

A DAD'S MISSION: "How my little girl inspired me to lose 6st 12lbs"

Slimm

World

magazine

JULY 2023

Meet care worker Mbali
'I lost 9st 6lbs in 13 months'

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Find the Syn values of all advertised products on page 68



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COVER & CONTENTS CREDITS Cover – photograph: Paul Buller. Styling: Sharna Valentine. Hair & make-up: Liz Kitchiner. Mbali wears: Top and skirt, both Little Mistress. Ring and earrings, both H&M. Bracelet, Jon Richard. Left – photograph: David Cummings. Styling: Charlotte Smythe. Hair & make-up: Sarah Bullett. Rachel wears: Jumpsuit, Phase Eight. Shoes, Kat Maconie. Earrings and ring, both Claire's. Bangle, Branch. See p119 for stockists

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All of our recipes have been tried and tested to make sure they're bursting with flavour, easy to follow and will keep your weight loss deliciously on track!

Look out for these symbols on our recipes:

- Free Free when Food Optimising
- SP Extra Easy SP recipes packed with Speed Free Food and P Food; perfect when you want to lose a little more in a little less time
- V Suitable for vegetarians
- Vegan Suitable for vegans
- * Suitable for freezing for up to 1 month

**Deduct 6 Syns if using the wholemeal roll/reduced-fat mozzarella as a Healthy Extra. **Deduct 7 Syns if using the wholemeal muffin/wholemeal pitta bread as a Healthy Extra*

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● See page 68 for a full list of Syn values of advertised products.



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READY TO SQUEEZE IN MORE FLAVOUR?



IN EVERY ISSUE

EXPERT ADVICE

Our features will help you to understand yourself as a slimmer, with fascinating psychological insights that work in the real world

TESTED RECIPES

All of our recipes are Slimming World approved, Syn counted and road tested to help you slim

REAL JOURNEYS

Our first-person stories show true transformations and share the genuine emotions of weight loss



Enjoying time around the table with family and friends, trying out new flavours on holiday, or the nostalgia of a childhood favourite...food can bring so much joy into our lives. Yet when you're unhappy with your weight, it can feel as if it's the enemy; even calling the shots. Finding a way to eat that turns food back into a friend, and puts you in control, is nothing short of magical. At Slimming World, we believe passionately that **good food is a pleasure you never have to deny yourself**. That's why we're all about showing you new and exciting ways to enjoy food that's good for your weight loss and health!

Because Food Optimising is so versatile, we've got a **World Food Special** for you, with lightened-up

holiday faves, global fakeaways and even some around-the-world desserts. Whether you love the spices of the Caribbean or a classic Parisian steak frites, you can take your taste buds on tour without leaving home. And if you're lucky enough to be getting away this summer, our **eating plan is a great way to boost your holiday confidence**.

Someone who knows all about rebuilding their relationship with food is our **cover star Mbali Nwankwo**. At her recent photoshoot, it was truly inspiring to hear how she lost 9st 6lbs in just 13 months – and transformed her life in the process. If you'd love the chance to star in a future issue of *Slimming World Magazine*, drop us a line at the address on this page. We can't wait to hear from you.

Wishing you a summer filled with success – and flavour!

Sara

SARA WARD, EDITOR

MEET SOME OF THIS ISSUE'S SLIMMERS



Brodie Marks shares the amazing life lessons she's learnt from losing over 4st.

Brodie lost 4st 5lbs – p122



Being over 9st lighter on his big day meant Ben Fletcher could enjoy every moment to the full.

Ben lost 9st 3lbs – p21



Losing weight gave Hannah Woof the confidence to step back on stage after losing her hair – and rock her new look!

Hannah lost 3st 4½lbs – p37



Kate Dallas-Wood is loving her 60s 7st 13lbs slimmer – and she's living the life she'd always dreamt of.

Kate lost 7st 13lbs – p12



As members of the Independent Press Standards Organisation, we are committed to the highest of editorial standards and abide by the Editors' Code of Practice. We take concerns and complaints very seriously and welcome feedback via the channels listed above

PHOTOGRAPH OF SARA AND MBALI: PAUL BULLER; STYLING: SHARNA VALENTINE; HAIR & MAKE-UP: LIZ KITCHNER; SARA WEARS: TOP, COAST; JEANS AND NECKLACE: ALL SARA'S OWN; MBALI WEARS: DRESS: GIRLS ON FILM; AT LITTLE MISTRESS; EARRINGS, ASOS; SEE P119 FOR STOCKISTS

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Fakeaway breakfast muffin

Our deliciously hearty muffin is the perfect treat to serve up for Father's Day – or to get any special someone's Sunday off to a cracking start!

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 1
SYNS PER SERVING 7

Deduct 7 Syms if using the wholemeal muffin as a Healthy Extra

READY IN 25 minutes

Low-calorie cooking spray

100g cherry tomatoes

1 frozen Slimming World Sausage Patty (from Iceland)

2 medium eggs

1 x 65g wholemeal English muffin, split in half

YOU'LL ALSO NEED

Cooking or crumpet ring (ours was 8 x 2.5cm)

1 Spray a lidded, non-stick frying pan with cooking spray and put over a medium-high heat. Cook the tomatoes for 5-6 minutes, shaking the pan every so often until softened. Move to a plate, cover with foil and wipe out the pan. Cook the sausage patty for 7 minutes, turning often. Set aside with the tomatoes and cover to keep warm.

2 Wipe the pan again and put back over the heat. Put the cooking ring in the pan and spray the inside with cooking spray. Break the eggs into the ring. Pour 2 tbsp water in the pan and pop the lid on, so the eggs steam as they fry. Cook for 3-5 minutes, or until the eggs are cooked as you like them.

3 When the eggs are almost done, toast the muffin halves. Smoosh the tomatoes over each half and season to taste. Run the back of a knife around the inside of the cooking ring to release the eggs. Top the muffin base with the patty, then the eggs and the other muffin half. Yum!

GETTING STARTED

If you're new to Slimming World and Food Optimising, turn to page 60 for a quick introduction to the plan

SHARE YOUR CREATIONS

#SWMagazineMakes



“Life’s even better in my 60s!”

Kate Dallas-Wood was determined not to hit another milestone birthday feeling miserable about her weight. By making her new eating habits stick, she’s lost 7st 13lbs and feels fitter and more energetic than she has in years!

As I neared the park, six smiling faces came into view and I found myself picking up the pace to join them. Meeting friends from my Slimming World group, including our Consultant, Shirley, for our regular Tuesday evening walk had become a real highlight of my week. As we walked and chatted, I marvelled at how far I’d come. Just a few months ago, a brisk lap of the park would have left me gasping for breath... Now, I genuinely felt fitter and more energetic in my 60s than I had done in my 40s.

Once upon a time, socialising had meant just one thing: meals out involving rich sauces, creamy desserts and plenty of wine. And with it, the knock-on effect on my weight. While going out for dinner was still definitely on the menu, I loved the way I’d found new, more active ways to spend time with friends – plus new friends to spend time with!

I’d gone into my 20s as a size 14 and had always assumed that it was my ‘natural’ size. I’d then gained weight while I had my hands full with my son, Alex, and stepchildren, Craig and Kirsty. As the children grew

and I could devote more time to my career, I did lots of wining and dining as part of my job. The numbers on my clothes labels went up, and I also noticed my joints ached when I walked. Wanting to be a healthy role model for our children, I joined Slimming World.

Riding the roller coaster...

As a vegetarian, I was surprised to find how well the Food Optimising eating plan worked for me, and I also got started with the Body Magic physical activity support programme. As the weight came off, I found I could manage longer and longer walks with our dogs, Paddi and Max, which I loved. I was thrilled when I lost 4st, reached my target weight and got back to a size 14. Though I knew I could now attend group for free as a target member, I felt I’d achieved what I’d set out to do and no longer needed to go along.

And that’s when things began to slip... Juggling the kids’ activities and work, I began skipping breakfast altogether and would pick up a meal-deal cheese sandwich with crisps and chocolate or biscuits for lunch. I’d get home worn out and, more often >



Meet Kate

Kate Dallas-Wood, 63, lives in Brighouse, West Yorkshire, with her husband, Steve, and they have three grown-up children between them

Height: 5ft 6ins
Starting weight: 18st 6½lbs
Weight now: 10st 7½lbs

WEIGHT LOST:
7st 13lbs

Kate is a target member of Shirley Blackburn's Slimming World group in Brighouse



BEFORE
The numbers on my clothes labels crept up to size 20



from my doctor about my genetic high cholesterol, a condition that resulted in my body retaining too much 'bad' cholesterol. I knew that made eating well and maintaining a healthy weight even more important, if I wasn't going to risk increasing my cholesterol levels further through what I was eating. I couldn't ignore the fact that everything was pointing in the same direction...

My regular Zumba class had just stopped for the festive season, so on a whim I checked when the Slimming World group nearby had its sessions instead. There was one that very same day - it felt like fate. So, exactly a week before Christmas Day 2019, I parked up and mustered all my courage to walk across the car park. To spur myself on, I quietly sang Queen's *Don't stop me now* to myself as I entered the hall! Instead of the stares and sniggers I'd feared, I was greeted with welcoming smiles. The Consultant, Shirley,

said: 'I think it's amazing you've joined us so close to Christmas, rather than waiting for the New Year. That shows how committed you are.' I felt buoyed up by the support, and only wavered a little at the end of the session when Shirley took me aside privately to find out my starting weight. At 18st 6½lbs, it was at least a couple of stones more than I'd expected. For a moment, that number felt completely insurmountable. But again, I let Freddie Mercury's lyrics run through my mind. Nothing was going to stop me getting back to where I wanted to be!

I kept a food diary for the first two weeks and found it so helpful. I realised how easy it was to 'forget' what I'd eaten throughout the day, and it helped me pause and rethink when I was about to reach for some chocolate when I wasn't actually hungry. That first week I had overnight oats with berries for breakfast, using a Healthy Extra, then big salads with mixed beans and homemade Free houmous for lunch. I carried on making my usual veggie casserole or shepherd's pie for dinner, swapping oil for low-calorie cooking spray and butter in my mash for stock or fat-free natural yogurt to make them Free. Now when I wanted chocolate, I used my Syns and really enjoyed it, rather than eating it mindlessly. In my first week I lost 2½lbs - just the motivation I needed.

I wanted to make the most of all the support offered to me as a member, so as well as soaking up the tips and meal ideas I heard in IMAGE Therapy, I also tried out the things that hadn't been available last time I was a member. I particularly enjoyed the Slimming World podcast - one of the hosts mentioned a little trick that had worked for her, which involved writing down the words 'Is it worth it?' on a piece of paper. Whenever I felt like a big bar of chocolate or a plate of cheese and biscuits, that little prompt stopped me and inspired me to think of all the things I could enjoy using my Syns. Another tip was to go through my cupboards and write on

than not, I'd throw a pizza in the oven for dinner, or order a takeaway vegetable korma or chow mein with samosas or spring rolls. While I knew these habits had contributed to my weight gain in the first place, I reasoned I worked hard and deserved to treat myself to a takeaway. On the nights I did cook, as I'd stopped Food Optimising, I went back to adding glugs of oil into my bean casserole and spoonfuls of butter to my mash.

The tailored clothes I'd bought myself after I'd lost weight had begun to feel tight, and I replaced them with floaty tops and trousers with elasticated waists from the supermarket. In time, these clothes got tighter, too, and even the actual food shopping had become an ordeal. On one trip, I realised I wasn't going to be able to open my door wide enough to ease through the gap between cars... I managed to climb over the gear stick and onto the passenger seat to get out the other side, hoping desperately I wasn't seen.

Finding moral support

I had a work event to go to, and with nothing suitable in the supermarket it was time to face the high street again. 'I'll come and help you,' said my husband, Steve, and I was so grateful for his support as we trawled the shops. We finally picked out a green mid-length evening dress in a size 20. As I pulled it on in the changing room, I didn't even need to look in the mirror to know it was a disaster. When Steve asked how I was getting on, I called through the curtain, 'No good!'

My 60th birthday was approaching, and I really didn't want another milestone to come round feeling this way. I thought back to how much Slimming World had helped me in the past, and wished I could find the courage to go back. But one thought kept popping into my head. 'What will they say when you tell them you're even bigger than last time you joined?' Still, I'd occasionally float the idea of rejoining to friends, maybe hoping they'd give me the push I needed to get over my fears. I also had a warning ringing in my ears

'At just over 3st lighter, I entered a new decade feeling healthy and positive'

every tin and packet how many Syns were in them to make deciding easier in the moment. I also bought *Slimming World Magazine* and some recipe books, and used the members' website to inspire me. I found lots more vegetarian recipes that would fill me up, and I started making an easy vegetable crustless quiche with baked beans.

Celebrating new-found energy

When lockdown happened, I concentrated on making my healthy habits stick this time round and I planned out my week's meals. Although my 60th birthday, in May 2020, wasn't the party I had hoped for, I was less disappointed than I expected. That's because I'd already gained so much from my weight loss! At just over 3st lighter, I was entering my next decade the healthiest and most positive I'd been in years.

As the weight dropped off, the smallest of things started to make the biggest of differences. I could zip up walking jackets for the first time in years, my rings no longer cut into my fingers and even my shoes were more comfortable. At the same time, I realised my joints no longer hurt when I walked, and those narrow spaces in the supermarket car park were no problem at all! When Slimming World groups went back from being virtual to real life, I volunteered to help out on the social team and was a cheerleader for the idea of having weekly evening walks together.

Two years after joining Slimming World, I decided to go on a full shopping spree! This time, Steve came with me not for moral support, but to help me celebrate just how far I'd come. It had always been my dream to own a pair of Levi's. And as I stood in the changing room, the skinny, size-12 jeans easily pulled up over my hips - they fitted like a glove. When I strutted out of the changing room, beaming, Steve said, 'Wow! You really do look wonderful!'

