

20 HOMEMADE NATURAL RUNNING FUEL RECIPES

THE
RUNNER
BEANS.

Charlie Watson



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FAQs

What are the differences between real foods and sports nutrition products?

A Mintel survey, released in January, showed that real food sports nutrition is going to be a strong trend for 2020. People, including top runners, are moving away from commercial sports nutrition products and closer to products made with natural ingredients and actual foods. We seem to be going back to what people were consuming twenty or thirty years ago, the dried fruit and the bananas at race (and still very popular in European races such as the Paris Marathon!)

Different things suit different people. It is really important to test everything out in training, so it is a lot of trial and error to work out what works for you and then stick to it.

Real food is nutritious, probably a bit cheaper and more likely to agree with you especially if you are prone to gut problems!

You can go for the dried fruit option, fruit and nuts bars are really good – there are lots of options on the market, or you can make your own energy bars/balls like the ones in this ebook.

One thing to be aware of is the amount of fuel ie carbs in real food versus sports nutrition products, as often you need to take on more of your homemade running fuel than shop bought gels to reach the recommended 30-60g per hour. Each recipe in this book includes both the calories and carbs per portion so that you can create a fueling strategy that works!

Some runners find that having real food at the beginning of a long run/marathon and then sports products towards the end works for them, because the sports nutrition products are designed to be absorbed at a faster rate and get into your bloodstream a little bit faster!

A good strategy for offloading the bigger heavier food items at the start and carrying the lighter gel type products for the longer distance! Lightening the load as it were!

How important is it for us to fuel on the run?

Fuelling on the run becomes very important on runs which are longer than sixty minutes. After running for sixty to ninety minutes, you are running low on glycogen which is the limiting factor for any endurance exercise. When you run out of glycogen (our body's carbohydrate stores), you can't keep up the intensity and pace of your run.

The idea of in run fuelling is to maintain your blood sugar levels, to eke out your body's precious glycogen stores, to delay fatigue and allow you to keep going longer at your desired pace.

What should you eat during a marathon or half marathon?

During a marathon, you are burning about 2600 calories, give or take, but it doesn't mean you have to consume that amount of calories during the race or even on race day itself.

The objective is that you will be consuming carbohydrate and all the energy you need beforehand, in the preceding two or three days. That's going to be your main focus, building up your glycogen stores so that on race day itself you will be consuming carbohydrates in your high carb breakfast roughly two to three hours beforehand.

Sports Nutrition products are designed for fast absorption and ease while out on your run, but part of the reason these gels and specially formulated drinks work so well is

General Fuelling Rules

RUN DURATION

<1 hour	= no fuel needed, water if hot
1-3 hours	= 30-60g (1-2oz) carbs/ hour
3 hours +	= 30-90g (1-3oz) carbs / hour

the combination of carbohydrate sources they combine. The body can't absorb more than 60g (2oz) of carbohydrates per hour, if ingesting it from a single source.

However, if you mix your carbohydrate sources, you can absorb up to 90g (3oz).

During the race itself, it's the carbs that you need to keep track of. Looking at the 30 gram of carbohydrate portions, that's roughly 150 calories. Focus more on the carb element, as that is what is going to matter in terms of absorption and digestion of the energy, and therefore your ability to release the energy and sustain your energy output during the run or the race.

Oatmeal Raisin 'Cookies'

REAL FOOD





Super Stuffed Dates



Super Stuffed Dates

Information

Makes : As many as you like
Cals / date : 75kcal
Carb / date : 11g
(depending on how generous you stuff them with nut butter)

No time to leave anything to set or cool?

Whip these up in 2 minutes with ingredients from your storecupboard. And you can make as many or as few as you want for these. They also make a great mid afternoon sweet treat snack.

Ingredients

- Dried dates
- Nut butter or Sunflower butter
- Pinch of salt

Method

1. Peel open the dates, spoon in half a teaspoon of nut or seed butter.
2. Sprinkle with a little salt and close the date. Be careful not to overstuff the date.
3. Try freezing extras them to make them more solid during your run!

