ACTION MOVIE HERO WORKOUTS
GET SUPER CRIME-FIGHTER RIPPED
DAVE RANDOLPH
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CONTENTS

PART 1: OVERVIEW
   Introduction
   How To Use This Book
   Eat Like An Action Hero

PART 2: PROGRAMS
   Christian Bale
   Jessica Biel
   Henry Cavill
   Daniel Craig
   Chris Evans
   Chris Hemsworth
   Hugh Jackman
   Bruce Lee
   Brad Pitt
   Andy Whitfield

PART 3: EXERCISES
   Presses
   Overhead Presses
   Flyes
   Pull-Aparts
   High Pulls
   Kettlebell Swings
   Advanced Kettlebell Techniques
   Good Mornings
   Deadlifts
   Cleans
   Squats
   Windmills
   Rows
   Weighted Walks
   Lat Pull-Down
   Upright Rows
   Shrugs
   Deltoid Raises
   Press-Downs
   Curls
   Triceps
Calf Raises
Lunges
Core
Push-Ups
Pull-Ups
Plyometrics
Legs
Ropes
Miscellaneous
Warm-Ups
Self-Myofascial Release
Cool-Downs

PHOTO CREDITS
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
PART 1: OVERVIEW
INTRODUCTION

When you were a kid, maybe you tied a bedsheets around your neck and tore through the house pretending you were Superman, Batman or Supergirl. Or maybe you donned a mask and karate-chopped and kicked your way through hundreds of imaginary bad guys as Kato from *The Green Hornet*. As an adult, you can absolutely get that smoking-hot physique your favorite action hero is known for.

*Action Movie Hero Workouts* features easy-to-follow exercise programs that anyone can do to sculpt their bodies into blockbuster shape. Although the actual workouts the actors in this book used to get their trademark looks are a closely guarded secret, we examined the few we did find and used our decades of fitness-training experience to create programs that will get you the physique you want.

Don’t fall for the “patented” quick fat-loss secrets of the stars—nutrition and hard work are all it takes and all that works. We show you how to add muscle mass like Chris Evans and Chris Hemsworth. We teach you how to get lean and ripped like Robert Downey Jr. in *Sherlock Holmes* and Brad Pitt in *Fight Club*.

You may notice that Jessica Biel is the only female action star in this book. It’s not because there’s a lack of strong female leads—it’s simply because female action stars often share the same physique and likely do similar if not identical workouts. In fact, many shared the same trainer. While all these women look great, they don’t necessarily have defined arms and shoulders, a shapely rear end or killer thighs that can kick some serious butt. Biel fits the bill as a bonafide action hero, not just a pretty face with a model’s body.

Whether you want to look like Thor, Captain America, James Bond or Lara Croft, *Action Movie Hero Workouts* will help you develop your action-hero body of choice with exercise programs and advice on nutrition. With hard work, the dedication to follow the programs to a T and, most importantly, diet, you’ll bulk up your slender figure or transform your overweight self into a lean, ripped machine.
HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Getting an action-hero physique requires a few simple things: reading this book (including the nutrition section), studying the exercises, and getting off the couch. If you aren’t already vigorously exercising on a regular basis, please get the okay to begin from your doctor. The workouts in this book can be very demanding and you need to make sure your body can handle the stress.

You’ll then want to decide which action hero you’d like to look like. Once you’ve made your choice, dig into the training program for that action hero and determine what kind of equipment you’ll need. Follow the program as written—make no modifications unless you have a pre-existing condition that prohibits you from doing certain exercises. Make sure you warm up beforehand (see pages 138–40 for suggestions)! Doing so prepares your body for the work you’re about to do.

We’ve tried to include progressions/regressions wherever possible to make it easier or harder based on your ability to do a movement. For example, here’s the progression for lunges:

- Level 1–Static Lunge/Split Squat Hold
- Level 2–Static Lunge/Split Squat rise up and down
- Level 3–Forward Lunge
- Level 4–Reverse Lunge
- Level 5–Walking Lunge
- Level 6–Jumping Lunge

Each level requires specific skills, so if you haven’t mastered level 3, you shouldn’t be doing level 6. It’s a safety issue.