I'm afraid to say it wasn't the last time my debit card took a pounding! In February this year, I reached my target of 10st 6lbs and added plenty more size 10s and 12s to my wardrobe - so much for size 14 being my 'natural' size! It turned out it wasn't the only change in me. I was made redundant last July and instead of falling into a dark place, I grasped the opportunity to start walking and looking after friends' dogs, knowing I had more than enough energy to do it. I may not be climbing mountains or running marathons, but it's not unusual for me to walk up to eight miles a day. Sometimes I feel like my achievements have been quite small. Then I realise all those little changes have added up to something *very* big - I'm living the healthy, energetic life I've always dreamt of, and I love it! ●

KATE WEARS

p13: Jumpsuit, AX Paris. Shoes, New Look. Earrings, Claire's. Bangle, Giovanni Raspini. Toe rings, Kate's own

Above: Dress, Phase Eight. Shoes, New Look. Earrings, Claire's. Toe rings, as before

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and scrumptious
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Be *INSPIRED*

UPLIFTING REAL-LIFE STORIES AND ADVICE TO GET YOUR MOTIVATION FIRING

LIVE LIFE IN FULL COLOUR

There's nothing like a little summer sunshine to brighten your mood and lift your slimming motivation out of the shade. So read on to try our easy weight loss wins for when time is tight, share in cover star Mbali's joy after she freed herself from emotional eating, and discover new ways to enjoy a rainbow of fruit!

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

Got a minute?

When you're up against it time wise, it's all about the easy wins, and there's a lot you can achieve in just 60 seconds to support your weight loss. Take a look...

WORDS: ANNA BLEWETT

1 Mix it up

Using a spare minute to flick through your Food Optimising book for tasty new Free Foods to try could be a win for your weight loss journey, and your health! 'Variety is one of the best things for our gut health, particularly when it comes to fibre-rich, plant-based foods,' says Alexandra Clark, a registered nutritionist at Slimming World. 'That could mean finding a new seasonal fruit or vegetable to add to your weekly shop, or a grain or pulse you haven't had before. As well as being amazing from a nutritional perspective, variety keeps us interested, motivated and excited. So mixing things up to get as many different fruits (see p29), veg, grains and pulses in across the week is a great idea.'

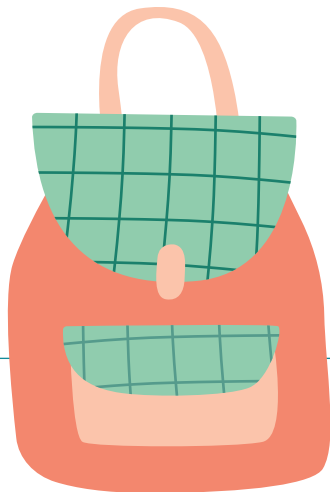
2 Check in with your crew

Research shows being part of a like-minded community can boost your chances of weight loss success, and while time spent at your Slimming World group is ideal if you're a member, it needn't end there. A post sharing your ups or downs on your group's Facebook page (or in the forum if you're a Slimming World Online member), is a quick way to get advice and support from those who really understand.

3 Grab some 'VILPA'...

Three to four one-minute bursts of 'vigorous intermittent lifestyle physical activity' a day, like power walking while doing errands or brisk on-the-spot marching while waiting for the kettle to boil, can improve heart health, research has shown*. Adding 60-second bursts of extra energy to daily tasks was found to have similar gains to structured exercise. 'Even one extra minute of activity, at any intensity, is a step in the right direction when you're building active habits,' says Alexandra Clark. 'Trying something new? That qualifies for the Magic Mover Body Magic award, too!'





4 Pack smart

If you find your best intentions can be sabotaged by impulse buys when you're out and about, this one's for you. Use that spare minute to preload your handbag, gym bag, glove box – even the pocket of your dog-walking coat – with Free or low Syn snacks. Planning them into your day this way means they'll be waiting when hunger strikes!

6 Do a stock take

Knowing what you've got to hand is a top tip for making tasty, healthy meals in minutes. Take a 60-second stock take of a cupboard, the fridge or a freezer drawer while waiting for the toaster to pop or microwave to ping. That rice hiding right at the back would make the perfect base for a slimming-friendly fried rice, or perhaps you'll spot you're getting low on your Food Optimising favourites and be able to jot them straight onto your shopping list.

5 Love every bite

Aaaah, that feeling when you've planned to use your Syns for something delicious and can't wait to get into it... Pausing for a moment could actually make that treat taste even better. 'Stop, take a breath and focus on what you're going to eat,' says Alexandra. 'Our hectic lives mean we can eat almost without noticing – sitting down and savouring your treat helps you enjoy it to the full. Be mindful of the sensations as you're chewing: the flavours, the textures, the smells...maybe even the sound if it's something crunchy! There's also good evidence that focusing on how you feel helps you notice appetite signals better, like feeling satisfied or fullness.' Because enjoying your food can stop you feeling deprived (essential when you're making lifestyle changes that last), you'll be supporting your weight loss, too!

There are lots of little things you can do to build in healthier habits that will keep your weight loss on track!

7 Zap a barcode

Taking a few seconds to scan a new product gives you all the info you need to keep your weight loss on track. 'Checking the Syns on the Slimming World app before you buy something means you're making an informed choice,' says Alexandra. 'You might be surprised – for example, a cereal bar isn't always the best pick for your weight loss. You might find something much more satisfying, for fewer Syns, that appeals to you more!'

8 Quench your thirst

As the days get warmer, using a spare minute to grab a glass of water (or pretty much anything other than alcohol!) can support your health in one simple step. 'Staying hydrated is really important, and easily missed,' says Alexandra. 'In fact, getting enough water is linked to healthier ageing with a reduced risk of conditions such as heart or lung disease, while dehydration could affect thinking and focus. If you find water a bit dull, adding some watermelon, lemon and lime, or cucumber will help to pep it up!'



9 Focus on goals

'Planning meals for the week is so useful, but can feel daunting,' says Alexandra. 'To ease into the habit, use a minute to try a single, manageable step: planning the next meal. Or use that time to boost your motivation by thinking about your goals and intentions for the day – for example, why you're on this journey and why it matters to you.' So if you've only got a minute, it could help start you on your way to a summer of slimming success! ●



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'We pulled off our dream wedding'

Losing weight gave Ben Fletcher the confidence to meet someone special – and to rescue their big day when a setback struck...

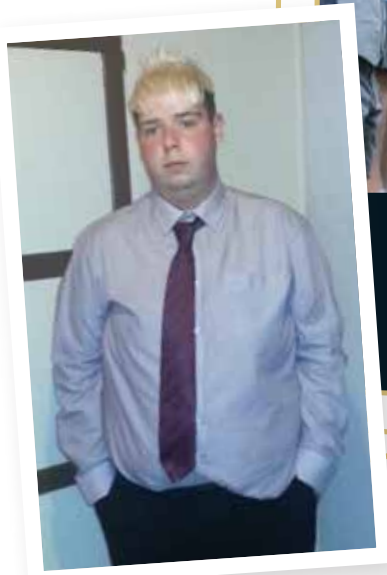
Ben, 31, is a nursing associate and events planner. He lives in York, North Yorkshire, with his husband, Aaron. Ben's 5ft 7ins tall and weighs 12st 11lbs, having lost 9st 3lbs. He's a member of Sue Coates' Slimming World group in South Bank, York

As we walked through the gardens of York Register Office, with cameras flashing and confetti showering over us, I held tightly onto my new husband's hand, wishing the moment would last forever. The day we'd been dreaming of for so long was finally here – and we'd managed to plan and organise the whole thing ourselves.

The shy, overweight Ben of my teens would certainly never have believed he could pull off something like that. After getting a job in a cafe, where I helped myself to the cakes and pastries, my weight had gone up to 22st. Then, reading about Slimming World in my local paper changed my destiny... I joined a group and lost 6st, and the real me began to shine through. Losing weight also gave me the confidence to tell my family that I was gay. It was such a relief to be finally living my life the way it was meant to be.

In November 2019, I started chatting to Aaron on a dating app. I knew I'd found someone special when, two days after we met, he helped my mum move house. Then lockdown hit the following March and things moved at speed – rather than having to stop seeing him, I asked him to move in.

I knew I wanted to spend the rest of my life with Aaron, and the following summer at a friend's party, I got down on one knee spontaneously and said: 'Will you marry me?'. I offered him the



Aaron (left) and I were free to enjoy our day both feeling our best

ring I always wore around my neck and he replied, 'Of course I will!'.

With a wedding on the horizon, my thoughts turned to my weight. I'd stopped going to group shortly after I got to target, and the stones I'd regained were zapping my confidence. They were also affecting my job as a nursing associate and I had to apply for flexible working, as I couldn't do more than two 12-hour shifts in a row. I decided to go back to Slimming World and found a new group nearby, run by a Consultant called Sue. Aaron came along, too, so we'd both feel our best on our wedding day, and we were made to feel so welcome.

With the support of Sue and the other members, the weight soon began to come

off again – which was just as well. After a bad experience with a wedding planner, we decided to organise everything ourselves. From carrying Prosecco walls to moving our wooden 'Mr and Mr' sign up flights of stairs, there was a lot of lifting and carrying to be done! There's no way I would have had the energy – or the self-belief – to do it all when I was heavier, let alone combine it with working full shifts on the wards.

We're both at our target weight now – and I'm so proud of Aaron. Our wedding day was so authentically us and we'll treasure our memories forever. It's also inspired us to set up our own events management business and help other couples plan their special day. We have lots of weddings coming up this summer and we can't wait to start sharing the magic that made our own so wonderful! ●

Have you caught a weight loss magic moment on camera in the last year? We'd love to hear about it! Email us at editorial@slimmingworld.co.uk



Meet Mbali

Mbali Nwankwo, 35, is a care home team leader and lives in Chelmsford, Essex, with her husband, Damian, and their son, David, four

Height: 5ft 5ins

Starting weight: 21st 2½lbs

Weight now: 11st 10½lbs

WEIGHT LOST:
9st 6lbs

Mbali is a target member of Emma Lodge's Slimming World group in Chelmsford

Mbali Howli

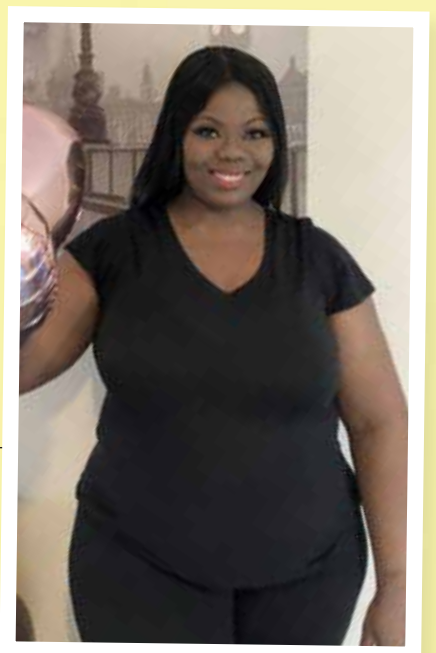
MADE IT HAPPEN

With her weight taking a toll on family life, Mbali Nwankwo knew she wanted to make a change. Here's how she went on to lose 9st 6lbs in just over a year and become the energetic mum she'd always wanted to be...

As I hurried down the corridor, I could feel my knees aching and my heart pounding. I was a manager in a care home and I needed to be ready to be at my residents' side as soon as I heard the emergency alarm. Now, as I helped a patient out of bed and to the toilet, I couldn't hide how out of puff I was. 'Are you OK, dear?' she said, face full of concern. 'Do you need to call someone to help you?' I could feel my cheeks burning as I said, 'No, it's fine. I'm just a little tired - it's been a long shift'. If I was honest, though, I'd felt the same all the way through my shift. At over 21st, every day at work felt like a physical challenge, and after 12 hours on my feet, helping elderly patients in and out of beds and chairs, I was exhausted. Pausing outside her door before I went on to the next patient, I had this feeling that I was letting everyone down, and a thought came into my mind: *What if I'm just not cut out for this kind of work any more?*

Food became my companion through life's ups and downs at university, where I went to study linguistics with international relations. I'd been around a size 14 when I left home, then I started working at the student union bar and would grab a pizza or kebab at the end of a shift, and my weight crept up. If I got a good mark on an essay, I'd celebrate with drinks and a takeaway. If I'd had a bad day, I'd commiserate with a tub of ice cream. I'd always had sweet cravings, but they seemed to get worse when I was fitted with a contraceptive implant, and white-chocolate biscuits and lots of ice cream never seemed to satisfy them. By the time >

BEFORE
I'd often wear
head-to-toe
black in an
attempt to
hide my size





I feel so much better in myself, and I can't believe I'm wearing size-10 dresses!



My day on a plate

THEN

Breakfast Cornflakes with whole milk or a fried breakfast with buttered toast

Lunch Burger meal with large fries and a vanilla cola, or a takeaway sandwich with lots of toppings and dressing

Dinner Boerewors sausage with curry and rice or chicken with jollof rice, cooked in lots of oil; or a Chinese takeaway with ribs, sweet and sour chicken, rice and prawn toast

Snacks Chocolate bars, white-chocolate biscuits and tubs of ice cream

NOW

Breakfast Porridge with semi-skimmed milk

Lunch Chicken stir-fry with rice and lots of veg

Dinner Salmon salad with low Syn sweet chilli sauce and Slimming World chips, or chicken and veg curry with rice, cooked with low-calorie cooking spray, with a boerewors sausage using my Syns

Snacks Bananas, low Syn flavoured yogurts, and low Syn chocolate Hi-fi bars, which I get at group

“My healthy lifestyle gives me so much energy, at work and at home – whether I’m helping a patient get out of bed, or playing with my little boy”

I’d finished my degree and moved to London to start a job as an IT assistant, I was over 15st. Around that time, I started dating a semi-professional boxer and began going to the gym with him. For a while, I really got into exercise, and I started eating healthier meals, too. After the relationship ended, though, my motivation seemed to vanish. Then, in 2016, I started working as a care home supervisor, and the shifts were long and hectic. I’d pick up a takeaway burger for lunch and eat biscuits throughout the day. If I had the energy to cook when I got home in the evening, it would be pasta with a ready-made cheese sauce, but often it was another takeaway – a burger again, or maybe pizza.