Salted Date & Pretzel Bars

Information

Makes : 10-12 bars
Cals / serving : 242 kcal
Carb / serving : 27g

Ingredients

- 10 (240g) medjool dates, pitted
- 2 tbsp (30g) coconut oil, melted
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 cups (80g) salted pretzels
- Sea salt
- 1 ½ cups (220g) chopped peanuts, unsalted

Method

1. Line an 8x8 inch / 20x20cm square tray with baking paper.
2. In a food processor or blender, combine dates, melted coconut oil, and vanilla until it becomes a thick paste.
3. Put pretzels into a resealable bag. Using a rolling pin, crush the pretzels into a small pieces.
4. Combine date paste, pretzels, and chopped peanuts in a bowl.
5. Transfer to the lined tray, using the back of a spatula to firmly press it down.
6. Sprinkle with sea salt.
7. Transfer to the fridge, and let set for 30 minutes.
8. Cut into 10-12 bars and enjoy!



Salted Date and Pretzel Bars



Nutty Coconut Krispies

Nutty Coconut Krispies

Information

Makes : 16 bites
Cals / serving : 186 kcals
Carb / serving : 22g

Ingredients

- 3 cups (125g) crispy rice cereal
- ½ cup (40g) shredded coconut, unsweetened
- ½ cup (130g) cashew, peanut or almond butter, creamy
- ½ cup (170g) agave syrup, or honey
- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2tbsp hundred and thousands (sprinkles)
- Pinch sea salt

Method

1. Line an 8x8inch (20x20cm) baking tray with baking paper.
2. Combine crispy rice cereal and coconut in a large bowl. Set aside.
3. Combine nut butter, agave, and coconut oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Gently warm until you see a few bubbles.
4. Remove from heat, and add vanilla extract.
5. Pour nut butter mixture over rice cereal. Stir to combine. Add in hundreds and thousands until incorporated.
6. Transfer to the baking tray, pressing down firmly with a spatula.
7. Top with a sprinkle of sea salt. Chill for 30-60 minutes or until set. Enjoy!

Salted Caramel Balls

Information

Makes : 15 balls
Cals / serving : 107 kcal
Carb / serving : 14g

For years I've used Salted Caramel gels for my long runs and races. As someone who sweats a lot, I appreciate the extra salt content, plus they're one of the only flavours I can handle after running for 3+ hours. These salted caramel balls are a lot more natural than the gels I have used and they taste a lot better, but they are perfect for popping into your backpack or pocket to enjoy mid-run for a little energy boost.

Ingredients

- 8 medjool dates
- 125g cashews
- 50g almonds
- 50g oats
- 2tsp vanilla essence
- Large pinch of seasalt

Method

1. Blitz the oats in a food processor until they become a flour.
2. Add in the dates, cashews, almonds, salt and vanilla essence. Pulse until the mixture comes together and forms a thick, sticky texture (add a little water if it is too dry).
3. Roll the mixture into 16 balls and transfer to a lined baking sheet.
4. Freeze the balls for 3 hours, then balls can be transferred to a tupperware, ziplock bag or your running backpack!
5. Keep in the freezer until use - up to 3 months.

Beetroot Cacao Coconut Balls

Information

Makes : 16 balls
Cals / serving : 54 kcals
Carb / serving : 7g

Ingredients

- 1 cooked beetroot, roughly chopped
- 5 medjool dates
- 1tspb cacao powder (alternatively you can use regular cocoa powder)
- 1/3 cup (30g) pecans, roughly chopped
- 1/2 cup (50g) ground almonds
- 1/3 cup (30g) desiccated coconut, plus extra to decorate
- 1 vanilla bean pod, seeds scraped

Method

1. In a food processor, blitz together the beetroot, dates, cacao powder and pecans. Add the almonds, coconut and vanilla and pulse until combined.
2. Line a baking sheet with greaseproof paper. Place the extra coconut in a shallow bowl.
3. Roll the mixture into 16 walnut size balls (each about the size of a walnut) and roll in desiccated coconut to cover.
4. Lay on the tray and freeze for 1-2 hrs until solid.
5. Transfer to an airtight container and store in the fridge for up to a week, or the freezer for up to a month.
6. These can get a bit squishy when its warm so keep them in a ziplock bag or sealed container in a pocket or bag while on the run!