Make sure your technique is as close to perfect as you can get—practice the movement. Don’t get hung up on trying to go too heavy or as quickly as you can. Both lead to poor form and increase the potential for injury.

Exercise Terms

There’s a lot of jargon and abbreviations used in the exercise world. We define some of the terms here so you’ll know what they mean and how to use them when you read the workouts.

Rep or rep: The number of times you do an exercise.

Set: A specific number of reps for one exercise. You’ll typically see “5x5,” “5x8,” etc., where the first number is the total number of sets and the second is the number of reps per set. Thus you have 5 sets of 5 reps, 5 sets of 8 reps. You may also see “8x5” or “5x3.” This is still sets and reps: 8 sets of 5 reps, 5 sets of 3 reps. Note that 5x8 and 8x5 are the same total reps (i.e., 40) but the first should be done with a lighter weight than the second. Typically the lower the number of reps, the heavier the weight.

Superset: Doing 2 different exercises one right after the other, usually with little
to no rest. This is typically written as “1a) Deadlift 1b) Pull-ups.” This means you’ll
do the prescribed number of reps for the deadlift followed immediately by the
prescribed number of pull-ups. Then you’ll go back to the deadlift. The sets are almost
always the same:

1a) Deadlift 3x6
1b) Pull-Ups 3xAMRAP
2a) Bench Press 3x10
2b) Curls 3x6

That’s 6 deadlifts, then as many reps as possible (AMRAP) of pull-ups, then repeat
2 more times. The 2a) 2b) pairing indicates a second superset. You’ll usually have a
few minutes of rest between the supersets. Note that some trainers also write them as
“A1) A2).”

**Tri-set:** Doing 3 exercises back to back, or 1a) 1b) 1c). This works the same as the
superset.

**Circuit:** More than 3 exercises performed back to back. You cycle through all the
exercises in the circuit, doing all prescribed reps for all exercises back to back before
repeating the first exercise.

**Rest Period:** The amount of rest between exercises or sets. Sometimes there’ll be
rest between exercises, especially in a high-intensity interval training (HIIT) circuit;
other times there may be rest after the last exercise of a super- or tri-set before you
repeat it. There’s almost always rest at the end of a super- or tri-set before going to the
next grouping. Try to stick to the rest, especially if you’re out of shape. Taking too
long allows the heart rate to drop too low (under 130 to 140 beats per minute), which
slows down the fat-burning process. If you’re in fairly good shape and find the rest
periods too long, by all means shorten them, but not so much that you can’t complete
the next exercise.

**Time:** Some exercises, supersets, etc., are done based on time rather than reps.
This is typical of a HIIT circuit. The goal is to use a weight that’s challenging to you
but still allows you to work the entire time period (typically 20 or 30 seconds). When
you see “20” in the Time column and “10” in the Rest column, that means hit it as
hard as you can for the time, then rest the amount of time allotted in the rest column.
The shorter the work period, the faster you should go! Crank it and try to maintain that
pace. This is especially true of bodyweight exercises like mountain climbers, squat
thrusts and burpees. These circuits are generally used as “finishers” at the end of the
workout.

**Time Under Tension, or TUT:** The pace you should do each part of the
movement. For example, you might see “3-1-2” for a biceps curl. The first number is
the first part of the movement (depending on the movement it could be a contraction
or an extension), the second number is the pause, while the third number is the return
to the start position:

- Count to 3 as the dumbbells come closer to your chest.
- Pause for 1 count with the biceps fully contracted.
- Count to 2 as you return the weight back to the start position.

Doing reps this way will make you a lot stronger without necessarily using a ton of
weight. You’ll only see TUT numbers on “grinding” exercises—those that aren’t
inherently done quickly, like a barbell clean or a kettlebell swing. For grinding exercises where we don’t specify a TUT, be reasonable and find a moderate pace. Don’t just toss the weight around; if you can, it’s too light.