When I met Damian, we bonded over our love of food. He was Nigerian and I learnt how to make one of his favourite dishes of spicy chicken with jollof rice. I’d saturate the chicken in oil, then use more oil to cook the rice. I’d also make us boerewors sausages, which I’d serve on a bed of rice with some chicken curry, again cooked in lots of oil – a dish from my native South Africa that I’d practically lived on growing up. By the time we got married in 2017 I was a size 18, and my weight carried on increasing as we enjoyed cosy dinner dates at our local Italian and Chinese restaurants. I fell pregnant the following year, and my sweet cravings returned with a vengeance, along with a hankering for crisps. Then David was born and being a new mum was more difficult than I’d imagined. I loved my baby more than anything, but I was struggling to come to terms with my identity as a mum, and eventually I was diagnosed with postnatal depression. I turned to food for comfort, eating two packets of biscuits at a time, or a tub of ice cream, telling myself if I took David for a walk in the pram later, it’d balance out – which of course it wouldn’t. And once I started eating anything sweet, I’d just eat more and more. I couldn’t ever seem to stop at just one or two biscuits, or a couple of scoops of ice cream. As David grew, I couldn’t get down on the floor to play with him as it was so hard to get back up again.

At a routine check-up, my doctor took my blood pressure and told me it was just below the high range. ‘Losing a bit of weight would be beneficial,’ she said. Not long afterwards, at church one Sunday, a woman I saw every week came up to say hello. ‘Congratulations, Mbali!’ she said with a smile. ‘Another one on the way!’ It took a moment for the realisation to sink in – she thought I was pregnant! ‘Erm, no, it’s just my tummy,’ I said, feeling my face burning. I looked down at the black size-22 dress that I’d thought had hidden my size, then felt a sudden determination

to lose weight and get my health back on track before my next birthday. I was going to do it – I’d be a confident, energetic mum by the time I turned 35. I’d now found my motivation to lose weight...but I still had to work out how I was going to do it.

A friend of mine had lost weight at Slimming World, though as I knew nothing about it and had never tried it before, I worried it might be too restrictive for me. In January 2022, I decided I’d nothing to lose by finding out. Though I felt embarrassed about my size and worried that people would judge me, I dug deep and messaged Emma, the Consultant of my local group, to let her know I was thinking about joining. I’d convinced myself she wouldn’t even reply – that’s how low my self-esteem was – and I thought: *When she doesn’t message back, I won’t have to go.* So I was genuinely surprised when she responded saying: ‘You’re more than welcome to come along next week, Mbali – I’m looking forward to meeting you’.

The following week it was raining, and I took it as a reason not to go...but I kept thinking of her kind message, and by the next week, I’d plucked up the courage to walk through the doors. Emma made me feel really at ease, and as she explained the plan, I realised it wasn’t a fad at all. It was about eating normal, real food and making my meals healthier – not cutting them out or reducing their size. I felt positive – right up until the moment when I was taken discreetly aside at the end to weigh in. Emma must have seen my face drop as 21st 2½lbs flashed up. ‘You can do this, Mbali,’ she said.

The next day, at the supermarket, I remembered her words as I filled up my trolley. Instead of white bread, I bought wholemeal. I chose semi-skimmed instead of whole milk, and swapped my usual olive oil for low-calorie cooking spray. For breakfast, I’d have a Healthy Extra portion of porridge or cereal with semi-skimmed milk, and for lunch I’d make a chicken stir-fry with rice and lots of vegetables. At dinnertime, I’d throw together a big salad of spinach, watercress and salmon or prawns, which I’d drizzle with a bit of low Syn sweet chilli sauce, and have with Slimming World chips. I soon realised I could make our favourite family dinners Food Optimising friendly, too, just by using low-calorie cooking spray instead of oil and skinless

chicken, and including plenty of veg. I didn’t even notice the difference, and there were no complaints from Damian or David either! Using the Syns calculator on the Slimming World app, I estimated boerewors sausages at 8 Syns each, deciding I’d >



BEFORE
I couldn’t get down on the floor to play with my son, David

“I couldn’t be happier with the change in how I feel about myself. For the first time in years, I’m truly confident”

just have them now and then. One aisle I avoided on those early shops was the one filled with biscuits and chocolate. Recognising that it was hard to stop once I’d started, I decided that I’d steer away from biscuits and ice cream, and have low-fat fruity yogurts, bananas and grapes instead. I was slowly starting to build a new relationship with food and enjoy eating things that I knew would help to nourish my body.

Within my first two weeks, I’d already got my half-stone award, and I was feeling good. It was working, and I knew that this was a way to lose weight that I could maintain. After that, my weight continued to go down, and I loved the support I was getting during IMAGE Therapy – the bit where we shared our stoppers, as well as our triumphs, and got personalised support from Emma. I knew I could count on Emma’s wise words no matter what the scales showed. One week, when I felt disappointed after a weigh-in, she said: ‘Life happens. You’re here now, and that’s what counts.’ I never once felt judged, and that meant I could be honest about how I was feeling. I talked about how low I’d been after having David and how food had become a friend – and realising other members understood meant the world to me. So many other people in the room opened up about their struggles with emotional eating, including the guilt or shame they’d felt about it, and it helped so much to know I wasn’t alone in that either. We’d always share tips, too, and the target members were an amazing source of shopping knowledge!

After four months of avoiding biscuits and ice cream, I felt ready to add sweet treats back in. That week in IMAGE Therapy, I talked about how I’d felt powerless against sweet cravings, and I could see heads nodding around the room, as so many members knew how it felt to have a trigger food. They suggested having the low Syn Hi-fi bars that you could buy at group for a chocolate fix, which I tried and really liked. And as I started to feel more in control around sweet food, I’d sometimes pick up chocolate bars that would fit into my daily Syns. To limit how much I could have in one go, I still didn’t keep a stash of chocolate in the house, but instead planned a bar into my Syns and bought it specially. It worked a treat for me!

With my confidence and self-compassion on the up, I felt inspired to start the Body Magic physical activity support programme. At first, I joined a gym, but I soon realised I rarely had a block of free time to go. And then it occurred to me that the exercise I enjoyed most was walking. It didn’t cost a penny and all I had to do was slip

on a pair of trainers and I was good to go. I started getting up early to go for a walk, excited to have some me-time before Damian and David woke. Sometimes I’d go for 20 minutes, sometimes an hour – whatever I could fit in around caring for David and work – and I always felt so good afterwards. I began to feel much healthier, and that was backed up by a visit to my doctor for a blood pressure check again. ‘Well done,’ she said, ‘that’s a very good reading!’

On my 35th birthday in August 2022, I went to group as normal, and was thrilled to see I’d now lost 6st 13lbs. This was a gift in itself...and then I found out I’d won my group’s Woman of the Year award, too. It was the best birthday present ever! And when one of the other members said, ‘You’re such an inspiration’, I thought I’d burst with pride. That evening, I slipped into a size-12 royal-blue dress and had photos taken with big pink balloons of the numbers three and five. I’d always hated having my photo taken, but for the first time in years, I felt truly confident and I wanted to capture that moment. I didn’t do anything extravagant – I went out for a Nando’s with my family using my Syns – and it really was the perfect day.

In December 2022, I reached my target weight of 12st 8lbs and I actually cried tears of joy on the scales. My whole group cheered me on as Emma announced I’d hit my target...but I wasn’t finished yet. I decided to lower my target weight a little bit, and I’m now 11st 10½lbs. It’s hard to believe I’m over 9st lighter – and I couldn’t be happier with the change in how I feel about myself. My healthy lifestyle gives me so much energy, at work and at home – whether I’m running to an emergency or helping a patient get out of bed, or I’m down on the floor playing with David. It’s taking me a while to get used to the idea that I can now wear size-10 dresses, and feeling so much better in my own skin has given me the confidence to pursue my dream career as a web developer and start a computer coding course – something I’d never had the guts to do before. When David starts school in September, I’m going to brush up my CV and begin applying for jobs. I’ve also started my own podcast about confidence, aimed at empowering women. In fact, the idea came to me a couple of years ago, but at the time, I thought: *Who cares what I have to say?* I know now that what I have to say – or any of us has to say – matters. I just needed to believe in myself and what I can achieve when I set my mind to it. And finally, I do! ●



BEFORE
Food was my go-to through the ups as well as the downs



MBALI WEARS

p22: Dress, Coast. Earrings, Lovisa. Bracelet, New Look

p24: Dress with belt, Coast. Shoes, Next. Earrings and bracelet, both Jon Richard. Ring, Lovisa

Right: Dress, Lipsy at Next. Earrings and bracelet, both Jon Richard. Ring, Lovisa



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Get fruity!

Fruit is so much more than a quick snack when you're peckish. And it's not just for desserts either – how about a fresh apple salsa with pork steaks, or passion fruit with prawns? No, we've not gone bananas! Read on for loads more great ideas

ILLUSTRATION: **JESSIE FORD**
WORDS: **REBECCA WOOLLARD**

Start your summer early with a colourful array of sweet fruit. Not only is it the perfect snack, bringing your favourite fruit into more of your meals and desserts is also a great way to make losing weight deliciously interesting. Plus, if you're choosing more Speed Free Food fruits – those

with the added bonus of being super low in calories – you've got a whole range of exciting ways to enjoy that weight loss boosting third (or more!) of a plate. From raspberries with breakfast to orange segments tossed through a chicken salad, come with us on a fruity journey of discovery... >



Pick of the crop

Most of us can probably name at least one fruit we'll eat, and as most fruit in its natural state (more on that later) is a Free or Speed Free Food, the chances are you can enjoy your favourites as part of your weight loss journey. It's great to mix things up and go for a variety, as that means you'll be getting a wide range of vitamins and minerals. Sticking to your faves is better than no fruit at all, though, so do it your way. And if you're used to eating your strawberries with cream, fat-free natural yogurt is an easy switch for a quick pud. Up for exploring? Your Slimming World group or online community will be full of suggestions for ways to broaden your fruit horizons – if you like peaches, for example, then a ripe nectarine might be up your street. Step two? Why not use some of these ideas to try something new!

Keep 'em sweet

Fruit is a fantastic option for between meals, either at home or on the go – and if you're out and about, here are our top tips to help keep it at its best

- Whole fruits that don't need slicing are easiest to transport. Protect ones that bruise easily, like bananas or pears, by wrapping them in a couple of sheets of kitchen paper or putting them in a tub.
- If you're carrying fresh berries around and it's a warm day, put them in a securely sealed plastic tub lined with a sheet of kitchen paper that you've run under cold water then squeezed out. It will help to keep them cool and stop them drying out. This

also works for halved or sliced stone fruit like cherries, plums, peaches or nectarines; pieces of melon (lovely in hot weather!); and grapes (halved if you're sharing them with young children).

- You can do the same thing with sliced apples or pears. Just wet the kitchen paper with lemon juice instead of water to slow the browning process. Or rub the cut sides of the fruit with a halved lemon – it'll alter the flavour slightly, but still be delicious.

Where to store it?

To a certain extent, this is personal preference – if you love a cold, crunchy apple straight from the fridge, that's your answer – but they don't technically have to be chilled. You might enjoy frozen grapes as a cooling snack on a sunny day, but they'll be perfectly happy in the fridge, or even at room temperature as long as it's not scorching outside. In fact, most fruit will sit for a while at room temp – although chilling delicate fruit like strawberries and ripe peaches or nectarines will make them last a bit longer. Bananas don't thrive in the fridge, and neither do oranges or pears, (unless they're on the verge of being overripe), so they're best kept out. Talking of which...out of sight is often also out of mind, so keeping a colourful bowlful on your kitchen table might prompt you to reach for fruit over snacks containing Syns, which is great for your weight loss plans! Because of the high water content, fruit tends to go off fairly quickly, especially as the weather warms up, so to save waste (and money) it helps to just buy what you can realistically get through in a week.



Why isn't cooked or puréed fruit as slimming friendly?

Emily Young, a registered nutritionist at Slimming World, explains: 'When we cook, mash, juice or purée fruit we not only change its texture, but we also lose much of its bulky, filling power in the process. This makes it easier to eat, often in larger quantities and more quickly than if we ate the whole fruit.'

'Chewing also plays an important role in digestion and can promote feelings of fullness. Think about eating a big bowl of sliced strawberries, banana and apple, and how long it would take you to chew each mouthful and how full you'd feel

after you finished. Now imagine blending that whole bowl of fruit and drinking it in one glass as a smoothie – it's gone in a few mouthfuls and your body doesn't have the time to register the same signals of fullness, which means you're more likely to overeat.'

WHAT ABOUT CANNED AND JARRED FRUIT?

Because of the way the fruit is processed and stored – usually in syrup, juice or even in alcohol – canned and jarred fruit is given a Syn value. That's not to say that it's off

the table, just that it's important to count it as Syns to help protect your weight loss.

FROZEN IS GOOD, TOO!

Frozen fruits count as Free or Speed Free Foods, depending on the variety, and can be much cheaper than fresh. While still frozen they're a refreshing snack on a hot day, and when defrosted they're a great option for topping your breakfast or stirring into Slimming World desserts. Top tip – they can be quite wet, so depending on your dish you may want to defrost them on kitchen paper first.

FRUITY INSPIRATION

The possibilities for adding fruit to your meals are endless, and once you've got a taste for it, experimenting can be fun. Here are just a few of our favourite combos to spark off some ideas

BREAKFAST

- Layer up fresh berries, sliced stone fruit, chopped apple or pear, sliced banana or chopped tropical fruits (like mango, pineapple or melon) over your Healthy Extra portion of cereal, porridge or overnight oats. Try out different flavour combinations to find your favourites, and experiment with gentle warming spices, too – apples love cinnamon, pineapples love allspice, and bananas love nutmeg.
- A fruit salad is a delicious lighter option if you're not up for a cooked brekkie (and is a great way to use things up). It can also be made the night before – though some fruit mingles more happily than others. Bananas aren't a good choice for prepping ahead – they tend to dissolve in the acid of other fruit and become very mushy – and apples go a bit brown and powdery, so it's best to chop these at the last minute. For a really special fruit salad, choose whole or halved berries, segments of stone fruits and some chopped melon. Add a fresh sprig of mint or two in there and you'll feel like you're having breakfast at a fancy hotel somewhere hot and sunny!