Oatmeal Raisin 'Cookies'

Information

Makes : 20 balls
Cals / serving : 99 kcals
Carb / serving : 16g

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups (150g) oats (instant works better than old fashioned)
- 3 ½ oz (100g) dates
- ½ cup (125g) peanut butter (smooth or chunky)
- 1tbsp ground cinnamon
- 1tsp vanilla extract
- 3tsp honey (Manuka is great for it's antibacterial properties!)
- 1 cup (125g) raisins or sultanas

Method

1. In a food processor pulse the oats for 20 seconds (pulse for 1 min if using old fashioned oats) before adding the dates, peanut butter, cinnamon, vanilla and honey. Pulse until it starts to come together, about a minute.
2. Add the raisins and pulse for another 15 seconds.
3. Divide the mixture into 20 small balls (about the size of a walnut). You may need to really squeeze to get them together.
4. Chill or freeze the balls until solid and enjoy!



Oatmeal Raisin 'Cookies'

Turmeric Roasted Potatoes

Information

Makes : 4 portions
Cals / serving : 133 kcals
Carb / serving : 22g

There was a study released towards the tail end of 2019, where scientists compared potatoes with gels. They found that potatoes were just as beneficial in terms of maintaining blood sugar level, maintaining performance and endurance, and a great source of potassium which runners often need.

Potassium is one of the electrolytes we would get in a sports drink, and here you get it naturally in potatoes. Leftover roasted potatoes or roasted wedges, which are much more convenient than mashed potatoes which were used in the study. Small baked potatoes, particularly on ultra marathons, are a good balance of savoury to the sweet/fruit snacks generally offered which can lead to flavour fatigue on those very long races.

With a mixture of carbs, fat and salt, these potatoes are the ultimate multi-taskers. I like to make a big batch to serve alongside roast chicken or burgers, and refrigerate some to eat on the run later.

Ingredients

- 1lb 2oz (500g) potatoes, washed
- 1 tsp ground turmeric
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp ground coriander
- 1 Tbsp coconut oil
- salt and ground black pepper, to taste

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/gas mark 6.
2. Halve the potatoes, then cut each half into wedges. Transfer the potato wedges to a large bowl and toss in the spices and plenty of seasoning until evenly coated.
3. Meanwhile, put the coconut oil into a large roasting pan and place in the oven to melt. When melted, carefully toss the wedges through the oil in the pan until well coated, and arrange in a single layer.
4. Roast for 25 minutes, or until the wedges are crispy on the outside and soft inside.





Stuffed Apricots

Stuffed Apricots

Information

Makes : 8-10 apricots
 Cals / serving : 100 kcals
 Carb / serving : 6g

Ingredients

- 8-10 dried apricots (60-70g)
- Optional fillings, per apricot:
- ½ tsp peanut or almond butter
- Hemp seeds
- Flax seeds
- 1-3 nuts, or ½ tsp pumpkin or sunflower seeds
- Cinnamon
- Mixed spice
- Pinch sea salt

Method

1. Find the opening of the apricot and gently open to reveal a “pocket”, or carefully slice each apricot parallel to the chopping board to open like a book.
2. Fill apricot halves with desired fillings and a pinch of salt, such as:
 - ½ tsp peanut butter + ¼ tsp hemp seeds + cinnamon
 - 1-2 pecans + mixed spice
 - ½ tsp almond butter + flax seeds
 - ½ tsp pumpkin seeds
 - 1 Walnut + cinnamon
 - 2-3 Almonds
3. Store in the fridge or freezer before eating. Enjoy!

Cinnamon Apple Chips

Information

Makes : 4 (approx 4 cups)
Cals / serving : 118 kcals
Carb / serving : 31g

Ingredients

- 4 large apples (whatever variety you have on hand (~800g))
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- Pinch sea salt

Method

1. Preheat your oven to 200°F/93°C. Line 2-3 baking trays with paper or non-stick silpat mats.
2. Thinly slice the apples into 1/8 inch // 1/4 cm slices. Core each apple using a paring knife or apple corer.
3. Arrange the apples on the baking trays without overlapping, and sprinkle with cinnamon and sea salt.
4. Bake for 90 minutes.
5. Rotate the trays and bake for an additional 45-75 minutes, or until after one piece hardens after 2-3 minutes, when removed and left on the counter.



