

a FOCUS Personal Training Institute Publication

# alumni

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## Protein 101

How Much Do Lifters Really Need?

Pivoting Your Personal Training  
Business During a Pandemic

Chef Mitch's Chopping Block:  
*Chicken and Mango Salsa*







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# PIVOTING YOUR **PERSONAL** **TRAINING** BUSINESS DURING A **PANDEMIC**

Over the last few months with coronavirus, the world has essentially been brought to a standstill, especially in the personal training business...

**Major league sports canceled. Businesses closed.**

**Beaches shut. Gyms are desolate.**

And if you're like most personal trainers, your in-person revenue stream was likely shut down as well. If you thought of at-home training sessions with clients, you had to consider personal protective equipment (PPE) and N95s.

## **Changing Times for Personal Training Businesses**

This pandemic has brought about some interesting business changes that may have you rethinking your current strategy. You may be asking yourself the following questions:

- How do I create a digital experience that matches what I'm offering now?
- What audience do I want to market to?
- What medium will I use to market myself?
- Do I need to create a niche for myself? If so, what is my area of expertise?
- What metrics will I track, and how can I ensure my clients make progress when I can't be with them day-to-day?

We're in uncharted territory now. If your business is in-person only, get ready to adapt and conquer, or COVID-19 might wipe you out.

## Social Media and Personal Training: The Double-Edge Sword of Marketing

Scroll through social media long enough, and you're bound to get hit with a fitness or supplement ad. They're everywhere because the barrier of entry into the health and fitness world is so low.

While ads can be annoying to some, you can use this tool to your advantage if you know what to look for and how to leverage it.

Let's talk about marketing. Granted, this isn't my field of expertise from an academic standpoint, but I've dealt with a very large number of diverse clientele in the industry over the last decade. After a while, you get a sense for what works and what doesn't.

### 1. Solve a Problem

One of the biggest factors that will generate buy-in from (potential) clients is problem-solving.

"What's your audience's biggest problem?"

**WHO** are they, **WHAT** do they need, and **HOW** can you help?

Many trainers fall back on body composition – give someone the body they want, and they'll gladly hand over cold, hard cash, right?

Well maybe, but when it comes to marketing, you may have to go deeper than that.

Why do they want it?

Who do they look up to when it comes to body goals, and why?

What will their body composition give them that they don't currently have?

Why is body composition more important than anything else?

What elements in their environment and lifestyle prevent them from changing their body composition?

These are the questions you may want to start asking when you're formulating your marketing narrative for social media or any other platform for that matter.



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You need to connect with your reader on a personal level. When you begin to build a relationship with potential clients, it opens their minds to the possibility that you may have what they want – knowledge in this case.

Remember, it's easy to sell someone on a product. But, in this case, you are the product. Show people how you can help them, what you can fix, and how it will make their lives better. That's how you engage them and ultimately get more clients.

## **2. Find Your Niche**

Some people only care about numbers – how much can you squat, bench, and deadlift? If it isn't more than three-quarters of a ton, you're not 'strong' in their book. While their marketing is bold, it may actually backfire because of the limited number of clients who only care about powerlifting.

Sure, some thrive on smelling salts and the deafening sound of Metallica as the bar tries to crush them. But from what I've seen, most clients are primarily focused on aesthetics – the "look good, feel good, play good" common saying in collegiate and professional baseball.

You have to figure out which area suits you best. Are you more focused on rehab or mobility? Maybe you're into CrossFit. Perhaps, you prefer working with endurance athletes.

Whatever specialty you prefer, cater your marketing to that population. No one can market to everyone because no one is good at everything. You're one individual with a very specific skillset, so capitalize on that.

## **3. Instagram vs. Facebook**

Today, both these social media giants seem to be the biggest contenders for traffic and views. Regardless of which you choose, you need to understand the algorithm and how to utilize all the tools each offers – content, pictures, live and recorded video footage, polls, groups, and stories.

From an outsider's perspective, it would seem that Instagram is more catered to a visual population where short videos, high-resolution photos, infographics, quotes, memes, and picture descriptions work well.



However, when it comes to lengthy content and professional discussions, Facebook seems to be the preferred choice.

So, we need to loop back to points #1 and #2 – who’s your audience, what do they need, and how can you solve it? In other words, who are you targeting?

You could link both accounts so that you can post across platforms, but you may need to tweak the content slightly, depending on the platform and your audience.

