



FUELING THE U12 PLAYER (11–12)

A PARENT'S GUIDE — FUELING THE LAST YEAR BEFORE THE BIG FIELD

U12 FUELING GUIDE

At 11–12, training steps up to three nights a week and the first growth spurts arrive — often for girls first. The job now: **keep the habits automatic while portions quietly grow.** Same simple food, slightly bigger plates, and the timing rules start to matter for real.

1 • FUEL, DON'T DIET

No weight talk, no restriction, no calorie counting — at any age in this club. Appetite that rises with training and growth is the system working.

2 • CARBS ARE THE GAS

Soccer runs on carbohydrates — rice, pasta, bread, potatoes, oats, fruit. More on training and game days, a little less on rest days.

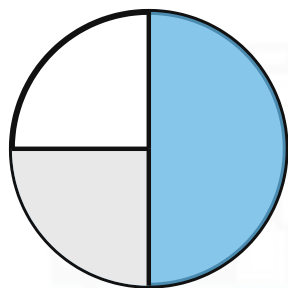
3 • PROTEIN BUILDS, EVERY MEAL

A palm-size portion at breakfast, lunch, and dinner — eggs, milk, yogurt, chicken, beef, fish, beans, peanut butter.

4 • TIMING BEATS PERFECTION

The 3 hours before and 45 minutes after activity matter most. Nail the timing and the rest is normal family food.

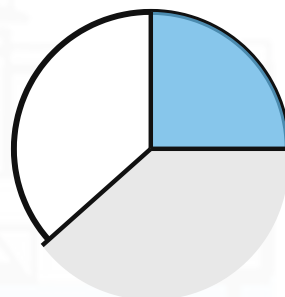
THE PERFORMANCE PLATE — HOW TO BUILD EVERY MEAL



TRAINING & GAME DAYS

- 1/2 CARBS — rice, pasta, bread, potatoes
- 1/4 PROTEIN — chicken, beef, eggs, beans
- 1/4 COLOR — veggies & fruit

+ milk or yogurt • + water • portions scale with the player



REST DAYS

- 1/3 CARBS
- 1/3 PROTEIN
- 1/3 COLOR — go bigger on veggies

Same foods, shifted portions. Nothing is “banned.”

THE HOUSE RULES (POST THESE ON THE FRIDGE)

- ✓ Breakfast every single day — non-negotiable for growing athletes
- ✓ Chocolate milk (or yogurt + fruit) within 45 min of every practice & game
- ✗ No energy drinks. Not ever. Caffeine has no place at U12
- ✗ Nothing fried or brand-new to the stomach on game day
- ✓ A full water bottle at every meal, at school, and at practice
- ✓ Three dairy/calcium servings a day — bones are banking now
- ✗ No soda on training or game days — it's an occasional treat, not a drink
- ✓ Dessert is dessert — never a reward or a punishment



THE SCHOOL-DAY FUELING CLOCK

PRACTICE NIGHTS (TYPICALLY TUE / WED / THU) · SESSIONS 75 MIN

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6:45–7:15 AM	BREAKFAST — the day's foundation. Carb + protein + fruit, every day. Rotate: oatmeal with berries & milk · eggs + toast + OJ · Greek yogurt parfait · cereal + milk + banana · bagel with peanut butter. “Not hungry” players start with a smoothie (milk + banana + frozen berries + spoon of PB).
11:30–12:30	SCHOOL LUNCH. Packed: sandwich or wrap + fruit + pretzels or crackers + milk or water. Buying: pick the grilled option over the fried one, always take the fruit, always take the milk. Lunch is fuel for practice — skipping or trading it shows up tonight.
3:30–4:30 PM	PRE-PRACTICE SNACK — the most important snack of the day. Carb-forward, easy on the stomach: banana + peanut butter crackers · yogurt + granola · half a PB&J · applesauce + cheese stick · trail mix + apple. Plus a full bottle of water between now and practice.
30–60 MIN BEFORE	TOP-OFF (only if the snack was early or missed): a banana, an applesauce pouch, or a granola bar. Nothing heavy inside the last hour.
6:00–7:15 PM	PRACTICE. Water first, always. A sports drink alongside water earns a place only in 75+ minute sessions or serious South Carolina heat. The bottle arrives full and comes home empty.
WITHIN 45 MIN AFTER	RECOVERY SNACK — the golden window. Carb + protein starts repair before dinner: chocolate milk is the club's official recovery drink — or a yogurt tube + banana, or half a PB&J in the car.
7:30–8:15 PM	DINNER — the training plate. Half the plate carbs on practice nights; big portions on hard nights are correct, not a problem. Practice-night dinners work best mostly-prepped before you leave for the field.
9:00 PM	SLEEP — 9–11 hours at this age. The best recovery tool that exists at any level of the game. Genuinely hungry before bed: milk, yogurt, or a banana.

NON-PRACTICE DAYS

Same clock, minus the top-off and recovery snack. After-school snack becomes fruit + a protein. Dinner uses the rest-day plate.