Cinnamon Apple Chips

Almond Mocha Bar

Information

Makes : 8-10 bars
Cals / serving : 281 kcals
Carb / serving : 24g

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cup (150g) gluten-free rolled oats
- 1 cup (130g) chopped almonds
- 1 tbsp (5g) instant coffee powder
- 2 tbsp (10g) cocoa powder
- ½ cup (90g) dark chocolate chips
- ½ cup (125g) almond butter, unsalted
- ¼ cup (60ml/135g) honey
- 2 tbsp (30g) coconut oil
- 1 tsp (5ml) vanilla extract
- Sea salt

Method

1. Line an 8x8inch/20x20cm square tray with baking paper.
2. In a large bowl, combine rolled oats, almonds, coffee powder, cocoa, and chocolate chips. Set aside.
3. Combine almond butter, honey, and coconut in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, let bubble for 20-30 seconds, and remove from heat immediately.
4. Add vanilla.
5. Pour hot almond butter and honey mixture over the oats. Stir to combine.
6. Transfer the mixture to the tray, using the back of your spatula to press firmly.
7. Sprinkle with sea salt.
8. Let cool in the fridge until set, about 2 hours.
9. Cut into 8-10 bars. Enjoy!



HOMEMADE ENERGY GELS



Berry Chia Bites

Information

Makes : 20-25 squares
Cals / serving : 45 kcals
Carb / serving : 9g

Ingredients

- 2 cups (250g) frozen raspberries (fresh also work)
- Juice of 1 lemon
- ½ cup (100g) caster sugar
- 2tbsp agar agar flakes
- 75g/ 5tbsp chia seeds
- ½ tsp baking powder

Method

1. Pour the raspberries into a medium/ large saucepan over low heat, and mash until fully softened and the raspberries are a spoonable consistency.
2. Stir in the water, lemon juice and sugar. Stir together and turn up the heat. Bring to the boil. Add the chia seeds, agar agar flakes and baking powder and stir for 1 min (the mixture will bubble a lot after the baking powder is added), turn down the heat to a simmer. Stir regularly to avoid the chia seeds sticking to the bottom of the pan.
3. Pour the mixture into a lined 9inch square baking tin and set aside to cool for 3hrs. Turn out the mixture and cut into squares - roll the squares in sugar. Chill in the fridge for up to 3 weeks.





Cheats Jelly Shots

Cheat's Jelly Shots

Information

Makes : 20-30 cubes
 Cals / serving : 37 kcals
 Carb / serving : 14g

These are quick, cheap and easy to make. I also find them really refreshing to eat on a run. The extra gelatine helps to make them more solid and less likely to become a slushy mess on hot runs.

Ingredients

- 4 gelatine sheets (or use agar agar equivalent to make these vegan/veggie friendly)
- 20fl oz/2½ cups (600ml) coconut water
- 2oz/¼ cup (50g) caster sugar
- 5-oz (1 x 135-g) packet flavoured jelly (jello) cubes (not sugar-free)
- large pinch of salt tapioca starch, for dusting

Method

1. Soak the gelatine sheets in a bowl of cold water for 5 minutes, or until softened, then remove and squeeze out any excess liquid.
2. Meanwhile, place 10fl oz/1¼ cups (300ml) of the coconut water into a large saucepan and bring to a simmer.
3. Remove from the heat, then stir in the sugar, jelly (jello) cubes and gelatine leaves. Continue stirring until the jelly cubes have completely melted, then stir in the remaining coconut water and salt.
4. Line a 20-cm (8-in) square cake tin with plastic wrap. Pour the mixture into the tin and chill in the refrigerator overnight. Turn out and cut into 2.5-4-cm (1-1½-in) squares.
5. Fill a bowl with tapioca starch and gently roll each square in the flour until coated – this will prevent them from sticking together. Store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

Note for US readers

A standard 3-oz packet of jello cubes will set 2 cups of liquid, so either reduce the quantity of coconut water to suit or use 1¼ packets of jello.