#### 4. YouTube?

If you want to use YouTube, you need to spend time on post-production and perhaps invest a little money. I’ve shot countless educational videos on an iPhone. However, I’ve also had the opportunity to participate and oversee video shoots with a professional film crew.

As you might guess, even if the content wasn’t useful or interesting, the professionally edited pieces still outperformed the lower-quality ones.

The takeaway is simple. If you want to use YouTube for simple exercise demos, don’t invest much. However, if you plan to build a lot of content, then it may be worthwhile to invest in post-production tools like:

- Lights
- Wireless/Bluetooth mics
- Large expo board
- iMovie or Final Cut Pro
- Tripod for an iPhone or camera
- Digital SLR camera, if still shots are desired for social media



#### What Do You Track and Why?

Online training can often be more difficult than in-person training because you need to design a system to track biometrics with clients. When working with someone in person, it’s often easier to determine changes in mood, motivation, energy, recovery, and overall readiness. You can also ask simple questions about appetite, soreness, or joint issues.

But when you take away that face-to-face interaction, you need to determine **WHAT** metrics you’re going to track with clients and **WHY**.

Clients may view this as boring and unnecessary, but digital coaching requires multiple biometrics to understand what's going on from a physiological level.

Use these simple metrics with clients to assess overall recovery from each training session:

- POMS (Profile of Mood Status) questionnaires
- Appetite changes
- Muscular Soreness Charts
- Personal Recovery questionnaires (individualized by each coach)
- Total hours of nightly sleep

If you're dealing with large high school, collegiate, or professional teams, you might use any of the following to assess daily readiness:

- Grip dynamometer
- Maximal vertical jump
- Peak force analysis (via force plates)
- Reaction time (via light or sound-based monitoring systems)

To assess dietary compliance and daily progress toward a client's goals, you might use any of the following long and short-term metrics:

- Daily caloric intake (weekly averages help to track and monitor changes)
- Morning bodyweight before any caloric intake or liquids
- Personal records (PRs) in any desired lift or athletic feat (running, biking, swimming, etc.)
- Measurements around the:
  - Neck
  - Chest
  - Shoulders
  - Upper arm (bicep/tricep)
  - Forearms
  - Hips
  - Waist
  - Thighs
  - Calves

These metrics require 2 very important stipulations:

- 1) The client **MUST** understand how to take specific metrics on their own and eliminate the potential for user bias, variability between measurements, and lack of specificity (aka are you actually measuring what you think you're measuring?).
  - a. Educate the client on when, where, and how to take the measurements, and why they need to take them.
  - b. To do that, you need to know the external factors that could shift the measurements like the environment, electrolyte intake, total water content within the diet, time of day, circadian rhythms, level of activity, and stress. This deserves more explanation in a later post, but keep these in mind for now.
- 2) As a coach, you must understand **WHY** you're tracking what you're tracking. If you love data but don't know what to do with it, you're going to frustrate your clients.
  - a. Tracking data takes work: Everything has a cost, and time is our most valuable commodity. Make sure you're using your client's time wisely.
  - b. Know your why: If your client wants to know why you're tracking something and you can't give them a specific reason for how that metric relates to the end goal, it may be time to ditch that metric.



When it comes to switching your business to online, the hardest part for most will probably be with the business logistics. Sure, coaching is fun, and working from home can appeal to many, but keep in mind that eventually, April 15th will roll around, and you will wonder how to file your taxes.

The best advice is to find a good CPA – someone who is a family friend or business partner who can guide you through the process. When you work from home, you can write off many business expenses, but most people aren't aware of them.

### **Square Footage**

If you work from home, you can write off the square footage of the area in your home where you conduct business as a "home office."

### **Personal Training Business Expenses**

Are you spending a lot of money on continuing education units (CEUs) and certification? Write it down and keep detailed notes. This may seem painful, but you can get a tax deduction on things like mileage, room and board, certification fees, and taxes.

### **Invoice Everything for Your Personal Training Business**

Invoice absolutely everything. I understand that PayPal and Venmo are cool and easy to use. But when the IRS starts asking questions about the extra \$6,000 in your account from undocumented online work, you will be sorry. Keep a digital paper trail to document everything for taxes. If you aren't working for another company, you won't have W-2s, I-9s, or 1098s, so your personal records need to be spotless. If your business takes off and you can work full-time from home, find a really good accountant. This will save you much time and frustration.