THE FIRST GROWTH SPURTS

Some players will grow 3+ inches this year; appetite can double almost overnight. That is biology working — add portions and an extra snack (toast + PB, cereal + milk before bed), never restriction. Players who haven't hit the spurt yet are exactly on time too — bodies keep their own calendars.



GAME DAY

60-MINUTE MATCHES — NOTHING NEW, NOTHING FRIED, NOTHING RUSHED

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MORNING KICKOFF (e.g., 9:00 AM)

2.5–3h before • Breakfast: pancakes or oatmeal + scrambled eggs + banana + milk/OJ. Familiar and carb-forward.

60–75 min before • Top-off: banana or granola bar + water in the car.

Warm-up onward: water only.

AFTERNOON KICKOFF (e.g., 2:00 PM)

Normal breakfast at the usual time.

2.5–3h before • Pre-match meal: pasta with red sauce, or a turkey sandwich + pretzels + fruit + water. Light on the sauce and cheese.

60–75 min before • Top-off: banana / applesauce pouch.

HALFTIME

Water first; orange slices remain the greatest halftime tradition in sport.

POST-MATCH — THE SAME GOLDEN WINDOW

Within 45 minutes: chocolate milk + a banana or PB crackers (keep a small cooler in the car — it removes every excuse).

Within 2 hours: a real meal on the training plate — burrito bowl, chicken + rice, spaghetti, deli sub + milk. Drive-through reality: grilled option + milk + fruit side is a perfectly good recovery meal.

TOURNAMENT DAYS — EAT BY THE GAP

Under 1 hour between games: fruit, applesauce, pretzels, sports-drink sips. Grazing, not eating.

1–2 hours: half a turkey or PB&J sandwich + fruit + water.

2+ hours: a normal light meal, finished 90 min before the next kickoff.

Pack the cooler the night before: sandwiches, bananas, applesauce, pretzels, cheese sticks, chocolate milk, frozen water bottles (they're the ice packs).

GAME-DAY DON'TS

❌ Nothing fried or greasy before kickoff (biscuits, sausage, fries, fast-food breakfast)

❌ No soda, no energy drinks — and concession-stand candy waits until after the last game

❌ No new foods, new bars, or new drinks on a game day — test everything on a practice day first

❌ Don't skip the post-match snack because lunch is "soon" — the window matters most on multi-game days



THE WEEKLY PLAN

ONE WEEK, ON REPEAT — SWAP FREELY WITHIN ANY COLUMN

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	BREAKFAST	LUNCH (PACK OR PICK)	AFTER-SCHOOL / PRE-PRACTICE	DINNER
MONDAY LIGHTER DAY	Oatmeal + berries + milk	Turkey & cheese sandwich, apple, pretzels, water	Apple + cheese stick	Chicken, rice & broccoli + milk
TUESDAY PRACTICE	Scrambled eggs + toast + OJ	School lunch: grilled pick + fruit + milk	Banana + PB crackers · recovery: chocolate milk	Spaghetti & meat sauce + salad + garlic bread
WEDNESDAY PRACTICE	Greek yogurt + granola + banana	Ham & cheese wrap, carrots + ranch, fruit cup	Yogurt + granola · recovery: chocolate milk	Turkey tacos + beans + rice + toppings
THURSDAY PRACTICE	Whole-grain cereal + milk + banana	Leftover taco quesadilla + apple + water	Half PB&J + banana · recovery: chocolate milk	Baked fish (or rotisserie chicken) + mashed potatoes + green beans
FRIDAY NIGHT BEFORE GAME	Bagel + peanut butter + fruit	Turkey sandwich, pretzels, grapes, milk	Smoothie (milk, banana, frozen berries, PB)	PASTA NIGHT: chicken + pasta (red sauce) + bread + salad — carbs up, early night
SATURDAY GAME DAY	Per the Game Day page (by kickoff time)	Post-match meal within 2 hours	Cooler: chocolate milk, bananas, PB crackers, applesauce	Burrito bowls (rice, beans, chicken, cheese) + milk
SUNDAY REST & RESET	Pancakes + eggs + fruit (family breakfast)	Family meal — rest-day plate (⅓ each)	Popcorn + fruit · prep snack drawer for the week	Roast chicken + potatoes + veg — cook once, use leftovers Mon/Tue lunches

THE SNACK DRAWER + FRUIT BOWL SYSTEM

Stock one drawer and one bowl on Sunday; players self-serve all week: bananas, apples, grapes · PB crackers · pretzels · granola bars · trail mix · applesauce pouches. Fridge zone: yogurt tubes, cheese sticks, chocolate milk boxes, baby carrots + hummus.

SWAP FREELY — THE COLUMNS ARE THE RULE, NOT THE MENU

Any breakfast for any breakfast, any dinner for any dinner. Portions scale with the player — a U12 in a growth phase eating seconds is the plan working. Budget week? Eggs, beans, rice, frozen veg, and store brands hit every target.

