia

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