### CHART ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMRAP</td>
<td>As Many Reps as Possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KB</td>
<td>Kettlebell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DB</td>
<td>Dumbbell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BB</td>
<td>Barbell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R/L</td>
<td>Do the given number of reps on the right side, then switch to the left.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1/L2/L3</td>
<td>Level 1/Level 2/Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2H</td>
<td>Hand to Hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIIT</td>
<td>High-Intensity Interval Training</td>
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### Gear

You’ll need some basic equipment to whip your body into action-hero shape. Most programs require a barbell and dumbbells, and perhaps a kettlebell or 2. The Jessica Biel workout also requires resistance bands that have 10–15 or 15–30 pounds resistance, possibly heavier. Three pairs of bands will generally do the trick.

You may also need a stability ball, access to a squat rack or stand, and a bench for bench presses (one that can be adjusted is best). Optional equipment include a wheelbarrow, heavy ropes, a sledgehammer, a big tire, a pushing/pulling sled, a Roman chair and a glute/hamstring raise.

Once you’ve gathered the equipment or found a facility that has the gear you need, you’re ready to start. Post-workout, you may want to invest in a foam roller. Foam rolling is essential to maintaining healthy tissue. Using a foam roller helps reduce soreness, improves blood flow and helps eliminate trigger points. For additional soreness relief, you should also get and use a small ball such as that used for lacrosse (harder, more intense) or tennis (softer, more yielding).
Proper eating is essential to developing the lean, chiseled look of an action hero—unless you want to look like Chris Farley in *Beverly Hills Ninja!* Consuming the right amount of protein, good fats and non-starchy carbs will help you build lean muscle mass and strip off body fat.

Most of the action heroes in this book followed typical bodybuilder dietary habits. Generally, they:

- Ate 4–6 small meals throughout the day
- Ate lean protein or had a shake with every meal
- Ate non-starchy carbs (veggies) with every meal
- Ate starchy carbs (like a baked potato or nutritionally dense bread) after high-exertion workouts
- Ate good fats (nuts, avocados, olive or coconut oil, fish oil)
- Avoided alcohol (a drink or two on the weekends was okay, but only one or two)

Those who were bulking up typically ingested about 4000–5000 calories and drank a lot of protein shakes. Those dropping weight ate fewer calories (in the 2500–3500 range) and less protein. No one—not even Jessica Biel—went on a low-calorie (under 1200 calories) diet. If you eat too little you’ll lose weight, but it’s muscle, not fat. So although your weight will go down, you won’t get defined muscles.

Muscle tone and being lean and ripped is solely a function of body fat. You can exercise until the cows come home, but if your body fat percentage stays the same, you’ll never have any definition. Bodybuilders in the past (and some still do this) went through phases: bulking and cutting. During the bulking phase they pretty much ate anything that came close enough to put in their mouths. During the cutting phase they decreased their calories and increased their cardio. The problem with this: It isn’t sustainable or doable by the average person—you!

It’s a common recommendation to eat four to six times per day. Doing so is supposed to keep your insulin levels steady, prevent you from feeling hungry so you don’t overeat at your next meal, provide a steady source of fuel, and a host of other things. Bodybuilders have been eating this way for years, but it can be tough to stick to. It requires a lot of planning and preparing food in advance, but if you can do that, it’s fantastic. If not, eating three times a day is okay too.

Some people are now trying “intermittent fasting.” The idea is that you eat all your daily required calories in a six- to eight-hour window. The rest of the day you eat nothing or very little. You’re still getting your caloric requirements for the day, just all at once. The body only knows it needs energy and doesn’t care if it comes all at once (filling up the tank when it’s on “E”) or three to six times per day (topping off the tank every day). Many people have lost a lot of weight with intermittent fasting and put on
tons of muscle at the same time. Do the research, try it for yourself and see what happens.

Here’s our dietary advice in a nutshell:

▪ Not all carbs are bad—get 25% of your calories/day from veggies and fruit.
▪ Animal-based protein is by far the best for building lean muscle—eat 30–35% of your calories/day from protein.
▪ Fats are necessary for maintaining healthy skin and joints—consume 40–45% of your daily caloric intake from nuts, avocados, coconut oil, olive oil and naturally occurring fats in meat and poultry, including bacon (but don’t go overboard on meat-based fats).
▪ Eat whole foods—the less processed the better, the longer they (especially grains) take to cook the better.
▪ Eat raw—try to eat most of your veggies as raw as possible, although some veggies are actually better for you steamed. You’ll cook all the vitamins and minerals away if you cook veggies to mush.
▪ Eat fresh—get your food from a source that’s as close to home as possible.