### **Protect Yourself – Liability Is Key**

Anything can happen, so it is in your best interest – personally and professionally – to include a liability statement on all aspects of your business, including emails, documentation, consults, and recommendations.

### **Client confidentiality**

Ensure that client confidentiality is priority #1. Depending on your initial intake documentation, you'll likely be dealing with an individual's medical records and current contraindications. Therefore, you need to understand HIPAA compliance from a social media, business, and personal standpoint. Divulging client information without prior written or digital consent could become a serious legal issue. Think through this before something major happens.

### **Nutritional information**

Depending on your knowledge, coaching format, and statewide legality, consider disclaimers but be very careful with the wording for nutritional consults.

Remember, you are not a registered dietician. The term 'nutritionist' is a little less strict and depends on your certification status. You cannot legally make meal plans or tell clients what they need to eat. You can make "suggestions" or "general recommendations" based on literature, but cite your sources and cover all your bases. This varies by state, so check with your state governing body. Ensure that you're not providing recommendations that can be used against you in a court of law if a medical issue arises with a client, and they decide to sue you.



## Supplementals

You must be extremely careful when providing advice on supplements. Understand that nutrient-drug interactions are very real, and they can happen if you don't have an understanding of pharmacology and immunology.

For example, some classes of medications warn about the consumption of grapefruit with the prescription because of the influence of grapefruit on cytochrome P450 isozymes in the liver.

Even if you stick with the basics like whey protein, creatine, caffeine, and beta-alanine, you still must understand the biochemical mechanism, how they affect physiology, and when they shouldn't be used. If you need a quick refresher on these, see the glossary at the end of this post.

It may sound crazy, but people will sue you for nearly anything, so make sure your supplement disclaimer is lengthy and thorough.

## Training

You absolutely must have a waiver and physical activity readiness questionnaire (PARQ) as part of your intake process. This is one of the few documents that's non-negotiable for anyone operating online.

Legally, your waiver needs to contain the client's signature, date, a very detailed explanation of what to expect, and everything that you are not liable for if something were to happen.

Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst. You can often avoid many of these issues when you train in person, but when you're interested (or forced) to transition online, you need to think about these things and legally protect yourself.

Obviously, running a business isn't cut and dry. This topic could be an entire novel, but this information should be a sufficient starting point.

## Personal Training Glossary

1. **Whey Protein:** Often seen in the form of 'isolate' or 'concentrate,' whey is a powdered form of protein that can be added to any liquid for a quick, portable meal on the go.
2. **Creatine:** One of the most well-studied supplements to date, creatine helps produce energy for high-intensity, short-duration activities.
3. **Caffeine:** Caffeine offers a boost in energy by blocking the receptors in your brain that register that you're tired. It is often promoted as an "energy producer," but it doesn't help you make energy. It only blocks your perception of fatigue.
4. **Beta-Alanine:** Usually included within pre or intra-workout supplements, beta-alanine helps buffer lactic acid and other cellular changes that occur during training. By doing so, users can often complete more repetitions or maintain higher training volumes due to the fatigue-buffering effects.



### Author: Mike Wines

Mike received his B.S. in Exercise Science from USC and his Masters in Exercise Physiology and Sport Performance at ETSU while studying under the head of sport biomechanics for the Olympic training site at ETSU.

**What were you doing prior to enrolling at FPTI?**

Before FPTI, I was an Army Infantry Staff Sergeant. When I wasn't working, I competed in local bodybuilding shows, and I knew fitness was my passion. FPTI allowed me to use the military's benefits to the fullest potential and explore this passion. This made the transition from the Military to Civilian life easy and they made sure I was ready to go straight into the workforce fully qualified.

**How would you describe your Focus experience?**

Myself and my fellow alumni still speak to this day about how much fun we had learning about our new professions at FPTI. Everyone in the Focus facility cares for each student to the maximum level. Every student, regardless of who they are, were given the same opportunities for success across the board. The teachers are phenomenal and make sure you understand everything they are teaching. They genuinely care for their students and that is what separates FPTI from any other school I've attended.

**What was the one topic you knew little about and now benefit from learning?**

Nutrition was my favorite topic. Why? Because without proper nutrition, you will never achieve results as quickly if you are just focusing on working out. Focus equipped me with the best nutritional knowledge possible and I use it daily with my current clients. Nutrition and Fitness go hand in hand, and when both are on point, clients see changes faster than ever expected.