DINNER

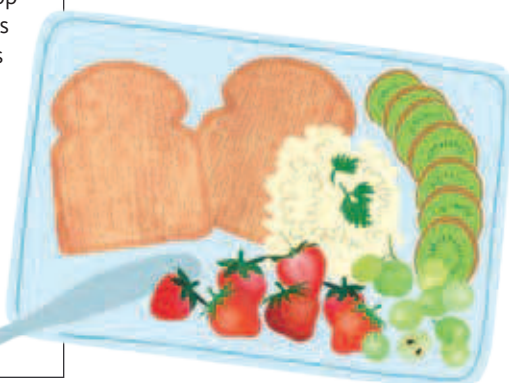
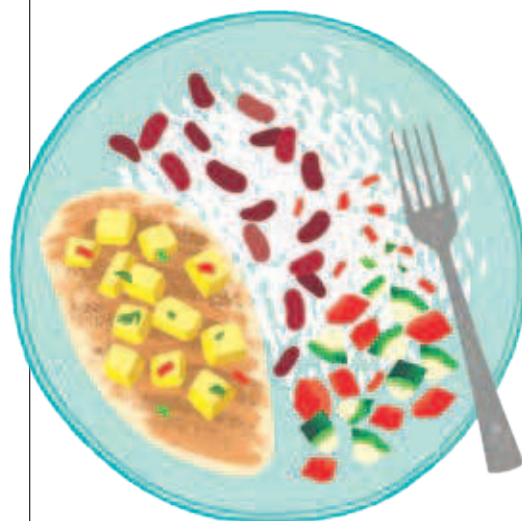
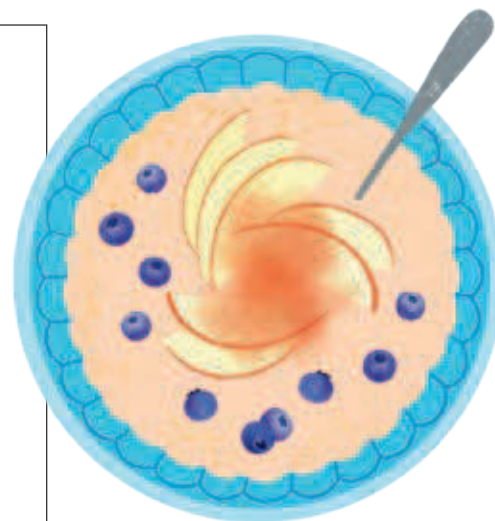
- Finely dice apple, then mix with some finely chopped red onion, sliced fresh chives or flat-leaf parsley and a little lemon juice. Serve as a salsa on top of grilled lean pork steaks.
- Try scooping out passion fruit pulp and topping griddled prawns with it. Add a little finely chopped chilli, if you like, then squeeze over lime juice and serve with rice and griddled thin-stemmed broccoli.
 - Roast skinless chicken breasts, then serve with a quick salad of chopped apricots or nectarines, rocket leaves and finely sliced spring onions. Serve with lemon wedges for squeezing over everything.
 - Dice fresh pineapple and mix with chopped fresh coriander, lime juice and zest, and chilli. This tastes great with jerk chicken (see our recipe on p48), or a griddled tuna steak.

LUNCH

- Sliced apple or pear and grapes are lovely as part of a ploughman's, and are particularly good with punchy cheeses like Cheddar (40g reduced-fat is a Healthy Extra). Apples also pair nicely with cooked lean ham.
- For a vegetarian grazing platter, slice a few strawberries, kiwi fruit and grapes and scatter with fresh basil or mint leaves. Serve with fat-free natural cottage cheese and two slices of wholemeal toast from a small 400g loaf (a Healthy Extra). Scoop the cheese onto the toast and top with the fruit to eat.
 - Toss orange segments through a rice or couscous salad with cooked sliced skinless chicken breast, chopped cucumber, peppery leaves like rocket or watercress, and a handful of sliced spring onions. Drizzle with fat-free vinaigrette or lemon juice before serving for added zing.

DESSERT

- Drizzle a little chocolate sauce (3 Syns per 1 level tbsp) over sliced clementines and scatter a crushed amaretti biscuit (1 Syn) on top for a low Syn treat.
- Make a quick Eton mess by layering raspberries and sliced strawberries with fat-free natural yogurt and a crumbled mini meringue nest (1 Syn).
- Tip a sugar-free jelly pot (½ Syn) into a tall glass with a handful of blueberries, raspberries or stoned cherries and a scoop of reduced-fat vanilla ice cream (3½ Syns per 50g). Top with a few sugar sprinkles (1 Syn per 1 level tsp) for an instant knickerbocker glory! ●





‘The meal that reminds me of home’

When Betsie Dixon was set up on a blind date, little did she realise it would take her across continents! Here she shares a lightened-up comfort food favourite that takes her back to falling in love in South Africa

FOOD PHOTOGRAPHS: ANT DUNCAN

Betsie, 55, is a Slimming World Consultant with groups in Bollington, Cheshire, where she lives with her husband, Andrew, and teenager Caroline, 16. She is 5ft 4ins tall and weighs 9st 13lbs, having lost 1st 3lbs

As I walked through the doors of a busy pub, I couldn't keep the butterflies from surging in my tummy. Because while on the surface this was just a sociable night out, I knew that my friend, Cobus, had a hidden agenda – he'd invited a chap he wanted to set me up with. 'You'd be perfect for each other,' he'd said. 'What with you being so independent and him travelling all over the world with his job – he wouldn't be in your hair all the time!'

It was 1998 and I was working in a hotel in my home country of South Africa – too busy enjoying life for a full-on relationship. All I knew about my date was that he was a Brit. Taking a seat at the pub table, I found myself next to a charming

Welshman I'd never met before. I could see why Cobus had thought we'd get on well – the conversation flowed.

As we left our seats and headed to the pool table, Cobus grabbed me. 'What are you doing?' he hissed in my ear. 'That's Mark you're chatting up and he's happily married with two kids!' My heart sank as I realised my intended date was the rather boring bloke who'd been sat opposite me and talked endlessly about Land Rovers! Despite my reservations, Land Rover man and I teamed up as pool partners, and as we got chatting, I realised there was a lot more to Andrew than just an interest in 4 x 4s. We shared a love of food, wine and travel – his job in the mining industry took him around the globe – and before the night was out, he'd asked me on a 'proper' date.

We ended up moving in together and we continued our mutual love of eating well. One dish Andrew loved was bobotie: a South African speciality made with curried mince topped with an egg-based sauce. His South African

friends had cooked it for him before we met, and he'd often made it for me when we started going out.

After three years, we got married – twice! Our first wedding took place in a beautiful seaside town called Gordon's Bay, near my parents' home, with Andrew looking so handsome in his tuxedo, and the Welshman acting as best man! Six weeks later, we did it all again in the UK, with Andrew's family in Leeds. This time, though, after all the celebrating we'd been doing, my dress was definitely feeling tighter, and Andrew complained about the waistband of his suit trousers, too.

We moved to the UK in 2005, and my weight worries took a back seat when Caroline was born. A few years later my best friend, Marnie, asked me to go along to Slimming World with her for support. I'd no intention of joining myself – while I did want to lose weight, there was no way I was going to give up all my favourite dinners. But by the time Barbara, our Consultant, had explained the eating plan, I'd had my preconceptions >

made with love



Betsie's bobotie,
recipe on p34

made with love

'My low Syn spin on bobotie was the first recipe I adapted to Food Optimising, and it tasted just as good'

about weight loss thoroughly shattered. It had dawned on me that I could easily adapt my favourite recipes to make them slimming friendly – and enjoy a glass of wine using my Syns! Turning to Marnie after Barbara's new-member talk, I said, 'Do you know, I think I could do this.'

Over the following months, I lost 2st 1lb to get to my target of 9st 4lbs, all the time enjoying the food that meant so much to my family and me. Being South African, our regular barbecues – known as braai – were a way of life, and I could still enjoy homemade burgers, lean steaks and skinless spatchcock chicken. I'd also make South African specialities like biltong (dried lean beef cured in vinegar, pepper, salt, Worcestershire sauce and coriander seeds). My low Syn spin on bobotie using lean mince – and omitting the sultanas, almonds and bread traditionally added – was the first recipe I adapted to Food Optimising, and it tasted just as good.

Life has had its ups and downs – during the pandemic I regained the weight I'd lost. But Slimming World has always had my back and before long I was losing again. When Barbara said she was retiring, I was keen to apply for the role. As a Consultant, I've loved helping members have the light-bulb moment I had 11 years earlier: that you can lose weight and still love your food!

I'm almost back at target now. We're due to go to South Africa for the first time in over three years and I want to feel my best. I'm looking forward to catching up with my family, and we're planning to take Caroline to the pub where we first met on that blind date. I might even cook some traditional South African dishes for them – the Slimming World way!

Betsie's bobotie

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 6
SYNS PER SERVING 1
READY IN 1 hour 40 minutes

Low-calorie cooking spray
2 onions, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 tbsp mild or medium curry powder
(see Cook's notes on p41)
1 tsp ground turmeric
1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
1kg lean beef mince (5% fat or less)
60g dried apricots, chopped
Zest and juice of ½ lemon
3 medium eggs
6 fresh or dried bay leaves (we used fresh)
250g fat-free natural yogurt

TO SERVE

500g dried basmati rice
Mixed salad leaves
Juice of 2 lemons

1 Preheat your oven to 180°C/fan 160°C/gas 4. Spray a large, non-stick frying pan with cooking spray and put over a medium-high heat. Fry the onions for 5-7 minutes with a splash of water until softened. Add the garlic, spices and pepper, and fry for 1 minute until fragrant.

2 Take the pan off the heat and stir in the mince, apricots, lemon zest and juice, and 1 beaten egg until well combined. Season well, then tip into a large, ovenproof dish (around 2 litres) and lightly level the top. Tuck 4 bay leaves into the mince mixture, evenly spaced apart. Cover with foil and bake for 1 hour until the mince is cooked through, but still moist.

3 To make the topping, beat the 2 remaining eggs, then mix with the yogurt and season. Turn the oven up to 220°C/fan 200°C/gas 7, then take out the dish and uncover. Evenly pour over the topping and pop the 2 leftover bay leaves on top. Bake for 15 minutes until set and golden-brown at the edges.

4 When the bobotie's nearly ready, cook the rice following the pack instructions, then drain. Toss the salad leaves with the lemon juice. Divide the bobotie between 6 plates, discarding the bay leaves. Serve with the rice and salad.

Feeling better than ever after losing weight (below) and in Spain with Caroline and Andrew (right)



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SWEET CHILLI STYLE CHICKEN
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10PK



340g e

KEEP REFRIGERATED
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PICK UP A PACK TODAY IN TESCO AND MORRISONS.
YOU'LL THANK US LATER!

TESCO

Morrisons

'I rocked with a bold buzz cut!'

When Hannah Woof lost her hair to alopecia, it was the journey she'd made to reach her dream weight that gave her the self-belief to step back into the limelight

Hannah, 24, is a singer/songwriter and lives in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, with her dad, Neil, stepmum, Cal, and boyfriend, Ryan. She's 5ft 4ins tall and weighs 10st 3lbs, having lost 3st 4½lbs at Jessica Fitzgerald's Slimming World group in Sydenham, Warwickshire

As I walked on stage, the air was filled with cheers and shouts of, 'Go, Hannah!'. The lights moved across the crowd, and I caught sight of my nan and grandad going wild right at the front. This was my first headline gig since the pandemic, and I felt great in my sleek black jumpsuit pinned with Nan's brooch as my lucky charm. I was also sporting a brand-new shaved head, something I never would've believed I'd have the confidence to do...

Singing had always been my therapy, but I'd struggled with the strain of finishing my studies at college and had gained a lot of weight really quickly. I'd started to feel self-conscious on stage and would cringe when I looked back at gig photos.

My mum, Wendy, had noticed the change in me, and we were chatting one day when she said: 'I'm worried about you – you don't seem yourself, and I can see you're unhappy with your weight. I'm thinking about joining Slimming World, do you fancy coming with me?'. As soon as I walked into group, I knew it was the right decision. Everyone was so welcoming and my Consultant, Jessica, made me feel right at home. I couldn't believe how flexible the plan was – when I learnt I could eat as much pasta and potatoes as I liked, I was sold!

In my first week, I lost 4lbs, which spurred me on. And I also started gaining confidence in my cooking – salmon, prawn and asparagus tagliatelle became a go-to



Losing weight helped to restore my self-esteem and love of performing

recipe. When I reached my target weight of 10st, my stepsister, Rachel, and I began planning a girls' trip to Greece – I was so excited! Then last June, a few days before our holiday, I noticed a five pence piece-size gap in my hair. I didn't think much of it, but by the time we flew back, it was the size of a 50 pence piece and getting bigger.

When my GP diagnosed alopecia in October, it felt like such a knock to my only recently new-found confidence. In time, my hair loss increased so rapidly, I couldn't ignore the hair clogging up the plughole any more. Taking a deep breath, I said to my boyfriend, Ryan, 'OK, I think it's time to shave it off...'. I video-called my sister, Charlotte, from the kitchen

for emotional support and guidance. She talked us through it, with Ryan in charge of the clippers. When his seven-year-old daughter, Lily, saw me, her mouth dropped open. Then she gently stroked my head. 'You look beautiful,' she said. 'And don't worry, I still want to be your best friend.' Ryan and I couldn't stop laughing!

With my headline gig at HMV Empire in Coventry coming up, I was the slimmest I'd been in years at 9st 10lbs and ready to show the world who I was – as I was. It was magical to hear the crowd sing along in unison to my lyrics. I felt so overwhelmed with happiness, I could have cried – especially when the event also raised £200 for Alopecia UK.

My Slimming World family has helped show me just how strong I am. And I know I've the tools to tackle anything that comes my way – with a little bit of attitude! ●

Have you caught a weight loss magic moment on camera in the last year? We'd love to hear about it! Email us at editorial@slimmingworld.co.uk

READER COMPETITION



Get ready to sizzle!

Enter Frylight's smoking-hot competition for the chance to win one of 20 stylish gas barbecues



Are you ready to fire up your summer slimdown? Barbecue season is upon us and serving up a smoking-hot Slimming World friendly spread couldn't be simpler, with homemade kebabs, lean steaks and burgers all on the menu. A few sprays of Frylight is all it takes to get your back-garden faves going.

Frylight is Syn free when you're Food Optimising, making it a great store-cupboard staple whether you're roasting, frying, baking, or grilling up a storm on the family barbecue. And as well as saving you Syns, Frylight lasts over twice as long as a regular one-litre bottle of oil**.

