**RAISING THE BAR**

**Apricot and Almond Energy Bars**

(taken from Womens Cycling Magazine)

These delicious bars are sweetened naturally with apricots and orange juice, avoiding the need for additional sugars. They also use almond nut butter, rich in protein and nutrients, including magnesium and B vitamins – important for energy production. As an alternative, you could use unsweetened peanut butter or cashew nut butter. For an extra protein boost, try adding a scoop of your favourite protein powder. By using porridge oats and wholemeal flour these bars will release sugar more slowly into the bloodstream, sustaining your energy for longer. This makes them ideal for longer rides. Can be frozen for up to 3 months.

Makes 16 bars

* 3 large oranges, pips removed (I used fresh orange juice)
* 225g dried apricots, chopped
* 170g almond nut butter, peanut butter or cashew nut butter
* 225g porridge oats
* 1 scoop protein powder (optional)
* 125g wholemeal self-raising wholemeal flour
* 25g mixed seeds e.g. sunflower, sesame, hemp, pumpkin (optional)
* ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
* 1tsp ground cinnamon
* 125g apricots, finely chopped

1. Preheat oven to 190 C, gas mark 5.
2. Place oranges, 225g apricots and nut butter in blender and puree to form a thick paste.
3. Place the porridge oats, flour, seeds, protein powder, if using, soda and cinnamon in a large bowl. Stir in the remaining chopped dried apricots and combine thoroughly. Press the mixture into a greased, lined shallow traybake tin, approx. 20cm by 35cm. smooth the top with the back of a spoon.
4. Bake in oven for 20-25 minutes until golden brown. Leave to cool in the tin for ten minutes before turning out. Cut into small bars.
5. Store in an airtight container. As the bars contain a high proportion of fruit they are best kept in the fridge. Alternatively, freeze for up to three months.

**Nutritional information per slice:**

Calories 203 kcal

Protein 7.3g

Carbohydrates 24.9g of which sugars 11g

Total fat 8.1 of which saturates 1.2g