If you eat right all the time, you increase your muscle mass by lifting heavy weights. The food helps fuel the process. If you eat a lot but lift light, you won’t build muscle, only fat.

Proteins, Carbs, Fats & Alcohol

A healthy diet should consist of 25% fibrous carbohydrates, followed by 30-35% protein. The rest of your calories should come from good fats. Depending on your specific goals you may need to adjust these numbers slightly. If you’re trying to build muscle, increase your protein intake a little and drop the fibrous carbs by the same amount. Don’t be afraid of fats—your body needs them for cellular functions as well as energy. Fats have been demonized over the past 30 to 40 years but better modern research is showing that we need fats more than we need carbs.

Protein: Protein is what muscle is made of. When you exercise, no matter what type of exercise, your body actually breaks down muscle (protein) for energy. Lifting heavy also causes microscopic tears in the muscle. The process of breaking down muscle is known as catabolism. In magazines you’ll see people talking about being in a catabolic state.

The opposite of that is anabolism. When you’re in an anabolic state, you’re building muscle. In order to be in an anabolic state you must eat protein. You have to not only replenish what the body used as fuel, you have to eat more than you burned in order to fuel the muscle-building process!

Protein also contains amino acids. Some are essential and some are not. Essential amino acids are those the body requires but cannot make itself, therefore you must get them from food. Protein from meat is the most complete source of amino acids. It has all the essential amino acids as well as those that the body can make for itself.
Branched chain amino acids (or BCAAs) are a specific type of amino acid that can provide a huge energy boost. No matter which eating style you choose, you should always eat protein, be it lean beef, chicken, turkey or fish. It’s required if you want to build muscle and get strong. We’re not fond of pork as a protein source but if you like it, eat it in moderation. If you’re a vegetarian, eat a high-quality plant-based protein such as peas or rice. Stay away from soy-based protein. If you eat eggs, eat the whole egg—the yolks are where most of the protein is. Don’t be afraid of dietary cholesterol.

If you’re on a big mass-building effort and are already eating properly, add a high-quality whey-based protein source to your diet. It should contain protein, branched chain amino acids (BCAAs) and perhaps some vitamins, minerals and flavorings. The sugar content should be low, and there should be absolutely no artificial sweeteners of any kind (e.g., sucralose, maltose, maltitol, high-fructose corn syrup, NutraSweet/aspartame, saccharine).

The good stuff is not cheap, but you get what you pay for. Inexpensive protein is not quality protein and you won’t see anywhere near the results. Pay a little, use a lot or pay a lot and use a little; the bottom line is it’s much cleaner with no junk added. You may also find that intestinal problems are a fairly common occurrence with lesser-quality proteins.

### AVOID SOY

The Chinese have been eating soy for 5000 years or more and written documents from that period show that they ate the roots, not the beans. They knew that unfermented soy was bad for them. Guess what—it still is! Stay away from soy-based proteins (soy protein powder, soy milk) unless they’re fermented, Japanese style. Tofu isn’t fermented, but items such as miso, natto and tempeh are. Unfermented soy has a lot of estrogenic properties and many doctors will prescribe soy milk instead of estrogen pills to women for hormone replacement therapy (HRT). This means guys could get the dreaded “man-boobs” and decreased testosterone levels.

Hundreds of foods out there are loaded with soybeans since it’s used as filler, as a primary protein source and as the main ingredient in almost all vegan/vegetarian meat substitute foods like vegan “burgers.” Make sure to read labels before you buy.

**Carbohydrates:** Carbs are an energy source and provide fiber in the diet. Your body also gets vitamins and minerals from carb-based foods so not eating fruits and veggies will lead to lower energy levels and many health issues related to the lack of certain vitamins and minerals. These deficiencies can be seen and felt—everything from muscle cramps (magnesium deficiency), to hair falling out (iron and the amino acid l-lysine), to more frequent and more severe colds (vitamins C and D), to lethargy (B vitamins) and much more. Supplementing with vitamins helps but many vitamins
are junk, which is a discussion for another book.

