

# Eating and Drinking during a ski marathon in cold weather

*by Nathan Schultz*

The only person you can count on to make sure you eat and drink properly is yourself. Bringing what you need with you is the only way that you can guarantee that you will have it. Even in races where the aid stations are functional, they are often clogged with people or you might come across them at a time when you don't feel good about eating and drinking. So bringing along some drink and food is a great way to stay fueled and offer yourself a bit of insurance.

We Subaru Factory Team skiers have found great success using Ultimate bottle carriers and bladder systems to carry drink ([E3](#) from [First Endurance](#) is your best choice), gels and energy bars (The Subaru Factory Team uses [Honey Stinger](#) gels and energy bars). The biggest concern, especially with sub-zero temperatures, is freezing. Ultimate packs have several key features that insulate hoses and bottle nipples from the cold, but even with those, you need to take special precautions to make sure gels and water don't freeze.

1. Keep them under a layer of clothing and close to your body. When the temperature approaches 0F I usually put a vest on over my normal racing kit and I have raced with an Ultimate bladder system under the vest for over two hours at -10F without it freezing.
2. Start with them hot. We often boil water and put it in the bottles/bladders. By the time you drive to the venue, and are ready to drink the stuff it should be cool enough. Just be careful to test it before you take your first sip.

Carrying your own gels and drinks gives you the advantage to feed whenever convenient - on a long downhill, or just when you really need it. Make sure that you feed early and often in a race. I have found that it helps to drink as soon as you have a chance and drink as often as you can throughout a race. One year at the American Birkebeiner I drank 6 full water bottles over the course of the 2-hour event. I have never felt more sick to my stomach, but I have also never felt so strong at the finish as I did that year.

You should also try using some of the products you will have with you in the week(s) leading up to the race. We use [E3](#) sport drink from [First Endurance](#), and it has worked great! However, it is good to let your body get use to the taste of something new before using it in a 3+ hour effort.