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Fitness has to start in the kitchen

LOCAL NEWS 1 NOV 10 @ 05:00AM BY SUE MIKKELSEN



DIETARY TIPS: Nick Croft and Jessica Fleming in talk up the importance of eating healthy foods.

HEALTHY eating is a vital part of sports training, but it doesn't have to be all pasta and salads.

Noosa Triathlon and ironman competitor Jessica Fleming knows how vital nutrition is to training, but she also makes sure there's room for a treat every day.

Jessica, who runs Noosa Tri Camps with her partner Nick Croft, a triathlon coach and former professional triathlete, competed in Sunday's Noosa Triathlon for the sixth time. She is also training for her first full Ironman event a 3.8km swim, 180km bike ride and marathon run, taking 10-11 hours in Western Australia in November.

"We try to eat quite healthy as part of our lifestyle but I still make sure I have a healthy treat every day," Jessica said.

An Australian Institute of Sport nutritionist lectures beginner to intermediate triathletes at the camps about the importance of nutrition, but at home, Jessica and Nick know how to look after their own nutrition. Their staple dinners are salmon, steamed vegetables and rice, or other fish or lean meat. For lunch, it's healthy sandwiches or a salad.

"I try to limit the amount of fried food I have and don't have much fast food," Jessica said.

A healthy treat for afternoon tea could be gluten-free, wheat-free and sugar-free Date and Ginger Muffins (see recipe).

"They're really yummy," Jessica said. "For morning tea I might have healthy yoghurt from the markets with fresh fruit I try to buy as organic and healthy as I can. But I also have a little choccy with a cup of tea most nights."

Jessica, who was born in Sweden but has lived away from her country of birth for 16 years, occasionally makes Swedish dishes such as meatballs with boiled potato and gravy, served with lingonberry jam.

“The climate here is not so conducive to Swedish cooking it’s very hearty and too heavy for here most of the time,” she said. “But in winter I find myself cooking Swedish food.”

Jessica, who hopes to do well enough in the WA ironman event to qualify for the Hawaiian Ironman, will take part in today’s Noosa Journal Breakfast Fun Run with her children, aged 8 and 5.

“It’s such a mecca for healthy eating in Noosa,” she said. “I came here about 10 years ago and got really wrapped up in the healthy aspects of Noosa.

“There’s a lot more action on the street at 6am than there is at 6pm. It’s bustling with healthy exercise.”

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