It seems many people are afraid of all carbs these days and even avoid vegetables and fruits because they contain carbs. On one hand “starchy” carbs like white potatoes and grains can wreak havoc on your insulin levels and are now being blamed for the rise in obesity levels over the past 50 years. There’s a definite correlation between obesity and the low-fat/high-carb diets that most people are on today.

Grains in the form of breads and pastas are okay in very small quantities but most people eat way too much. Almost all grains contain gluten and some people who are gluten sensitive may not know it. Crohn’s disease and other inflammatory diseases have risen along with obesity and the increase in grain-based foods.

Fibrous carbs (spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, kale, carrots, etc.), on the other hand, provide a substantial portion of essential vitamins and minerals and should make up the majority of your diet. You can eat a whole bag of baby carrots and not gain any weight at all. The same goes for a big container of spinach.

Eat all the salad you want, but no bread or croutons. Dressing, if you must have it, should be extra virgin olive oil and a high-quality balsamic vinegar. Stay away from pre-packaged salad dressings, which tend to contain high-fructose corn syrup, soy and possibly artificial sweeteners.

Here are sources of starchy carbs that are okay in moderation:

▪ Quinoa-based pasta

▪ Dense bread that’s 100% whole grain (if a loaf feels heavy, it probably has more nutrients per slice)—the ingredient list shouldn’t have enriched flour of any kind, nor added sugar or molasses

▪ Legumes, beans and peas have tons of fiber and protein, although fruits and veggies are a better source of fiber and meat is the best source of protein

▪ Long-grain rice and wild rice, but stay away from white rice—like other grains, the longer it takes to cook, the better it is

▪ Yams and sweet potatoes, eaten plain or with a bit of real butter

Note that this doesn’t mean you can go out and eat starchy carbs at each meal or even every day. Keep your starchy carb intake to an hour or so before or after your workout. Eating them pre-workout will increase your glucose levels, giving you more energy. Eating them post-workout replenishes those glucose stores and actually helps build muscle when ingested in conjunction with lean protein. A baked potato, plain or with real butter, is a great carb source as long as you eat it after a hard workout. Eating potatoes every day, especially loaded with sour cream and all the other junk, will make you fat.

After a workout, especially a tough one, your body craves protein to rebuild muscle and carbs for immediate energy. By taking them together within an hour or so after working out, your body will pull the nutrients into your body more quickly than usual and make them more readily available. The increase in insulin from the carbs helps pull more nutrients into your system right after a workout so you’ll get more protein to the muscles. The protein helps stabilize and minimize the insulin spike and the subsequent drop.

The morning is another good time to eat starchy carbs such as steel-cut oatmeal
(not the instant kind—the longer it takes to cook, the better it is for you). They help get your brain going and provide some quick energy. If you don’t eat protein with it, you’re much more likely to crash an hour or so later, unless you’re drinking a lot of coffee. At breakfast the protein slows the insulin secretion and keeps you on a more even keel. To get more protein at breakfast, mix in some natural or organic peanut butter, almond butter or even protein powder; do so after the oatmeal has finished cooking to avoid protein breakdown from the heat. You can also mix in fresh berries as well.

In many circles fruit has gotten a bad rap: It’s a sugary carb, it’ll make you fat. This is B.S. The vitamins and minerals you don’t get from veggies you get from fruit, which should be fresh and, wherever possible, organic to avoid pesticides. Sure, fruit is sugar (fructose, to be exact), but your body responds differently to fructose than it does to sucrose (table sugar). Fructose causes a lower insulin response than sucrose.

Fructose is a monosaccharide, while sucrose is a disaccharide (or two molecules, one fructose and one glucose). When you eat fruit, your body can immediately use the fructose for energy or store it as fat. When you eat regular sugar, it gets spilt into glucose and fructose. The glucose triggers a whole cascade of events in the body, including signaling the body to pull excess glucose out of the bloodstream for storage.