**Any advice for future students on how to make the most of their student experience at FPTI?**

Three words: be a sponge. Forget all of what you knew prior to this course because you will attain information that trumps any of your preconceived notions. As for the Teachers and Focus Alumni, pick their brains, and give them the respect they deserve as they are giving their time for you to better yourself. The ones who give the most effort will be the ones that learn the most.

**alumni**  
**CODY**  
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alumni

2019 Jasmin  
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**What were you doing prior to enrolling at FPTI?**

Prior to enrolling at FPTI, I was attending a 4 year university program for Exercise Science. Before that, I was a medic in the U.S. Army. I quickly realized that my way of learning is quite unconventional, which is why FPTI worked so well for me. 300 hours of lecture MATCHED with 300 hours of practical experience was a perfect set up for me. Applying what I've learned through hands on training made it stick all the more.

**How would you describe your Focus experience?**

My Focus experience has been a positive challenge. The name of the education center says it all - FOCUS. Ever since, "Focus" has been a part of my mantra. This experience has literally changed my life for the better, and I could even go as far as to say it saved me. With the support system found in this program as well as the demands placed upon us and my deep desire to learn, there was no time to waste. Also, sitting in a classroom and sharing the arena with a group of people sharing a similar path in this realm as you - there is nothing like it.

**Proudest moment you have had with a client since graduating FPTI.**

Since graduating FPTI with all the acquired knowledge and experience, I have had the pleasure of training a plethora of clients successfully. One of my experiences includes working with a client through injury for fat loss. With the limitation of a Total Knee Replacement and a hip surgery, the typical high intensity workouts we are so used to seeing for weight loss was a no-go. This situation, as many others, inspired me to dig deeper on the matters learned at Focus in relation to contraindications and how we can get the body moving efficiently and safely, all the while reaching the client's primary goal. Without all the vital information learned through this program, the notes I've kept, and the drive to dig deeper, I wouldn't have had the confidence to train such a client.

**Any advice for future FPTI students about making the most of the student experience?**

For all future students, if you've chosen this institution to grow in this industry you've already taken a positive step towards your success and I commend you. However, this is only the beginning of a joyful ride. The experience you'll have here will be based on you, so please put your best foot forward and have an open mind. Stay focused, ask for help when you need to, value the staff and your peers, keep all of your notes (your future self will thank you), and one of the most important factors - have fun! You're here by choice, remember that. Make the best out of it for you!! Oh and yes, take advantage of the opportunity to work out, and train your face off! Don't let this opportunity go to waste. Grow for yourself, and for others!



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# LEAH BARRON 2020

## **What were you doing prior to enrolling at FPTI**

I moved to NYC in June of 2019, and started at Focus in October. Prior to making the big move I was working as a Registered Dietitian at a pediatric hospital in Cincinnati, OH. I loved my team and my patients were the best, but after 5 years I realized I wanted to do more to help educate people on how they can prevent chronic disease and stay out of the hospital. Combining my nutrition knowledge with personal training seemed like the perfect way to do that, and Focus provided me with the opportunity to get the education I needed in order to best serve the people I work with.

## **How would you describe your Focus experience?**

The time I spent at Focus was one of the most valuable educational experiences of my life. I had actually completed a personal training certification through ACSM about 5 years ago, but never got a job in the industry because I didn't feel like I really had the knowledge I needed to safely and effectively train a variety of clients. After 6 months of hard work, I left Focus feeling confident that I could take on any client and help them achieve whatever goal they had in mind. Outside of all the knowledge I gained, my class was so much fun and I made friends that I will have for life - and I am so grateful for that!

## **Proudest moment you have had with a client since graduating from FPTI?**

My proudest moment has been with my first client who also happens to be my best friend. A year ago, she was hospitalized with life threatening blood clots and despite making a full recovery, she was nervous about getting back into the gym. We've been working together for almost 6 months, and not only is she getting her strength back, she has used her physical fitness as a foundation to rebuild her entire lifestyle. Watching her progress and being there to guide her through it has been one of the biggest accomplishments of my life.

## **Any advice for future FPTI students about making the most of the student experience?**

You have an incredible opportunity to learn from some of the best in the business. Keep an open mind, ask tons of questions, manage your time well, and this experience will be nothing short of life changing.