With six versatile varieties to choose from, you'll find a match for anything you throw on the grill. Extra Virgin Olive Oil

With six Frylight varieties to choose from, grilling up a storm on your barbie couldn't be simpler

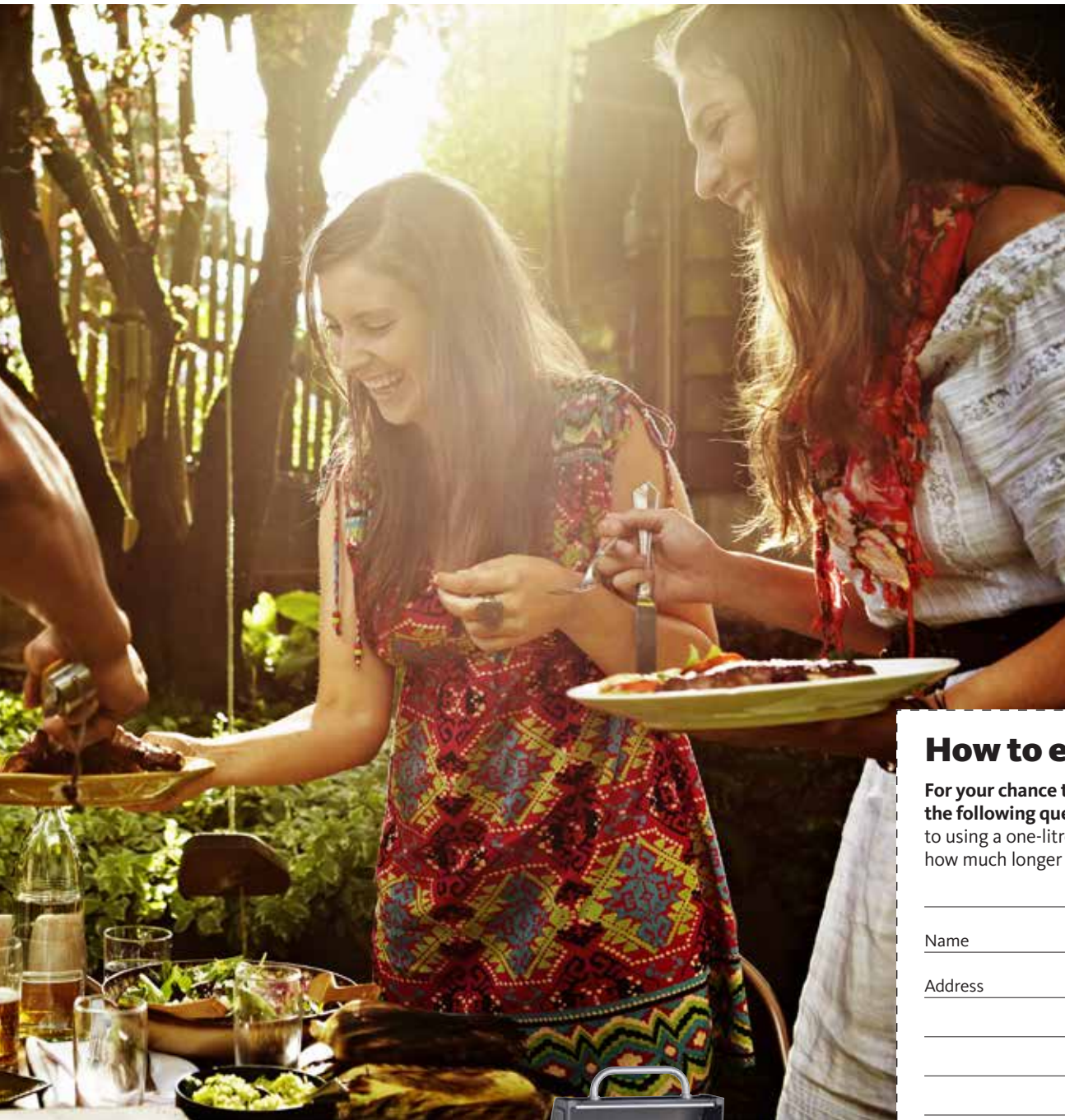
and Garlic Oil lend themselves to vibrant Mediterranean veg. Chicken kebabs rubbed in Asian spices go beautifully with Coconut Oil, and Sunflower Oil and Rapeseed Oil are great all-rounders – spritz over large flat mushrooms before grilling to make

a fantastic Free Food 'bun' for burgers. Not forgetting Butter Flavour – the perfect partner for chargrilling sweet and juicy corn on the cob. It really is that easy to stay on track with a barbie that's deliciously bang on plan!

Now Frylight is offering you the chance to win one of 20 Outback Spectrum 2 Burner Hooded barbecues, worth £349.99. Enter online or using the entry form opposite. And if you're one of the lucky winners, you could soon be looking forward to a summer of Food Optimising feasts cooked alfresco!



Frylight is the original one-calorie cooking spray and is available from most major supermarkets, subject to availability. Visit frylight.com



How to enter

For your chance to win, answer the following question: compared to using a one-litre bottle of oil, how much longer does Frylight last?

Name _____

Address _____

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Daytime tel _____

Visit slimmingworld.co.uk/magcomps to enter online no later than 13 July 2023. Alternatively, send your entry form to **Frylight Competition**, *Slimming World Magazine*, Clover Nook Road, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 4SW, to arrive no later than 13 July 2023.

DATA PROTECTION: By entering the competition, all entrants consent to the use of their personal data by Slimming World and Outback for the purpose of the administration of this competition. The winners' names and counties will be published in the Nov/Dec 2023 issue of Slimming World Magazine.

Prize details

Twenty winners will each receive an Outback Spectrum 2 Burner Hooded barbecue

- A stylish design of black, silver and traditional wood
- Twin stainless steel burners with autoignition
- Two handy wooden side tables
- Base storage shelf
- Worth £349.99*

The competition is open to UK and Republic of Ireland residents aged 18 or over.

No purchase necessary. For full competition terms and conditions, see page 120.



*PRIZE VALUE BASED ON THE RETAIL PRICE QUOTED ON OUTBACKBARBECUES.COM AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS. **BASED ON USING FRYLIGHT 900ML FIVE SPRAYS PER COOK AND A SERVING OF POURING OIL BEING 15ML (1TBSF)




Say YES to Pudding!
Find us in the jelly aisle



EAT, love & lose

DISCOVER A WORLD OF FRESH, FILLING FOOD THAT'S DELICIOUSLY SLIMMING

Look out for these symbols on our recipes:

-  Free | Free when Food Optimising
-  SP | Extra Easy SP recipe
-  V | Suitable for vegetarians
-  Vegan | Suitable for vegans
-  ❄️ | Suitable for freezing for up to 1 month

COOK'S NOTES

- When cooking with shop-bought spice mixes or blends, choose brands without Synned ingredients such as sugar, flour and oil. Otherwise, count ½ Syn per level tsp or 1½ Syns per level tbsp
- When using low-calorie cooking spray in our recipes, choose brands with one calorie or less per spray as they're Syn free. See page 6 for a complete list of recipes and Syn values. For an introduction to Food Optimising, turn to page 60

WHAT'S COOKING?

Share your photos of this issue's recipes on social media:

#SWMagazineMakes

110
brilliant recipes,
ideas & tips in
this issue
WORLD FOOD ISSUE

American Key lime pie,
recipe p82



Wish you were here

Six Slimming World members share the lightened-up recipes that transport them to their favourite travel destinations with just one taste – from an elegant Italian pasta dish to sun-soaked Jamaican jerk chicken

PHOTOGRAPHS: GARETH MORGANS



SPAIN

Seafood paella

Recreate that beach-holiday feeling at home with this colourful Spanish dish

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

Free

READY IN 50 minutes

800ml fish stock, made with 1 stock cube

Pinch of saffron threads (optional)

Low-calorie cooking spray

1 onion, finely chopped

1 green pepper, deseeded and sliced

2 garlic cloves, crushed

1½ tsp sweet smoked paprika

250g dried paella rice

400g can chopped tomatoes

400g frozen raw or cooked seafood mix, defrosted

150g green beans trimmed, cut into 5cm lengths

400g can artichoke hearts in water, drained and cut in half

10g fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped

1 lemon, cut into wedges

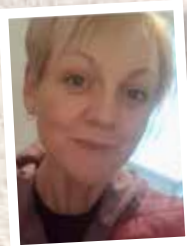
1 Bring the stock to the boil in a saucepan, and add the saffron (if using), crushing the threads between your fingertips. Set aside.

2 Spray a large, lidded, non-stick frying pan or paella pan with cooking spray and put over a low heat. Add the onion and cook very gently for 8-10 minutes, or until the onion has softened but not coloured, adding a splash of water if it starts to stick. Add the pepper, garlic and paprika, then fry for 1 minute. Stir in the rice and stir-fry for another minute.

3 Stir in the tomatoes and stock, and bring to the boil. Lower the heat and leave to

simmer, uncovered, for 15 minutes, stirring from time to time. Add the seafood and beans, cover and cook for a further 5 minutes. Take off the heat and arrange the artichoke hearts over the top of the paella. Cover and leave to steam for a further 2-3 minutes until the rice is tender and the seafood is piping hot.

4 Divide between 4 plates. Scatter over the parsley and serve with the lemon wedges.



Jenni Simpson, 35, lives in Sion Mills, County Tyrone, with her partner, Keith. She has lost 5st 9½lbs at Sinead Twells' group in Sion Mills

'With its relaxing vibe and beautiful beaches, Spain has to be my ultimate holiday spot. I often get recipe ideas when I'm away – and this easy, veg-packed paella has all the colours and flavours I love.'

FRANCE

Steak frites

Ooh la la! This French classic is the ultimate dinnertime treat, served with a red wine sauce

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING ½

READY IN 55 minutes

- 4 lean rump steaks, visible fat removed
- 1 kg floury potatoes, such as Maris Piper or King Edward, cut into thin chips
- Low-calorie cooking spray
- 2 echalion shallots, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 sprigs of fresh thyme
- 3 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 400ml pouch liquid beef stock
- 1 tsp mustard powder
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 head of lettuce, leaves separated
- 100g radishes, finely sliced
- 30ml red wine

- 1 Take the steaks out of the fridge and pat dry. Season and set aside on a plate.
- 2 Preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Spread the chips on a large, non-stick baking tray in a single layer. Spritz with cooking spray and bake for 40 minutes, or until crisp and golden, turning halfway.
- 3 While the chips are cooking, spray a large, non-stick saucepan with cooking spray and put over a low heat. Add the shallots and cook very gently for 6-8 minutes until softened. Add the garlic and thyme, and cook for a further minute until fragrant. Pour in the vinegar and simmer for 2-3 minutes until reduced and syrupy. Stir in the stock, then simmer until it's reduced

by half and the sauce is slightly thicker and glossy – this should take about 10 minutes.

- 4 While the stock is simmering, put a large, non-stick frying pan over a high heat. Spritz the steaks with cooking spray and fry for 2-3 minutes on each side for pink to medium-well done. Set aside to rest.

- 5 Mix the mustard powder with 1 tsp cold water and the lemon juice to make a dressing. Season to taste, then toss through the lettuce and radishes.

- 6 Add the wine to the sauce and simmer for a final 2 minutes. Season to taste. Divide the steaks, chips and salad between 4 plates. Serve a quarter of the sauce per person.



Jayne Wood, 58, lives in Sutton-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, with her husband, George. She has lost 7st ½lb and he's lost 3st 1½lbs at Annette Towle's group in Sutton-in-Ashfield

'My husband and I love to travel around France in our self-build camper van, enjoying wonderful meals. Recreating them at home brings back so many memories – steak frites will always be my favourite.'

TURKEY

Spiced lamb kebabs

A sandwich like no other – tender cubes of spiced grilled lamb, yogurt and salad wrapped in a pitta

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING 7

Deduct 7 Syms if using the wholemeal pitta bread as a Healthy Extra

READY IN 40 minutes, plus marinating

700g lamb leg steaks, visible fat removed, cut into 3-4cm cubes

1 tbsp dried baharat spice mix (see *Cook's notes* on p41)

3 garlic cloves, crushed

1 tbsp tomato purée

1 red onion, finely sliced

1½ tbsp red wine vinegar

150g cherry tomatoes, quartered

4 roasted red peppers in brine from a jar, drained and sliced

1 cucumber, roughly chopped

100g fat-free natural yogurt

15g fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped

10g fresh mint, leaves roughly chopped

4 x 60g wholemeal pitta breads, toasted

Lemon wedges and pickled chillies, to serve

1 Put the lamb in a sealable food bag or non-metallic bowl with the spice mix, two-thirds of the garlic and the tomato purée. Mix everything together really well. Seal the bag or cover and leave in the fridge to marinate for at least 2 hours, or overnight.

2 Tip the onion into a large bowl and stir through the vinegar. Season with a little salt and set aside for 30 minutes. Add the tomatoes, peppers and cucumber, then toss together. Pour the yogurt into a small bowl, stir through the remaining garlic, season to taste and set aside.

3 Preheat your grill to high. Thread the lamb on to 4 wooden skewers (pre-soaked in water for at least 30 minutes) and grill for 3-4 minutes on each side, or until lightly charred, but still pink inside. Set aside to rest briefly, loosely covered with foil.

4 Toss most of the herbs through the salad. Arrange the pitta breads, kebabs, lemon wedges and chillies on a serving plate, and scatter over the leftover herbs. Serve 1 pitta bread per person with the kebabs, salad and yogurt.



Claire Preston, 46, lives in Wolverhampton, West Midlands, with her two children. She has lost 1st 1½lbs at Vimla Ahmed's group in Coseley, West Midlands

'The kebabs they served by the poolside at lunchtime during our holiday to Turkey were amazing. We've always said we'd go back to that hotel just for the kebabs – with this recipe, we can enjoy them any time!'