All types of sugar can be used immediately for energy. If they aren’t burned off, they get stored as fat. Recent studies have shown that it doesn’t matter what type of sugar you eat—if you eat too much, it’ll make you fat. However, you have to eat 20 apples every day to make any difference in body fat percentage. Twenty apples would equal about 500 calories from sugar; the same holds true for pears. On a 2000-calories-per-day diet, that’s 25% of your calories from sugar. Other fruits like berries, oranges and peaches have less fructose so you’d have to eat even more of them to have a significant effect on fat stores.

So should you eat fruit? Yes. An apple or a banana a day, berries in your oatmeal or salad—the benefits are great and you can’t possibly eat enough of them to keep you from losing fat. If, however, you’re in the last phase of preparing for a bodybuilding contest, you should stop eating fruit, but that’s only if you’re one of those few who want to be 5–6% body fat. For everyone else, one or two pieces of fruit a day won’t make a difference.

**Fats:** Fats found in lean protein such as lean beef, chicken and turkey, coconut and palm kernel oil, avocados and fresh fish are essential to maintaining healthy skin and joints but you shouldn’t consume too much. We typically recommend that 40–45% of your daily caloric intake come from fat, including fish oil supplements.

There are three types of fats: saturated, unsaturated and trans-fats. Saturated fat comes mostly from animal sources (think butter, lard and solid shortening) and many doctors think they’re bad for you. The prevalent belief that butter is bad because it has higher levels of cholesterol and saturated fat than margarine is still being pushed by the “health” organizations. New research, however, is showing that butter is much better for you than margarine. We also now see that eating an entire egg isn’t bad either. Cholesterol in food doesn’t play a role in high cholesterol in the body. High cholesterol in the body is now being viewed as an inflammatory response to stress and sensitivity to all the grains we eat these days.

Unsaturated fat comes in two varieties: mono and poly. Considered “good fats,”
they’re a part of a healthy diet. Mono-unsaturated fats, which are liquid at room temperature but solidify when cold, can be found in olives, olive oil, nuts, peanut oil, canola oil and avocados. Some studies have shown that these kinds of fats can actually lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and maintain HDL (good) cholesterol. Poly-unsaturated fats are also liquid at room temperature and are found in safflower, sesame, corn and other oils. They’re thought to lower LDL and raise HDL as well. Trans-fats are man-made and no doubt you’ve heard about how bad they are; food manufacturers are removing them from their products.

The Atkins diet made low-carb, high-fat diets a hugefad that’s still popular but controversial today. Basically it involves avoidance of all carbs, including vegetables, which is nonsense, as explained earlier. Another problem with high-fat-type diets is that people eat the wrong type of fat. Typically they figure they can eat tons of McDonald’s burgers because they contain protein and fat, but the wrong kind of fat (saturated) or too much fat in general can cause health problems. Eating a home-cooked sirloin or bison burger is much healthier than a burger from a fast-food joint.

The demonization of meat and, by extension, fats, by the press, vegans, vegetarians and even the American Medical Association and American Heart Association is based on faulty science. Poorly done studies, with intentionally skewed or hidden data by those who may have an agenda, have caused many people to think fat is bad, hence the low-fat fad of the 1970s and ’80s. If you look at the incidence of obesity from the ’70s on, when food producers were coming out with low-fat everything, obesity has gone up steadily. Replacing fat with artificial fats and adding in sugar and artificial sweeteners made people think they could eat more because their favorite foods had less fat and were therefore okay to eat.

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) and American Heart Association (AHA) continually recommend the use of vegetable oil instead of animal fats. According to several well-done studies, however, the use of vegetable oil may actually cause or increase the likelihood of cancer. Your body must have fat in order to utilize fat-soluble vitamins like A, D, E and K. The problem with eating low fat is that your body will run out of those vitamins and not be able to utilize them. The fat is required to allow the body to use those vitamins. You don’t have to eat the vitamins every day. Your liver stores them if they aren’t used, but the supply has to be replenished. The only way to do so is by ingesting fats.

**Alcohol:** If you’re trying to get totally ripped, like 5% body fat, stay away from alcohol. Fermented alcohol, like beer and wine, contains sugar, or carbs. Distilled beverages such as whiskey, vodka and rum don’t have any sugar but most people mix in sugary flavorings (margaritas, anyone?), which is where the vast majority of calories comes from. With seven calories per gram, it actually contains more calories than protein and carbs. Only fat, coming in at nine, has more calories per gram. Protein and carbs both contain four calories per gram.

