



TASTE TEST | Nutrition bars

Our fit panel members were Andre Prue, a bodybuilding champion and owner-operator of 3PT, a personal training studio in Old Town Alexandria; kickboxing instructor Bill Matthews, also of 3PT; Los Angeles Times-Washington Post News Service editor Paul Freedman, a casual bicyclist and longtime energy bar consumer; and Food section editorial assistant Leigh Lambert, a former pastry chef and a marathoner (in her spare time).

We asked the testers to focus primarily on taste. Then they ranked the samples in three categories: whether the bars would be suitable to eat before or after a workout; as a snack bar; or — what turned out to be the largest group — not at all.

Here are the results, listed alphabetically after the No. 1 choices in each category:



Testers Matthews, Prue and Lambert.

NAME	FLAVOR/WEIGHT	TESTERS' COMMENTS	WORTH NOTING
Before/after a workout			
Clif Bar Energy Bar	Black Cherry Almond 2.4 ounces	Fruity good taste and texture; wouldn't weigh you down.	This and the Carrot Cake flavor are the heftiest of the bunch.
Mojo Not Your Ordinary Snack Bar	Mixed Nuts 1.59 ounces	Salty flavor would make it good for post-workout; needs liquid accompaniment.	Highest calorie count (220) in the bunch.
For a snack or day-tripper sustenance			
Balance Gold Crunch Nutrition Energy Bar	S'mores 1.76 ounces	Goes down easy; no aftertaste; chewy.	In the ingredient list: fish gelatin!
Balance Gold Nutrition Energy Bar	Triple Chocolate Chaos 1.76 ounces	Creamy; good as a fudge truffle stand-in; would also work as a post-workout snack.	More fish gelatin!
Body for Life Balanced Nutrition Bar	Chocolate Mint Cookie 1.76 ounces	Candy bar; peppermint-patty taste with good texture.	
Carb Solutions High Protein Bar	Caramel Peanut Crunch 1.76 ounces	Candylike; good caramel; nice crispy blend.	24 total carbs; 4 net carbs.
Power Bar Triple Threat	Caramel Peanut Crisp 1.94 ounces	Fake maple taste; needs a chaser; very thick rice crispy bar with chocolate.	
Trim Advantage Protein Bar	Banana Creme 2.1 ounces	Nougat-like; tastes like candy.	With 21 grams of proteins, the highest of the bunch.
Not recommended			
Zone Perfect All-Natural Nutrition Bar	Mango Orange Delight 1.76 ounces	Totally artificial; too citrusy; dry, chalky aftertaste.	15 grams protein; testers agreed this was the worst-tasting of the bunch.
Balance Trail Mix Energy Bar	Fruit and Nut 1.76 ounces	Fake berry flavor; hard to chew.	
Clif Bar Energy Bar	Carrot Cake 2.4 ounces	Christmas cookie; typical Clif Bar taste; too spicy.	
Clif Nectar Organic Fruit & Nut Bar	Cranberry, Apricot & Almond, 1.6 ounces	Sticks to teeth; too much cranberry.	Among the new, softer-consistency brands, such as Larabars (Humm Foods).
Kashi Go Lean Protein & Fiber Bar	Chocolate Caramel Karma, 1.59 ounces	A lot of nothing; popcorn kernel taste and texture.	
Luna Whole Nutrition Bar for Women (usually extra calcium and folic acid)	Dulce de Leche 1.69 ounces	Seafood aftertaste.	Sometimes if the caramel flavor has weakened, vitamin B flavor can become prominent, causing an "off" aftertaste.
Odwalla Nourishing Food Bar	Berries GoMega 2.2 ounces	Flat, stale; taste of Tabasco; would need liquid accompaniment.	Testers said the taste has gotten slightly better in the product's 20-year history.
South Beach Meal Replacement Bar	Chocolate Peanut Butter 2.1 ounces	Stale; dry; hard to chew.	19 grams protein; gets its crunch from soy protein crisps.
Trim Advantage Protein Bar	Mixed Berry Smoothie 2.1 ounces	Too sweet.	
Zone Perfect All-Natural Nutrition Bar	Chocolate Raspberry 1.76 ounces	Cough syrup; dry; tough to swallow.	