Halal/kosher/vegetarian: swap the protein 1-for-1 — the plate stays the same.



THE ONE-TRIP GROCERY LIST

EVERYTHING ON PAGES 1-4, ONE CART, ANY SUPERMARKET

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PRODUCE

- ☐ Bananas (big bunch — the MVP)
- ☐ Apples
- ☐ Grapes
- ☐ Oranges (halftime slices)
- ☐ Berries (fresh or frozen)
- ☐ Baby carrots
- ☐ Broccoli (fresh or frozen)
- ☐ Green beans (fresh or frozen)
- ☐ Salad kit
- ☐ Potatoes / mashed-ready
- ☐ Lemons or limes (water flavor)

DAIRY & EGGS

- ☐ Milk (2 gallons)
- ☐ Chocolate milk (jug or lunchbox boxes)
- ☐ Greek yogurt tub + yogurt tubes
- ☐ Cheese sticks
- ☐ Shredded cheese
- ☐ Butter
- ☐ Eggs (18-count)

PROTEINS

- ☐ Chicken breasts or thighs
- ☐ Rotisserie chicken (the weeknight cheat code)
- ☐ Ground turkey or lean beef (2 lbs)
- ☐ Deli turkey & ham
- ☐ Fish fillets or fish sticks
- ☐ Canned black beans / refried beans (3 cans)
- ☐ Peanut butter (big jar)
- ☐ Hummus

GRAINS & BREAD

- ☐ Whole-grain sandwich bread (2 loaves)
- ☐ Bagels
- ☐ Tortillas / wraps
- ☐ Spaghetti + 1 more pasta shape
- ☐ Pasta sauce (2 jars)
- ☐ Rice (big bag)
- ☐ Oatmeal
- ☐ Whole-grain cereal
- ☐ Pancake mix
- ☐ Granola

SNACK AISLE

- ☐ Peanut butter crackers
- ☐ Pretzels
- ☐ Granola bars (simple ones)
- ☐ Trail mix
- ☐ Applesauce pouches
- ☐ Popcorn
- ☐ Jelly / jam
- ☐ Fruit cups (in juice)

FREEZER & EXTRAS

- ☐ Frozen berries (smoothies)
- ☐ Frozen veg backup bags
- ☐ Taco kit / taco seasoning
- ☐ Salsa
- ☐ Sports drink (per this guide's rule only)
- ☐ Water bottles or a good refillable
- ☐ NOT on the list: soda, energy drinks

THE 10-MINUTE SUNDAY SETUP

Roast the chicken · boil eggs · fill the snack drawer and fruit bowl · pack Saturday's cooler list on the fridge door · freeze two water bottles. Ten minutes on Sunday runs the whole week.



HYDRATION, GROWTH & QUICK ANSWERS

THE U12-SPECIFIC ANSWERS

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HYDRATION — THE BOTTLE RULE

A full bottle **with every meal**, one **at school**, one **at practice** — the baseline. Game days and SC summer: start the day before; urine should look like pale lemonade, not apple juice. Water first, always. A sports drink alongside water earns a place only in 75+ minute sessions or serious South Carolina heat.

GROWING AT 11–12

Calcium x3 daily — the bone-building window is opening. **Iron starts to matter**, especially for girls as they begin to mature: red meat twice a week, beans, eggs, fortified cereal. Persistent tiredness sleep doesn't fix → mention iron to your pediatrician. **Sleep 9–11 hours.**

QUICK ANSWERS

“Suddenly ALWAYS hungry — is that okay?” Growth spurt. Feed it: bigger portions, extra snacks, zero guilt. Hunger during a spurt is a biological instruction, not a discipline issue.

“Winter futsal nights — anything different?” Same clock. Indoor sessions still earn the recovery snack; the gym being warm doesn't change the fueling.

“Protein powder? Their friend uses it.” No. Food + chocolate milk fully covers a U12. Supplements are unregulated and unnecessary at this age — club policy and pediatric consensus agree.

“My daughter seems extra tired lately.” Common as girls mature — check sleep first, then ask the pediatrician about iron. Never solve tiredness with caffeine at this age.

“They won't eat before morning games.” Liquid it: smoothie or chocolate milk + banana beats an empty tank. Train the morning stomach on weekend practice days.

A NOTE ON FOOD TALK — CLUB POLICY

Adults at Soda City FC do not comment on players' bodies or weight, label foods “good” and “bad,” or attach food to punishment or reward — at any age. We talk about fueling, energy, and recovery — full stop. If eating habits ever worry you, the right first call is your pediatrician or a registered dietitian, and the club will support quietly and completely.

DISCLAIMER

This guide is general fueling guidance for healthy U12 athletes, not medical advice. Food allergies, diabetes, coeliac disease, vegetarian/vegan or religious diets, and any medical condition change the details — your pediatrician or a registered dietitian (eatright.org “Find a Nutrition Expert”) personalizes it. Tell your coach and team manager about allergies so the sideline is safe.