Apple Chia Gels

Information

Makes : 12 - 14 servings
Cals / serving : 44 kcals
Carb / serving : 11g

One of my favourite shop-bought energy gels is the Huma Apple Cinnamon chia, which sadly you don't seem to be able to buy in the UK. So I set about making my own. Less convenient to carry but definitely cheaper and less waste!

Ingredients

- 2 apples - I used braeburn (add more maple syrup if using cooking apples)
- 75ml unsweetened apple juice
- 1tbsp lemon juice
- 1tbsp maple syrup
- 2tbsp chia seeds
- Pinch ground cinnamon
- Pinch salt

Method

1. Peel and roughly chop the apples.
2. Cook the apples in a large saucepan over medium heat, covered, until they start to break down, stirring regularly.
3. Once apples are soft, remove from the heat and add the apple juice, lemon juice, maple syrup and chia seeds.
4. Using a blender or stick blender, blitz until smooth. Season to taste with the cinnamon and salt, and set aside to thicken.
5. Chill until ready to use - this can be eaten on the go with a spoon or from a gel tube. It also works really well as a toast topping!
6. The gel lasts up to a week in the fridge or a month in the freezer.



Apple Chia Gels

Fruit Smoothie Gels

Information

Makes : 12 - 14 servings
Cals / serving : 60 kcals
Protein / serving : 15g

Essentially this is a smoothie in a tube, you'll need two of these homemade gels for every one traditional gel you'd normally enjoy.

Ingredients

- 350g frozen blueberries
- 100g frozen raspberries
- 175g medjool dates, roughly chopped
- 4-5tbsp maple syrup
- Pinch of salt

Method

1. Stir together the frozen fruit and dates in a large saucepan over medium heat.
2. Cook for 20-25mins, stirring every few mins to stop the fruit sticking to the bottom of the pan.
3. Allow to cool slightly.
4. Transfer the cooked fruit to a blender, mixing in the maple syrup and salt. Blitz until smooth and let cool completely.
5. Divide the mixture amongst gels tubes or freezer bags.
6. This will keep for up to a week in the fridge and a month in the freezer.

Salted Watermelon Squares

Information

Makes : 12 squares
Cals / serving : 37 kcals
Carb / serving : 11g

Watermelon contains L-Citrulline, an amino acid involved with nitric oxide synthesis (a gas that widens blood vessels) and glucose transportation into the skeletal muscle, which studies have linked to improvements in athletic performance.

Ingredients

- 4 gelatine sheets (or 4 Tbsp agar-agar flakes, if vegetarian/vegan)
- 20fl oz/2½ cups (600ml) watermelon juice
- 4 Tbsp caster (superfine) sugar
- large pinch of salt
- tapioca starch, for dusting

Method

1. Soak the gelatine sheets in a bowl of cold water for 5 minutes, or until softened, then remove and squeeze out any excess liquid.
2. Meanwhile, gently heat the watermelon juice in a small saucepan, then stir in the sugar until dissolved.
3. Remove from the heat, add the gelatine and salt and stir until the gelatine has completely dissolved.
4. Line a 2lb (900g) loaf tin with plastic wrap.
5. Pour the mixture into the tin and chill in the refrigerator for 5 hours or until set.
6. Turn out and cut into 12 large squares.
7. Fill a bowl with tapioca starch and gently roll each square in the flour until coated – this will prevent them from sticking together.
8. Store in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

Tart Cherry Squares

Information

Makes : 18 squares
Cals / serving : 55 kcals
Carb / serving : 14g

Studies have shown that tart cherries are a great source of antioxidants for runners and can help aid sleep when taken before bed due to their naturally occurring melatonin. Some runners have seen benefits from taking Montmorency Cherry Juice before a marathon to reduce muscle inflammation, soreness and damage both during and after a race.

