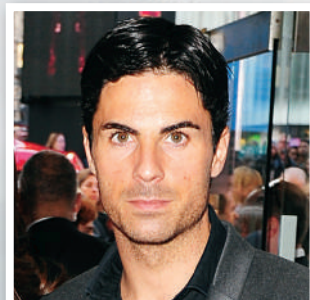


GOURMET GUNNERS



Napoleon said 'an army marches on its stomach' and fellow Frenchman Arsène Wenger certainly needs his troops to be well fuelled if they are to fire on all cylinders for the first team. Each month we ask an Arsenal star to spill the beans on all their foody thoughts. On the menu this month is

MIKEL ARTETA



Seafood lover

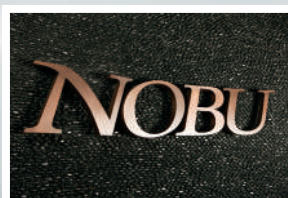


What would you say is your favourite food?

I like all sorts of seafood.

What is your favourite restaurant – either to visit regularly or as a treat?

I'd say it's probably Nobu.



What's the first thing you look for on a menu?

The starters. I am a fan of starters.

Tell us the perfect person for you to go to a restaurant with. My wife.

What's the main cuisine where you are from?

In Spain it is paella, seafood, ham, things like that.

What do you have for breakfast?

A fruit smoothie and scrambled eggs on toast.

...and a late night snack?

Sometimes cereal, other times a piece of fruit.



Morning Mikel!

Did you have school dinners? What were they like?

Yes I did. They weren't the best to be honest – there wasn't much choice.

How do you like to eat your eggs?

I like them scrambled.

What do you like on toast?

Just butter.

Favourite three vegetables?

Beans, carrots and potato.



Beans Spanish style

Your favourite cold drink?

Orange juice.

...and hot drink?

Coffee.

What's your secret vice?

Chocolate.

Which team-mate has the most unusual taste in food?

Mathieu Flamini is strange because he puts Tabasco on everything!

Best dish you can cook?

I'm very good at doing barbecues.

Tell us what you have for Christmas dinner?

A Spanish Christmas dinner is roast lamb, croquettes, and vegetables.

Finally, when you go for lunch at the training ground, tell us three things you hope are on the menu that day?

I love the Dover Sole. The steak is really nice and some of Rob's soups are really nice – particularly the vegetable ones.

Refreshing



Fiery Flamini



Merry Christmas



Fingers crossed it's Dover Sole Day

COLLINS GEMS



ALCOHOL AND FITNESS

This month, with the festive season and New Year's resolutions on everyone's minds, Arsenal Nutritionist James Collins looks at the effects of alcohol on the body.

Research has shown that almost a fifth of those who make a new year's resolution plan to cut back on alcohol, but a mid-January to February slump was a common occurrence. Exercisers should think twice before reaching for an ice cold beer after a game or a glass of wine when returning from the gym as alcohol in your system is detrimental to physical condition, activity and recovery – here's how:

WEIGHT GAIN – Alcohol is energy-dense (providing 7 calories per gram) and nutrient-poor, and thus provides 'empty calories'. Therefore, consuming alcohol contributes significantly to total daily energy intake. If habitual energy intakes exceed energy expenditure then weight gains will occur in the form of adipose (fat) tissue. Alcohol cannot be stored by the body and metabolises it as a priority, its accumulation in the blood can suppress the oxidation of other dietary energy sources (fat, carbohydrate and to a lesser extent protein) and subsequently results in increased fat storage.

AFFECTING EXERCISE PERFORMANCE

Drinking alcohol in the lead up to and immediately before an event is likely to impair both physical and psychological performance. For example, causing dehydration resulting in cognitive and physical function. Secondly, alcohol interferes with energy production, as the liver has to first process alcohol, meaning it is less efficient in producing and regulating blood sugar (glucose). This results in low blood glucose, meaning the body will not be able to maintain exercise at a high intensity.



RECOVERY – Problems also arise when drinking alcohol takes precedence over other recovery nutritional practices, such as acute intake of carbohydrate, protein and fluid, specifically affecting glycogen storage, muscle protein synthesis and hydration status. Sleep patterns and quality are also hit, compromising the body's ability to return to homeostasis (normal operating conditions).

SO NO ALCOHOL AT ALL? – No, it is important to highlight that drinking in moderation (sticking to government guidelines) can still be part of an active social lifestyle. It is best to enjoy a drinks on non 'key training' days. Following competition, exercisers should ensure that they are hitting key recovery targets, such as consuming 1.2g/kg/bodyweight of carbohydrate + 25g high quality protein + adequate fluids, before celebrating!