If you’re trying to get lean (say, in the 10–15% body fat range), a few beers or a glass of wine on the weekends isn’t going to make much of a difference. However, you should avoid mixed drinks completely. The mixtures are typically loaded with sugar, which you should be making every effort to stay away from. If you must drink a cocktail, try mixing it with 10% natural fruit juice (not from concentrate). Margaritas and other mixes will pack on the pounds very quickly.
PART 2: PROGRAMS
Christian Bale, probably the best Batman to date, transformed himself from a scrawny 120 pounds (some say 130) to a brawny 220 or 230. What’s impressive is that his 100-pound weight gain was almost all muscle and he did it in six months! Most coaches will tell you it’s impossible to put on that much muscle mass in such a short time without the use of steroids. On average he would’ve gained almost 17 pounds a month!

Note that before accepting the Batman role, Bale dropped a significant amount of weight for his role in *The Machinist*. He lost about 64 pounds, dropping from 181 to 121 by severely under-eating and working out like a maniac. This is not a recommend method to lose weight and it can be very dangerous to your health. Bale consulted with a nutritionist to make sure he was getting enough of the proper nutrients to keep him from breaking down completely, but Bale says he still couldn’t even do one push-up when he started training for *Batman—The Dark Knight*.

Since Bale’s normal weight was around 181 pounds, when he started eating right his weight would’ve started to go back up naturally. However, if he just ate without a proper nutrition plan, he’d put on more fat than lean muscle. In order to make sure the weight gain was as much solid muscle as possible, he had to train with heavy weights to rebuild his strength and muscle mass. But he also had to make sure his diet was spot on—just the right amount of protein from lean meats and fish, lots of fresh vegetables and some healthy fats. His starchy carb intake (potatoes, grains, breads) and his alcohol consumption would be very minimal since both grains/cereals and alcohol will fatten you up pretty fast.

In addition to weight training, Bale did a variety of bodyweight exercises, such as sprints, push-ups and pull-ups. He also did some martial arts training to improve his hand-eye coordination, hand and foot speed and overall mobility and flexibility.

Can you do it? It’d be very tough for anyone to gain 100 pounds of mostly muscle mass in six months, but you can certainly pack on 10 to 15 pounds in that time by following Bale’s workout and eating right.

The Workout

Bale’s routine is on the internet with some variations. It consists of 3 workouts per week and one workout that’s active rest. This 12-week program will pack on some mass to your chest, back and legs. It’ll also improve explosive power in both your chest and legs. On top of that, Sprint Day will really ramp up your heart rate.

Day 1 targets upper-body and back development with chin-ups, rows, high pulls and cleans. Day 2 focuses on lower-body power with sprints, squat jumps and reverse
lunge. Day 3 is chest day. We’ve added barbell deadlifts to the routine because the glutes and hamstrings weren’t being worked enough in this routine. Bale’s routine is very quadriceps dominant and even though the power cleans should be using the glutes and hamstrings (posterior chain), many people use the quads too much.

Day 4 is an active recovery day, which means do something moderate that you enjoy. In Bale’s case it was swimming, but it could be tai chi, yoga, golf or anything at a light intensity that helps you relax. Bale’s routine also called for him to spend 30 minutes or so stretching, although he should’ve been stretching 10 minutes or so after every workout to maintain his flexibility.

In addition to active recovery, you should do soft tissue work with foam rollers and similar tools to increase blood flow to the muscles, release trigger points and “unstick” muscle fibers and fascia. Many do this prior to their workout but you can do it after as well. If you have time, do both. At the end of each workout you should also be stretching out the muscles you worked to keep from getting too tight and rigid. You can have big muscles and still move well. Bale practiced martial arts on his off days, not only for the fight scene prep but also to keep his movements fast and fluid.

We highly recommend getting a good deep-tissue massage on Day 5 or 6 to complement your yoga/stretching. Recovery is important—without it, your muscles won’t grow and you’ll feel terrible. If you have a day where you don’t feel up to the day’s workout, either take the day off or do your active recovery work instead.