THAILAND

Thai red curry & jasmine rice

A deliciously fragrant dish packed with fresh vegetables and a kick of spice

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4
SYNS PER SERVING 2
READY IN 50 minutes

Low-calorie cooking spray

2cm-piece fresh root ginger, peeled and finely grated

4 level tbsp red Thai curry paste

1 level tbsp cornflour

300ml plain unsweetened coconut drink

350ml chicken stock

200g dried jasmine rice, well-rinsed and drained

4 skinless and boneless chicken breasts, chopped into chunks

1 fresh lemongrass stalk, outer layers discarded and stalk bashed with the flat of a knife (optional)

4 fresh or dried lime leaves (optional)

200g cherry tomatoes

150g baby sweetcorn, halved widthways

2 pak choi, sliced

150g mangetout

2 tbsp fish sauce

15g fresh coriander, roughly chopped

1 lime, cut into wedges

1 Spray a large, deep, non-stick frying pan with cooking spray. Put over a medium-low heat, add the ginger and curry paste, then stir-fry for 2 minutes until fragrant.

2 Mix the cornflour with 2 tbsp coconut drink until smooth. Pour the rest of the coconut drink and the stock into the frying pan and bring to the boil. Lower the heat, add the cornflour mixture and stir until thickened. Gently simmer for 5 minutes. While it's simmering, tip the rice into a medium, lidded, non-stick pan with 300ml cold water. Bring to the boil, cover and turn the heat to its lowest setting. Simmer

for 10-12 minutes until the rice is tender and the water has been absorbed. Take off the heat, keeping the lid on.

3 Add the chicken, lemongrass and lime leaves (if using), and tomatoes to the sauce. Simmer for 5 minutes, then add the sweetcorn, and simmer for 5 minutes. Add the pak choi and mangetout and simmer for 2 minutes until the veg are just tender and the chicken is cooked through. Discard the lemongrass and lime leaves (if using).

4 Stir the fish sauce into the curry and scatter over the coriander. Divide between 4 plates and serve with the rice and lime.



Scott Smith, 53, is a Slimming World Consultant with groups in Hampton, Cambridgeshire. He lives with his husband, Jamie, in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, and has lost 8st

'I'm a huge fan of Thai culture and a visit to the country itself is on my bucket list for when I retire. Until then, though, this red chicken curry is the perfect way to bring a taste of its famous street food home.'

ITALY

Roast tomato & mozzarella pasta

A bowlful of fresh summery flavours – buon appetito!

SUPER SIMPLE

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING 6

Deduct 6 Syns if using the reduced-fat mozzarella as a Healthy Extra



READY IN 50 minutes

600g cherry tomatoes, halved

4 garlic cloves, crushed

Low-calorie cooking spray

350g dried spaghetti

Juice of 1 lemon

Pinch of dried red chilli flakes (optional)

280g reduced-fat mozzarella, roughly torn

10g fresh basil leaves, roughly torn

1 Preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Put the tomatoes, cut-side up, in a non-stick baking dish so they fit snugly together. Scatter over the garlic and add 2 tbs water. Spritz with cooking spray, cover with foil and bake for 20 minutes.

2 Take off the foil and bake for a further 15-20 minutes, or until the tomatoes have started to collapse and are golden at the edges. At the same time, cook the spaghetti following the pack instructions, then drain.

3 Drizzle the lemon juice over the tomatoes. Add the chilli flakes (if using). Toss through the spaghetti, mozzarella and most of the basil. Divide between 4 bowls. Top with the leftover basil and a twist of black pepper.



Gabriella Sotgiu, 50, lives in Bradford, West Yorkshire, with her partner, Matt. She has lost 1st 4½lbs at Julie Dawson's group in Low Moor, West Yorkshire

'My dad was Italian and every summer we'd go to stay at my grandparents' home in Sardinia. This tomato and basil pasta has all the classic flavours of Italy from the childhood holidays I remember!'



JAMAICA

Jerk chicken with rice & peas

Tender chicken breast with spicy jerk seasoning brings the flavours of the Caribbean to life

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

Free

READY IN 45 minutes, plus marinating

- 4 skinless and boneless chicken breasts
- 2½ tsp jerk seasoning (see *Cook's notes* on p41)
- 4 sprigs of fresh thyme, plus extra to serve
- Low-calorie cooking spray
- 250g dried long-grain rice, rinsed until the water runs clear, then drained
- 1 bunch spring onions, finely sliced, white and green parts separated
- 400g can red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 100g bag pea shoots
- 250g sugar snap peas, halved lengthways
- 2 limes, 1 juiced, 1 cut into wedges to serve
- 1 tbsp light soy sauce

'This lightened-up recipe takes me back to the beach bar where I first tasted jerk chicken'



Roxanne Freeman, 33, is a Slimming World Consultant with groups in Aylestone, Leicestershire. She lives in Aylestone with her sons, Logan, nine, and Douglas, four, and has lost 3st

'Jamaica is a special place to me, as I was a bridesmaid at my friend's wedding there. It was also the first time I'd tasted jerk chicken – and I fell in love with it! This lightened-up version takes me back to the beach bar.'

1 Put the chicken between 2 sheets of baking paper and beat with a rolling pin until about 1.5cm thick. Pop in a sealable food bag or non-metallic bowl with the jerk seasoning. Pick the leaves from half the thyme and add to the chicken. Spritz with cooking spray and toss until the chicken is well coated. Seal the bag or cover and leave in the fridge to marinate for at least 2 hours, or overnight.

2 Spray a medium, lidded, non-stick saucepan with cooking spray and put over a medium-low heat. Add the spring onion whites and fry for 1 minute until fragrant.

3 Stir through the rice, kidney beans and remaining thyme. Pour over 350ml water and bring to the boil. Cover the pan tightly,

turn the heat to its lowest setting and simmer very gently for 15 minutes until the rice is tender and the water has been absorbed. Discard the thyme.

4 While the rice is cooking, heat a large, non-stick frying pan over a medium-high heat. Spray the chicken with a little more cooking spray. Cook for 3-4 minutes on each side, or until cooked through. Set aside on a plate to rest.

5 Tip the pea shoots, sugar snap peas and spring onion greens into a bowl. Whisk together the lime juice and soy sauce to make a dressing. Pour over the salad and toss to coat. Slice the chicken breasts lengthways, fluff up the rice and serve with the salad and lime wedges.

Win a city break worth £1,000

...at The Francis Hotel in the heart of historic Bath

Famous for its ancient Roman Baths and elegant Georgian architecture, Bath was purpose built for rest and relaxation. And The Francis Hotel – a stunning Grade I listed building set in the centre of the 18th-century city – is the perfect place to enjoy its charms. Our lucky winner and their guest will stay in a luxurious Feature king bedroom, and dine in the hotel's vibrant Boho Marché restaurant – where the chef specialises in Mediterranean food with a tasty Moroccan twist. Then head out to discover the fascinating history behind the Roman Baths and Pump Rooms, stroll the sweeping 500ft-long Royal Crescent – channelling your inner Jane Austen (or *Bridgerton!*) heroine – or treat yourself to a shopping spree. However you choose to spend your days, beautiful Bath has all you need for a magical mini-break!



READER OFFER

Save 20% on a two-night stay at The Francis Hotel

Take a two-night break at the hotel by 29 February 2024 and pay from £339, based on two people sharing a Classic double or twin bedroom.

Offer includes breakfast each morning, one two-course lunch, and a one-hour guided relaxation and sound bath at the nearby Soul Spa. Offer subject to availability and restrictions apply. Guests must be aged 18 or over. To book, visit franchishotel.com/sworld and quote offer code: SW23.

For full offer terms and conditions, see p120.

PRIZE DETAILS

- Two nights' luxury accommodation for two in a Feature king bedroom or a Superior twin bedroom
- A bottle of Champagne on arrival
- Full cooked or continental buffet breakfast each morning
- Two-course lunch on one day
- Three-course dinner each evening

For more information about The Francis Hotel, visit franchishotel.com. The prize must be taken by 31 August 2024, subject to availability, and restrictions apply. The competition is open to UK and Republic of Ireland residents aged 18 or over; guest must be 18 or over.

No purchase necessary. For full terms and conditions, see p120.

HOW TO ENTER

For your chance to win, answer the following question: how long is Bath's famous Royal Crescent?

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Email _____

Daytime tel _____

Please tick if you are happy for The Francis Hotel to use your email address to send you updates about offers and promotional events

Visit slimmingworld.co.uk/magcomps to enter online no later than 13 July 2023. Or send your competition entry form to The Francis Hotel, *Slimming World Magazine*, Clover Nook Road, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 4SW, to arrive no later than 13 May 2023.

DATA PROTECTION: By entering the competition, all entrants consent to the use of their personal data by Slimming World, Bellevue Marketing and The Francis Hotel for the purpose of the administration of this competition. The winner's name and county will be published in the Nov/Dec 2023 issue of *Slimming World Magazine*.

RESCUE RECIPES

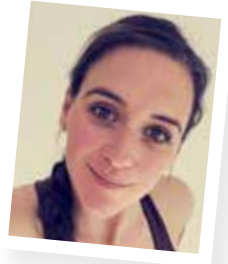
'What can I swap for a frozen pizza?'

Slimming World member Charlie Sennett asked us for a recipe for one that's as easy to cook as it is exciting to eat. We came up with this single-serving superstar



As a busy mum of three, I'm used to cooking for a crowd, so it's tempting not to bother with much of a meal when I get some rare time to myself. What can I rustle up that's easy and delicious, and will stop me from reaching for a shop-bought pizza, or sitting down with sandwiches and crisps?'

Charlie, 34, lives in Hereford with her partner, Ben, and their daughters, Nellie, five, and three-year-old twins Dotty and Nori. She's lost 1st 4lbs and is a member of Jo Diggle's Slimming World group in Hereford



Our food editor, Rebecca Woollard, says: 'This indulgently cheesy omelette looks and tastes amazing, so it's great for when you want a mealtime treat that's just for you!'

Mozzarella & spinach pizza omelette

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 1

SYNS PER SERVING 6

Deduct 6 Syms if using the reduced-fat mozzarella as a Healthy Extra

V

READY IN 30 minutes

125g cherry tomatoes (we used on the vine)

100g spinach

1 tsp tomato purée

½ small garlic clove, crushed

¼ tsp dried oregano

¼ tsp dried red chilli flakes (optional)

Low-calorie cooking spray

3 medium eggs, beaten

70g reduced-fat mozzarella, torn into pieces

Fresh basil leaves, to serve

1 Preheat your oven to 220°C/fan 200°C/gas 7. Put the tomatoes in an ovenproof dish and roast for 15 minutes until softened.

2 While the tomatoes are cooking, put a small, ovenproof, non-stick frying pan over a medium-high heat. Cook the spinach until just wilted, then pop on a plate to cool. Wipe the pan clean. When cool, give the spinach a good squeeze to get rid of any excess water and return to the plate. Mix together the tomato purée, garlic, oregano, chilli flakes (if using), 1 tbsp water and a pinch of salt.

3 Spray the pan with cooking spray and put over a medium-high heat. Season the eggs and pour into the pan. As the base begins to set, push the cooked egg from the edges into the centre using a silicone spatula or wooden spoon, letting the uncooked egg run into its place. Keep doing this until the egg is almost set. Take the pan off the heat. Put the spinach and two-thirds of the mozzarella on one half of the omelette. Fold the other half over and push down the edges.

4 Spread the tomato purée mixture over the top of the omelette, add the leftover mozzarella and bake for 5 minutes. Remove from the oven. Leave to rest for 2 minutes, then scatter over the basil and serve with the tomatoes.



'This clever recipe brings together all of my favourite pizza flavours, plus it's easy to make'

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TAKE A BATCH OF **chicken** casserole

With summery Mediterranean flavours, our one-pot is perfect for welcoming in the lighter nights, and that's not the best bit... You can use it to make three other delicious dishes, too

PHOTOGRAPHS: MYLES NEW

PICTURED LEFT

Summer casserole

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4
SYNS PER SERVING ½
READY IN 1 hour 10 minutes

Low-calorie cooking spray

600g skinless and boneless chicken thighs, visible fat removed, halved

1 onion, finely sliced

2 garlic cloves, crushed

400g small tomatoes

500g courgettes, sliced into 4cm diagonal pieces

2 sprigs of fresh oregano, plus extra leaves to serve, or 1 tsp dried oregano

500ml chicken stock

25g plain light soft cheese

1 Spray a flameproof, non-stick casserole dish or a large, deep, non-stick frying pan with cooking spray and put over a medium-high heat. When it's hot, fry the chicken in batches for 2 minutes on each side until golden. Move the chicken to a plate, then turn down the heat and fry the onion for 5-6 minutes, stirring often, until softened. Add the garlic and fry for another 2 minutes.

2 Add the chicken, tomatoes, courgettes, oregano and stock, and bring to a gentle simmer. Bubble for 30-40 minutes until the chicken is cooked through and the tomatoes have broken down into a sauce. Take off the heat. Pick out the oregano sprigs (if using), then stir in the soft cheese and season. Use in one of the following recipes, or scatter with the oregano leaves (if using fresh) and serve with jacket potatoes or mash (use fat-free natural fromage frais instead of butter to make a delicious Free mash).

Mediterranean chicken pasta

SUPER SIMPLE

SERVES 4
SYNS PER SERVING ½
READY IN 20 minutes

400g dried pasta of your choice (we used pappardelle)

1 x summer casserole recipe (see left)

Fresh basil leaves, to serve

1 Once the casserole is ready, cook the pasta following the pack instructions. While it's cooking, use scissors to snip the chicken and veg in the casserole into small pieces (you can keep it in the pan), then return to a medium heat. Bring to a simmer and cook for 5-6 minutes until the sauce has reduced and thickened (don't worry if the courgettes collapse into it).

2 Once the pasta is cooked, drain well and tip into the pan. Toss everything together over a low heat for a minute, then divide between 4 bowls. Add a twist of black pepper and scatter over the basil leaves to serve.

Fresh basil leaves will help bring out the flavour of the tomatoes





2

Sunshine chicken hotpot

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING ½

READY IN 1 hour 25 minutes

1 x summer casserole recipe (see p53)

250g floury potatoes, such as Maris Piper or King Edward, sliced into 3mm-thick rounds

Low-calorie cooking spray

400g thin-stemmed broccoli

1 Once the casserole is ready, tip it into a medium pie dish and preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Boil the potatoes for 3 minutes – parboiling the spuds first is key to making sure they cook through. Drain, then spread on kitchen paper to help them cool down more quickly.

2 Leave the potatoes to cool for 10 minutes, or until cool enough to handle, then arrange in circles on top of the casserole, overlapping slightly to completely cover the filling. Spray with cooking spray and cover with foil.