# Protein 101:

## *How Much Do Lifters Really Need?*

In the world of strength training and weight loss, protein is essentially the powdered equivalent of solid gold. We put it in nearly everything these days – granola bars, pancakes, chips, cereal, waffles, and the list goes on and on.

But as time goes on, it becomes increasingly clear that marketing has caught onto the protein popularity, which is sweeping the nation by storm. So, it's important to remember that not all protein is created equal. Lifters should be aware of the science behind protein if they want to truly maximize their body composition and performance.

### **Protein: The LEGO Bricks of the Human Body**

In a nutshell, protein is essentially the human equivalent of LEGO bricks. When you consume something like a protein shake, that liquid makes its way down your throat and into your stomach. There it comes in contact with hydrochloric acid (HCL) and an enzyme known as pepsin, which assists with protein digestion.

Pepsin and HCL help break down the protein into individual parts, better known as amino acids. These amino acids head out of the stomach and into the small intestine where they are further broken down before heading into the bloodstream and circulating to working muscle.

Think about cars on a highway as the protein in your bloodstream. There are endless routes you could take to arrive at different destinations. Some people need to take one exit while others need to go to another.

Protein functions in a similar manner. Once amino acids enter your bloodstream (aka the highway), they can be used for a variety of functions at different locations (aka exit ramps). Most importantly, they are shuttled to working muscles to help repair microtrauma that occurs during exercise.

Microtrauma is where our LEGO analogy comes into play. When LEGOs are broken apart, they're pretty small, weak, and unusable (the same with amino acids). However, when you combine the right LEGOs in the right combination, they become strong, form a structure, and serve a purpose.

Amino acids function on all the same principles – you need specific types of amino acids and certain amounts to build muscle and help repair damage from your training session. We'll get into more of the specifics later, but these simple LEGO and superhighway analogies will help you see how protein gets disassembled (via digestion) and then reassembled (via enzymes) into muscle.



Now that you have a very basic understanding of protein digestion and assimilation (aka transport from the intestines into the bloodstream where it can be used), we need to dive into some specifics on protein dosages. If you sit down and chat with anyone who's interested in adding muscle or losing fat, they'll likely mention one of the following:

*"I know I need to eat more protein and workout."*

Or...

*"I have to have a protein shake after I workout or else I'll lose muscle."*

While they are not wrong, we need to discuss both those statements and the general understanding of protein that most of the public has.

## The Science

When it comes to protein recommendations, we need to examine the research and look at the current science when it comes to specifics. Many people have their own opinion on the subject, but let's look at the data and examine the facts.

"For building muscle mass and for maintaining muscle mass through a positive muscle protein balance, an overall daily protein intake in the range of **1.4–2.0 g protein/kg body weight/day (g/kg/d)** is sufficient for most exercising individuals.

Recommendations regarding the optimal protein intake per serving for athletes to maximize muscle protein synthesis (MPS) are mixed but general recommendations are 0.25 g of a high-quality protein per kg of body weight, or an absolute dose of **20–40 g per meal**.

These protein doses should ideally be evenly distributed, every 3–4 hours, across the day."

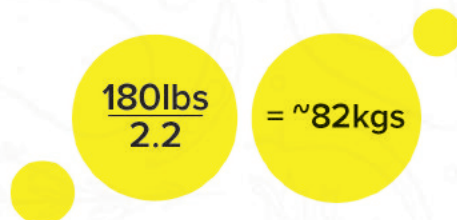
That may sound like a lot of scientific mumbo jumbo, so let's break it down a bit. Most people need to eat 1.4-2.0 grams of protein per kilogram of bodyweight per day to build and/or maintain muscle mass. This protein should probably be spread between multiple meals spaced 3-4 hours apart, with each meal containing 20-40 grams of protein.

## THE NUMBERS

If you're not familiar with kilograms, use this conversion:

Current bodyweight (in LBS) / 2.2 = Weight in KG

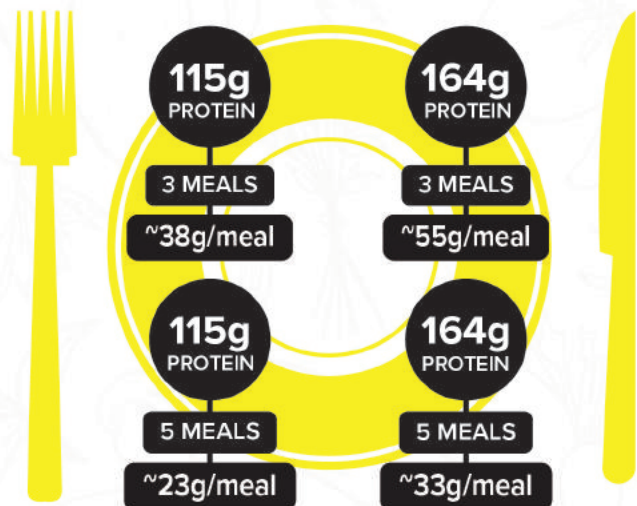
So if you're a 180lb male, your daily protein intake based on the above recommendations would look like this:



$82\text{kg} * 1.4 = \sim 115\text{g}$  of protein, the lower end of the range

$82\text{kg} * 2 = \sim 164\text{g}$

Thus, a 180lb person needs to eat between 115-164 grams of protein over the course of 3-5 meals, depending on their schedule and preferences. That breaks down to:



Now, how do you decide whether you want 1.4g/kg or 2.0g/kg?

That comes down to a few different factors, but it isn't as complicated as you might think...

## Sustainability

Can you keep this up? If 164 grams of daily protein sounds like too much, then opt for an amount closer to 1.4g/kg and slowly walk your way up. But if you prefer protein over carbs or fat (who doesn't love a good steak?), opt for an amount closer to 2.0g/kg and enjoy some extra meat.

## Caloric Intake

Protein tends to help you stay full (aka satiated) because it takes a while to digest. So if you're trying to put on muscle and take in a lot of calories, eating extra protein above the 2.0g/kg recommendation is actually counterproductive. It will likely keep you full longer and lower your caloric intake. If your appetite is great and you can easily eat above the 2.0g/kg, then that's good.

But keep in mind that it's much more difficult for the body to convert protein into energy compared to carbs and fat. You're essentially making your body work harder to produce the energy you need to train. Not only that, carbs and fat are tasty, so don't make this harder than it has to be.



## Training Load

Usually when you're working through an exceedingly tough block of training, most people like to make sure they cover their bases. Thus, they'll probably increase protein intake to the top end of the range to ensure they have enough amino acids to support recovery and growth from training.

However, it's not a guarantee that they will build more muscle with 2.0g/kg as opposed to 1.4g/kg. On the contrary, it largely depends on the total number of calories consumed over the course of the day rather than the total amount of protein.

## Digestive Efficiency

Some people have a harder time breaking down protein during the initial phases of digestion, so they may want to stay closer to the 1.4g/kg recommendation. This discussion is somewhat outside the scope of this article, but it's something to consider for coaches who may encounter clients who prefer a low(er) meat diet or have a distaste for large amounts of meat due to digestive issues accompanied by protein consumption.

## Live or Die By the Numbers...

So there you have it, that's essentially protein 101 – everything you could possibly need to know to determine your baseline level of protein intake. Protein receives the largest amount of press from a marketing standpoint, so hopefully this guide helped dispel some myths and formulate a nutritional plan of action.

Stay tuned for part 2!



### Author: Mike Wines

Mike received his B.S. in Exercise Science from USC and his Masters in Exercise Physiology and Sport Performance at ETSU while studying under the head of sport biomechanics for the Olympic training site at ETSU.



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## the chopping block



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### Grilled Chicken and Mango Salsa

#### Chicken

- 4 large boneless skinless chicken breasts pounded to even 3/4 inch thickness or less
- 2 tablespoons olive oil • Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 teaspoon cumin • 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon Italian blend seasoning  
(or make your own with dried basil, dried thyme, dried oregano)

#### Mango Salsa

- 2 mangoes
- 1/2 red and white onion, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1 bunch cilantro, chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon salt Juice of 1 lime
- 1 Tbs Red wine vinegar