Ingredients

- 2tsp agar powder (or 3tbsp agar-agar flakes)
- 400ml pure cherry juice
- 6tbsp concentrated cherry active
- 2tbsp maple syrup
- Pinch of salt

Method

1. Heat the agar and cherry juice in a small saucepan over a medium-high heat. Bring to the boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook for 5 mins.
2. Remove from the heat and stir in the cherry active concentrate, maple syrup and salt until dissolved.
3. Line a 2lb (900g) loaf tin with clingfilm. Pour the mixture into the tin and leave at room temperature for 2-4 hours or until set.
4. Turn out and cut into 18 squares.
5. Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Salted Mango Lime Squeeze Gel

Information

Makes : 1 large 'gel'
Cals / serving : 113 kcals
Carb / serving : 24g

Ingredients

- ½ cup (115g) mango chunks, fresh or defrosted from frozen
- ½ tsp (2ml) lime juice
- ½ tsp lime zest
- 1 tsp (5ml) agave syrup, or honey
- 1 tsp (3g) chia seeds
- Pinch sea salt

Method

1. Combine mango, lime juice, zest, syrup, chia seeds, and sea salt in a blender or food processor until smooth.
2. Transfer to a small bag or bottle.
3. Store in the fridge. Enjoy as part of your running fuel.



Sweet Potato Gel

Information

Makes : 1 large 'gel'
Cals / serving : 115
Carb / serving : 27.4g

Ingredients

- 1 small sweet potato (80g), peeled and chopped
- ½ tsp chia seeds (2g)
- 1 tsp fresh ginger, chopped (2g)
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- Pinch sea salt

Method

1. In a small pot, combine sweet potato with enough water to cover.
2. Bring to a boil, and cook for 10-12 minutes, or until the potato is very tender. Reserve 60-90ml water (1/4 cup - 1/3 cup).
3. Transfer potatoes to a blender with 3 tbsp of the cooking liquid. Add chia seeds, ginger, cinnamon, and sea salt. Blend until smooth, adding cooking liquid 1 tbsp at a time, if necessary.
4. Transfer to a small jar or squeeze pouch. Enjoy!



Sweet Potato Gel



Grapefruit Electrolyte Drink

Grapefruit Electrolyte Drink

Information

Makes : 500ml (approx)
Cals / serving : 55 - 75 kcal
Carb / serving : 12-17g

Ingredients

- 1tbsp raw honey or manuka honey
- 100ml fresh grapefruit juice (about ½ grapefruit squeezed)
- Pinch of sea salt or himalayan salt
- 400ml water

Method

1. Mix 50ml boiling water with the honey to dissolve. Stir in the grapefruit juice and remaining (cold) water.
2. Stir in a pinch of salt and chill.

Notes on Electrolyte Drinks

The general rule is that if you are running for less than an hour, water is all you need to drink as hydration is your priority. But if you are running longer than an hour, then you could benefit from the extra carbs in a drink, so having one of these homemade drinks or by making up a squash or juice with 1 part squash/juice to 6 parts water.

If you sweat a lot or it's very warm outside, then having a drink or fuel with sodium is a good idea. These drinks all contain sodium as well as other essential electrolytes as do most of the homemade running fuels, so you can create a fueling and hydration strategy that works for you. For example you could have the Stuffed Dates with water, or the cinnamon apple slices with an electrolyte drink.

These drinks all contain between 55-75 kcals and 12-17g carbohydrates per serving.

Orange Drink

Information

Makes : 400-500ml (approx)
Cals / serving : 55 - 75 kcal
Carb / serving : 12-17g

Method

- Juice of 1 orange (about 100ml)
 - 250ml coconut water
 - 1tsp maple syrup or honey
 - 150-200ml water, to taste
 - Pinch of salt - optional
1. Squeeze the juice of the orange into a large jug (or measure in fresh orange juice), stir in the maple syrup until dissolved. Mix in the coconut water, water and pinch of salt (if using).
 2. Chill until ready to drink - will last 2 days in the fridge.

Lemon Ginger Drink

Information

Makes : 500ml (approx)
Cals / serving : 55 - 75 kcal
Carb / serving : 12-17g

Method

- 1 thumb piece size fresh ginger
 - Juice of 1 lemon
 - 2tbsp fresh orange juice
 - 2tbsp agave nectar
 - Pinch of sea salt or himalayan salt
 - 500ml water
1. Finely grate the ginger into a large jug. Squeeze the juice of 1 lemon and orange juice into the jug. Add in the water, agave nectar and salt, stir to combine, until agave and salt has dissolved.
 2. Sieve the mixture into a large bottle or glass, chill until ready to drink.

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