3 Put the dish on a baking tray and bake for 40 minutes. Carefully take off the foil and cook for another 20-30 minutes, or until the potatoes are golden and crisp. When it's nearly ready, boil the broccoli for 2-3 minutes, then drain. Season the hot pot with freshly ground black pepper, then divide between 4 plates and serve with the broccoli.

3

Mexican-style chicken with rice

SUPER SIMPLE

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING ½

READY IN 20 minutes

1 x summer casserole recipe (see p53)

250g dried long-grain rice

4 tbsp fat-free natural yogurt

Fresh coriander sprigs, to serve

Lime wedges, to serve

FOR THE SPICE MIX

1 tbsp cumin seeds

Low-calorie cooking spray

1 tsp each of ground coriander and paprika (unsmoked)

¼ tsp dried red chilli flakes

¼ tsp ground allspice

1 Once the casserole is ready, cook the rice following the pack instructions. While the rice is cooking, start on the spice mix.

2 Put the cumin seeds in a small, non-stick frying pan and toast over a medium heat for 2-3 minutes until fragrant. Spray the pan with cooking spray, then add the ground coriander, paprika, chilli flakes and allspice, along with a small splash of water to make a paste. Cook for 2-3 minutes, stirring often. Tip the paste into the casserole, stir it through and bring back to a gentle simmer.

3 When the rice is ready, drain and spoon into 4 bowls. Divide over the casserole, then add a dollop of yogurt and some freshly ground black pepper. Scatter over the coriander and serve with the lime wedges.



Kitchen SECRETS

GENIUS TIPS, TRICKS AND SHORTCUTS TO SEND YOUR COOKING CONFIDENCE SKY HIGH

Fall in love with beetroot

Think you don't like beetroot? Cooking it from fresh knocks spots off buying it pickled in a jar. It's coming into season, so it'll be cheaper, too! Here are three simple ways to use this Speed Free Food

ROAST IT: peel, trim and cut into wedges, then spread on a non-stick baking tray. Spray with low-calorie cooking spray and roast at 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6 for 30-40 minutes, turning once. Toss through pasta salads, serve as a side for chicken or fish, or eat as a snack.

GRATE IT: peel, trim and coarsely grate. Heat in a pan with a splash of water and some seasoning until hot but still crunchy. Squeeze over lemon juice and toss through fresh chopped chives, then serve alongside smoked haddock or salmon.

BLEND IT: wrap whole (unpeeled) in foil and bake

COOK'S NOTE

To avoid stains, wear rubber gloves and use a chopping board you can put in the dishwasher, rather than a wooden one

at 180°C/fan 160°C/gas 4 for 1-2 hours until tender (depending on size). Peel, chop and blitz with a little garlic, a dollop of fat-free natural yogurt, lemon juice and a pinch of dried red chilli flakes to make a tasty Free dip.



ALL ABOUT...

Bay leaves

The leaves from the bay tree have a unique, aromatic smell that infuses into recipes, giving them a subtle fragrant flavour

HOW TO BUY THEM Supermarkets sell the leaves both fresh and dried. The fresh ones have a lot more oomph, so if you're lucky enough to have a bay tree or bush growing in your garden, you can't get much fresher than that!

HOW TO USE THEM Add one or two (usually no more unless the recipe calls for it) to casseroles; tuck under roasting joints; add to a gravy; toss through just-cooked new potatoes; or pop on top of fish fillets before baking. They're also delicious added to sweet things – try putting a leaf in a low Syn apple crumble or rice pudding before cooking. Whether you go savoury or sweet, you'll always need a little liquid and some heat for the leaves to start releasing their flavour. And remove them before serving.



WHY RINSE RICE?

Rinsing rice before cooking removes some of the starch that makes the grains sticky. If you're just boiling and draining it, then it's not necessary, but if you're cooking rice into a pilaf or bake, rinse it really well first.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mangetout get their name because, unlike regular peas, you eat (*mange*) all (*tout*) of them – pod included!



Perfect peaks

You'll often see recipes asking for soft, medium or firm peaks, but what does that look like? Follow our steps for beautifully whisked egg whites every time



1 Carefully crack each egg in half and separate the white from the yolk. Make sure no yolk creeps into the whites, or they won't whip up properly.



2 Start whisking slowly and increase the speed gradually. Soft peaks are when the whites on the whisk droop and softly hold their shape in the bowl.



3 Keep whisking. Medium peaks are when the whites on the whisk just droop at the ends and hold their shape more strongly in the bowl.



4 Once standing to attention on the whisk and completely holding their shape in the bowl, you'll have firm peaks. Stop now to avoid overwhisking.

Wok this way!

Make your favourite Chinese dishes weight loss friendly, with a little help from Frylight



Shiitake mushroom & broccoli chow mein

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING ½



READY IN 30 minutes

250g dried medium egg noodles

Frylight

1 red onion, sliced

200g thin-stemmed broccoli, halved widthways

200g baby sweetcorn, halved lengthways

250g shiitake mushrooms, large ones halved

225g can bamboo shoots, drained and rinsed

4 spring onions, cut into thirds

FOR THE SAUCE

2 garlic cloves, crushed

3cm-piece fresh root ginger, peeled and grated

1 level tsp brown sugar

2 tsp rice vinegar

4 tbsp reduced-salt soy sauce

1 Cook the noodles following the pack instructions, then drain and rinse well under cold water. Set aside in a colander. Mix together all the sauce ingredients and set aside.

2 Spray a large, non-stick wok or frying pan with Frylight and put over a medium heat. Stir-fry the onion and broccoli for 4-5 minutes until softened and coloured. Add the corn and stir-fry for 2-3 minutes until coloured. Pop in the mushrooms, turn up the heat a little and fry for 4 minutes.

3 Add the noodles, sauce, bamboo shoots and spring onions to the pan. Stir-fry until the noodles are piping hot and the sauce has been absorbed. Divide between 4 bowls to serve.

MIX AND MATCH

If you fancy mixing things up a bit, try swapping out the shiitake for sliced skinless and boneless chicken breast, lean beef frying steak (visible fat removed), or peeled prawns. You can have fun with the veg, too. Sliced peppers, carrots, mangetout – throw in whatever you have to hand!

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step', goes the famous Chinese saying, and we agree that first move can be the start of something amazing! Step through the door of your local Slimming World group and you'll discover a world of filling recipes, plus ideas for simple swaps that can make a big difference – like switching your cooking oil for Frylight, which is Syn free when you're Food Optimising.

Whether you're baking, roasting, grilling or stir-frying, you can rely on Frylight to get all your favourite dishes going – even a takeaway-

style Chinese feast. All you need are a few Free Food ingredients, like soy sauce, plenty of stir-fry Speed Free Food veg and your pick of Frylight's six versatile varieties: Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Sunflower Oil, Butter Flavour, Coconut Oil, Rapeseed Oil and Garlic Oil.

From lemon chicken to sweet 'n' sour pork, and our sizzling shiitake chow mein (recipe right), a few sprays of Frylight is your first step to creating a fabulous on-plan fakeaway. Where will your flavour journey take you?



Frylight is the original one-calorie cooking spray and is available from most major supermarkets, subject to availability. Discover more at frylight.com



'Following the plan really boosted my motivation and focus'



Taste tester

Shaun Kay, 37, lives in Gillingham, Kent. He's a shift worker for the London Underground and a Slimming World Consultant with groups in Gillingham. Shaun has lost a total of 8st

Slimmer for summer

Dream of holidays near and far with our world food seven-day menu, designed to help you hit your weight loss goals – and feel ready to jet off for real!

See your week's menu at a glance below

Monday	BREAKFAST BERRY BRAN: pour milk from your Healthy Extra 'a' allowance over 45g bran flakes (a Healthy Extra 'b'), and top with blueberries and raspberries	LUNCH PEA & BEAN PASTA: cook dried pasta shapes following the pack instructions, adding green beans and frozen peas and broad beans for the last 3 minutes, then drain. Stir through a little fat-free vinaigrette and crumble in 45g reduced-fat Greek-style salad cheese (a Healthy Extra 'a'), if you like	DINNER Chicken tikka traybake Free SP
Tuesday	BREAKFAST OVERNIGHT OATS: the night before, mix 40g plain porridge oats (a Healthy Extra 'b') with fat-free natural yogurt, a pinch of cinnamon and blueberries. Cover and chill. In the morning, stir and top with blueberries	LUNCH COURGETTE FRITTATA: fry finely sliced courgette in low-calorie cooking spray until softened. Pour over 3 beaten eggs and season. Cook until almost set, top with 40g grated reduced-fat Cheddar (a Healthy Extra 'a'), then finish under the grill. Serve with salad leaves	DINNER Pork bolognese with spaghetti 1 Syn
Wednesday	BREAKFAST BERRY BRAN: pour milk from your Healthy Extra 'a' allowance over 45g bran flakes (a Healthy Extra 'b'), and top with blueberries and raspberries	LUNCH CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP: heat a pouch of liquid chicken stock until piping hot, with sliced mushrooms, finely chopped broccoli and cooked shredded skinless chicken breast. Pour the stock mixture over cooked dried folded or flat rice noodles and drizzle over a bit of soy sauce	DINNER Moroccan cauliflower tagine Free Vegan
Thursday	BREAKFAST BANANA TOAST: toast 2 slices wholemeal bread from a small 400g loaf (a Healthy Extra 'b'). Top with sliced banana and blueberries, and drizzle over a little honey (1 Syn per 1 level tsp)	LUNCH TUNA & POTATO SALAD: toss salad leaves with cooked green beans, halved new potatoes, drained canned tuna in spring water and fat-free vinaigrette. Top with peeled and halved hard-boiled eggs	DINNER Tofu pad thai 1½ Syns Vegan
Friday	BREAKFAST MUSHROOM OMELETTE: fry lots of finely sliced mushrooms in low-calorie cooking spray until softened. Add beaten eggs and cook until set, then fold over to serve	LUNCH JACKET & COLESLAW: prick a baking potato, then microwave or oven-cook until soft. Mix grated carrot with finely sliced cabbage and red onion. Stir in fat-free natural yogurt and a little lemon juice. Split the potato and top with 40g grated reduced-fat Cheddar (a Healthy Extra 'a') and the slaw	DINNER Diner burgers with sweet potato fries 6 Syns <i>Deduct 6 Syns if using the wholemeal roll as a Healthy Extra 'b'</i>
Saturday	BREAKFAST VEGGIE SAUSAGE SARNIE: cook frozen Slimming World Veggie Bangers (from Iceland). Halve, then sandwich between 2 slices wholemeal bread from a small 400g loaf (a Healthy Extra 'b') with sliced tomato	LUNCH HAM & RICE SALAD: toss cooked cooled dried rice with shredded lettuce, chopped cucumber, sliced celery, drained and rinsed canned chickpeas and sliced ham (visible fat removed). Dress with fat-free vinaigrette	DINNER Scandi-style salmon with creamy beetroot Free
Sunday	BREAKFAST COOKED BREKKIE: cook frozen Slimming World Veggie Bangers (from Iceland). Serve with sliced mushrooms and eggs fried in low-calorie cooking spray and piping-hot canned plum tomatoes	LUNCH PRAWN SANDWICH: mix a little lemon juice into fat-free natural fromage frais, then stir through cooked peeled small prawns and sprinkle with smoked paprika. Sandwich between 2 slices wholemeal bread from a small 400g loaf (a Healthy Extra 'b') with sliced cucumber and salad leaves	DINNER No-fuss roast chicken 1½ Syns

SNACKS & TREATS ● Corn on the cob, FREE ● Fresh grapefruit, FREE ● Seafood sticks, FREE ● Pickled cornichons, FREE ● Quorn Cocktail Sausages, chilled, ½ Syn each ● Marshmallows, 1 Syn each ● Olives in brine, 1½ Syns for 8 ● Cheese twists, 2 Syns each ● Pimms (25ml) and diet lemonade, 2 Syns ● Ice-cream sauce, 2½ Syns per 1 level tbsp ● Fruit-flavour ice lolly, 3 Syns ● Chocolate digestive biscuit, 4 Syns ● Bacon-flavour snacks, 4½ Syns per 18g bag ● Crumpet, 5 Syns ● Popcorn, ready-made sweet or salted, 5½ Syns per 25g ● Rosé wine, 6 Syns per 125ml glass



Your introduction to Food Optimising

Fill up on Free Food

The power of Slimming World's unique eating plan lies in Free Food. These are the foods you can enjoy in unlimited amounts, with no weighing, counting or measuring – ever! Based on the science of energy density and satiety (how filling a food is), Free Foods fill you up for fewer calories. So by basing your meals around Free Food, you're naturally limiting your calorie intake, meaning you lose weight without feeling hungry. Free Food includes lean meat, poultry, fish, plain Quorn and plain tofu, eggs, pasta, potatoes, pulses, and fresh fruit and veg. There are more than 350 to choose from, so you can personalise Food Optimising to suit your taste, lifestyle and dietary needs. Some Free Food has the bonus of being Speed Free Food – fruit and veg that are super-low in calories – so for the best results, include at least a third of a plate at every meal, where it makes sense.

Add in Healthy Extras

To support your calcium intake, you can enjoy two measured portions of milk or cheese each day – your Healthy Extra 'a' choices. Options include 350ml skimmed milk or 250ml semi-skimmed milk, 400ml plain unsweetened almond or soya drink with added calcium, 40g reduced-fat or 30g full-fat hard

cheese, and 40g Daiya Medium Cheddar Style Farmhouse Block or Koko Dairy Free Alternative to Cheddar. For fibre and other nutrients, also add one portion of wholemeal bread or high-fibre cereal each day, your Healthy Extra 'b' choice. To keep things simple, we've built your Healthy Extra 'b' into the menu plan each day.

Choose your Syns

Foods and drinks that pose a risk to your weight loss – those high in fat or sugar, as well as alcohol – can be enjoyed as carefully counted Syns. We recommend you plan 5 to 15 Syns into your day (see the bottom of page 59 for ideas).