#### INSTRUCTIONS

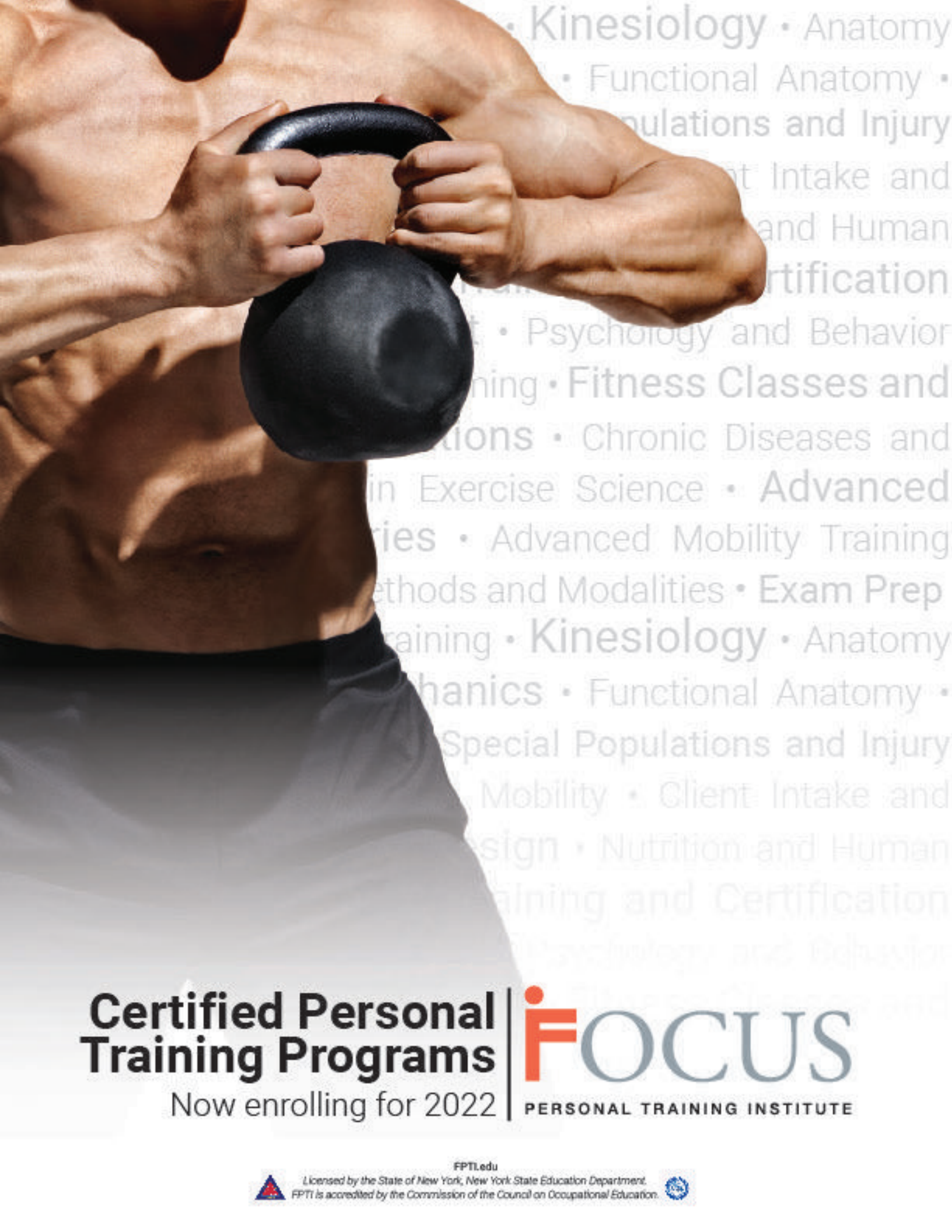
In a medium bowl stir together all of the ingredients for the mango salsa, set aside.

Drizzle chicken with oil, then season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir together cumin, chili powder, garlic powder, and Italian seasonings. Season chicken with spices.

GRILL chicken over medium-high heat, or BAKE at 375 degrees for 20 minutes or until cooked through. Serve immediately with mango salsa.







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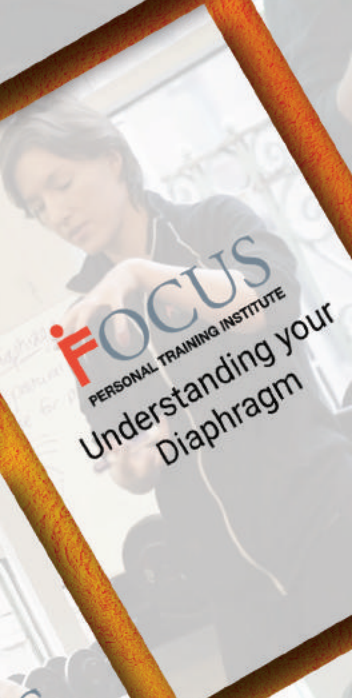
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