Make simple swaps

To help protect your weight loss, choose the leanest meat and trim off any visible fat, such as the white bits off bacon, and remove skin from poultry. Dry-fry mince, fry veg with water, and use low-calorie cooking spray rather than fat or oil. Swap cream and crème fraîche for fat-free natural yogurt, plain quark, or plain unsweetened soya yogurt with added calcium. You can choose to swap sugar for sweetener, or count sugar as Syns. So that's Food Optimising in a nutshell. You'll find more info in your Food Optimising book. Here's to a great weight loss week!

EASY INDIAN FLAVOURS



Monday

Chicken tikka traybake

SUPER SIMPLE

SERVES 4

Free

SP

READY IN 50 minutes

3 peppers, mixed colours, deseeded and sliced into thick wedges

2 red onions, sliced into wedges

1 head of broccoli, chopped into florets, stalk chopped into bite-size pieces

Low-calorie cooking spray

4 skinless and boneless chicken breasts

2 tbsp tikka curry powder (see Cook's notes on p41)

400g can chickpeas, drained and rinsed

200g spinach

1 lemon, zested, then cut into wedges

100g fat-free natural Greek yogurt, to serve

1 Preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Spread the peppers, onions and broccoli in a large, non-stick roasting tin. Spray with cooking spray and roast for 15 minutes.

2 Put the chicken and curry powder in a mixing bowl, spritz with cooking spray and toss together so the chicken is evenly coated in the curry powder. After the veg have been roasting for 15 minutes, nestle the chicken into the veg and put back in the oven for 20 minutes.

3 When the time's up, scatter the chickpeas around the chicken in the tin, then lay the spinach on top, trying not to cover the chicken. Return to the oven for 5 minutes until the spinach is starting to wilt.

4 Take the tin out of the oven and gently stir the spinach and chickpeas. Scatter over the lemon zest, then divide the traybake between 4 plates. Serve with lemon wedges and the yogurt on the side for dolloping over.

SCAN & SHOP

SCAN TO FIND YOUR WEEK'S SHOPPING LIST

OPEN YOUR PHONE'S CAMERA



SCAN YOUR QR CODE



ACCESS YOUR SHOPPING LIST



YOUR QR CODE

Tuesday

Pork bolognese with spaghetti

SUPER SIMPLE**SERVES 4****SYNS PER SERVING 1****READY IN 45 minutes**

Low-calorie cooking spray

1 red onion, finely chopped

2 carrots, finely chopped

500g lean pork mince (5% fat or less)

2 garlic cloves, crushed

2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes

1 chicken stock cube

400g dried spaghetti

10g fresh basil leaves, to serve

20g fresh Parmesan, grated

1 Spray a large, wide, non-stick saucepan with cooking spray and put over a medium heat. Fry the onion and carrots for 5-6 minutes until softened. Turn up the heat and add the mince, breaking it up with a wooden spoon. Fry for 4-5 minutes until browned, then turn the heat back down to medium. Drain off any liquid, then add the garlic and fry for a further 2 minutes.

2 Stir in the chopped tomatoes with a can of water and crumble in the stock cube. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook for 20 minutes, stirring often, until the sauce is rich and thickened.

3 When the sauce has around 10 minutes to go, boil the spaghetti following the pack instructions, then drain and return to the pan. Tip in the sauce and toss together for a minute. Divide between 4 plates. Scatter with basil leaves, add a twist of black pepper and divide over the Parmesan.



PACKED FULL OF VEGGIE GOODNESS

Wednesday

Moroccan cauliflower tagine

SUPER SIMPLE**SERVES 4**

Free

Vegan

READY IN 55 minutes

2 medium heads of cauliflower, trimmed, chopped into large chunks and stalks roughly chopped (keeping the leaves)

Low-calorie cooking spray

1 red onion, finely sliced

2 garlic cloves, crushed

1 tbsp ras el hanout (see *Cook's notes* on p41)

2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes

400g can chickpeas, drained and rinsed

250g dried basmati rice, to serve

320g spinach

1 Preheat your oven to 220°C/fan 200°C/gas 7. Spread the cauliflower (including the leaves and stalks) over 1 or 2 non-stick baking trays – the pieces shouldn't be crowded, so that everything cooks evenly – and spray with cooking spray. Roast for 30 minutes until charred on the tips, but still with some bite.

2 At the same time, spray a wide, lidded, non-stick frying pan with cooking spray and put over a medium heat. Fry the onion for 8-10 minutes, stirring often. Add the garlic and ras el hanout with a splash of water, and fry for 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes with 2 cans of water and bring to a simmer. Add the chickpeas and simmer gently for 10-15 minutes until the sauce has reduced and thickened. Season well. Cook the rice following the pack instructions while the sauce finishes simmering. Drain and keep warm until ready to serve.

3 Once the cauliflower is cooked, gently stir it through the sauce with the spinach, trying not to break up the florets too much. Cover with the lid and allow the spinach to wilt for 4-5 minutes. Divide the rice and tagine between 4 bowls and serve.

FAMILY- PLEASING ITALIAN

**SPICE TRAIL**

Ras el hanout is a Moroccan spice mix with a gentle, warming flavour. Find it in the spice section of larger supermarkets

Thursday

Tofu pad thai

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING 1½

Vegan

READY IN 30 minutes

300g plain silken tofu

200g dried folded or flat rice noodles

Low-calorie cooking spray

3 medium carrots, shredded

1 red onion, finely sliced

1 bunch of spring onions, sliced into thirds, leaving the bottom two-thirds whole, then slicing the green tops

3 tbsp soy sauce

3 garlic cloves, crushed

300g bean sprouts

2 limes, 1 juiced, 1 cut into wedges

20g unsalted roasted peanuts, finely chopped

50g fresh coriander, roughly chopped

1 Carefully remove the tofu from its pack, wrap in several layers of kitchen paper and leave to drain on a plate until needed – this will firm it up. Boil the noodles in plenty of water for 8-10 minutes until just tender. Rinse in a colander under warm water for 2 minutes, before rinsing under cold for another 2 minutes (this washes off the starch and stops them sticking together). Leave in the colander to drain.

2 Spray a large, non-stick wok with cooking spray and put over a medium-high heat. Stir-fry the carrots, red onion and whole bits of the spring onions for 5-6 minutes until softened and starting to colour. While these are cooking, mix together the soy sauce and garlic.

3 Once the veg are softened, turn the heat up to high, wait until it's all sizzling loudly, then tip in the tofu, noodles and sauce. Stir-fry everything together for 3-4 minutes, breaking up the tofu. Add the bean sprouts and stir-fry for 2 minutes more, then add the lime juice, peanuts, coriander and sliced spring onions. Toss for a final minute, then divide between 4 bowls and serve with the lime wedges.



YAY FOR THE USA!

Friday

Diner burgers with sweet potato fries

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING 6

Deduct 6 Syns if using the wholemeal roll as a Healthy Extra

READY IN 50 minutes

1kg sweet potatoes, cut into thick fries

Low-calorie cooking spray

500g lean beef mince (5% fat or less)

1 tsp dried oregano

1 tsp mustard powder

4 x 60g wholemeal rolls, split and toasted

1 red onion, finely sliced into rings

1 large tomato, sliced

2 gherkins, sliced

100g salad leaves, to serve

1 Preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Spread the fries on a large, non-stick baking tray in a single layer and spray with cooking spray. Season and bake the fries for 40 minutes, turning halfway.

2 For the burgers, put the mince and oregano in a bowl, and season. Mix together using your hands and shape into 4 patties. Spray a large, lidded, non-stick frying pan with cooking spray and put over a medium-high heat. Fry the patties for 3 minutes on the first side, then flip over and fry for a further minute. Turn the heat up to high, splash in 2 tbsp water and cover straight away with the lid. Cook for 1 minute, then turn off the heat and leave the burgers to rest – this steams them so they stay lovely and juicy.

3 Mix the mustard powder with water following the pack instructions. Spread over the bases of the rolls, then fill them with the onion, burgers, tomato and gherkins. Serve with the fries and salad.



A TASTE OF ASIA IN 30 MINUTES!

Saturday

Scandi-style salmon with creamy beetroot

SUPER SIMPLE**SERVES 4**

Free

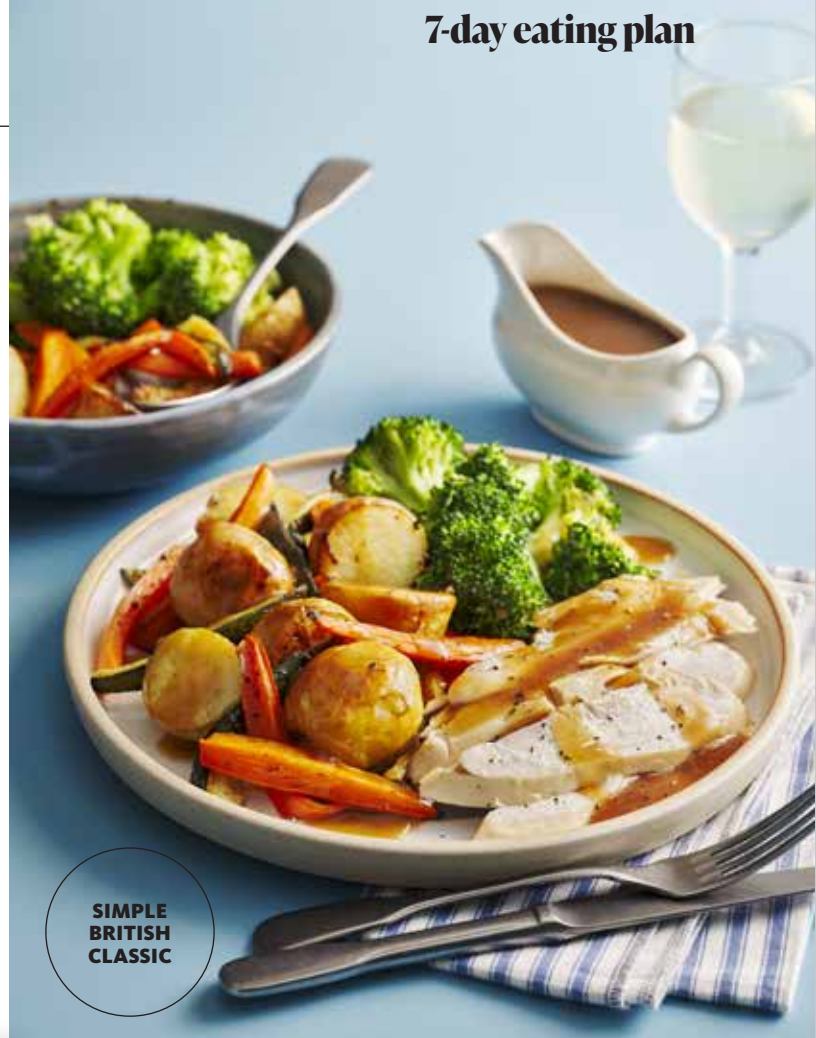
READY IN 30 minutes**1kg new potatoes, halved if large****200g green beans, trimmed****4 skinless and boneless salmon fillets****500g ready-cooked plain whole beetroot****60g fat-free natural Greek yogurt, at room temperature****20g fresh dill, roughly chopped****1 lemon, cut into wedges, to serve**

1 Put the potatoes on to boil for 15-20 minutes, or until tender, adding the beans for the last 3-4 minutes.

When the veg have 5-10 minutes left, preheat your grill to high. Lay the salmon out over a foil-lined baking tray. Grill for 5-6 minutes until golden on top and just cooked through.

2 Once the salmon's under the grill, tip the beetroot and any juices into a saucepan, then cut it into cubes in the pan using a cutlery knife – this limits the mess. Put over a low heat and warm through until steaming. Move to a bowl using a slotted spoon, then stir through the yogurt and most of the dill. Season well.

3 Drain the potatoes and beans, then divide between 4 plates with the salmon and beetroot. Scatter over the remaining dill, add a twist of black pepper and serve with lemon wedges.

SIMPLE
BRITISH
CLASSIC

Sunday

No-fuss roast chicken

SUPER SIMPLE**SERVES 4****SYNS PER SERVING 1½****READY IN 1 hour****40 minutes****1.8kg whole chicken, legs untied****1 lemon****1kg new potatoes, halved if large****4 medium carrots, chopped into batons****4 medium courgettes, chopped into bite-size pieces****Low-calorie cooking spray****1 head of broccoli, chopped into florets, stalk chopped into bite-size pieces****2 level tbsp chicken gravy granules**

1 Preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Put the chicken in a non-stick roasting tin and push the lemon into the cavity. Season well and roast for 1 hour, or until the juices run clear when you insert a skewer into the thickest part of the breast.

2 When the chicken's in the oven, spread the potatoes, carrots and courgettes on a large, non-stick baking tray. Spray with cooking spray and season. Add to the oven for the final 30 minutes of the chicken's cooking time, on the shelf below.

3 Remove the chicken from the oven. Cover with clingfilm and leave to rest until ready to serve. Turn the veg and put back in the oven for another 30 minutes.

4 When the veg are nearly ready, boil the broccoli for 3-4 minutes, then drain. Make up the gravy following the pack instructions. Carve the chicken, discarding the lemon, skin and any visible fat. Divide everything between 4 plates and season with black pepper.

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FOOD *news*

WE'VE SEARCHED THE SHELVES TO BRING YOU THREE PAGES OF TASTY INSPIRATION



MAKE IT VEGGIE
Swap the steak for 8 sliced portobello mushrooms cooked for 8-10 minutes



Italian steak salad with crushed roasties

Free

To serve 4, preheat your oven to 220°C/fan 200°C/gas 7. Put **750g baby potatoes** in a non-stick roasting tin and spray with **low-calorie cooking spray**. Roast for 40 minutes, or until golden, turning halfway. While they're in the oven, boil **400g trimmed green beans** for 5 minutes

until tender. Drain, run under cold water and set aside. Season **2 large lean rump steaks** (visible fat removed). Put a large, non-stick frying pan over a high heat. When it's smoking hot, cook the steaks for 4-5 minutes on each side for medium to medium-well done. Move them to

a plate to rest. Slightly split the potatoes with the back of a fork or a masher, then arrange in a serving dish with the beans and **140g rocket**. Slice the steaks and place on top. Add a twist of black pepper and squeeze over the **juice of 1-2 lemons**. Serve with extra **lemon wedges**.

Rice, rice, baby

Marmite lovers, these are for you! Each rice cake, coated with the savoury spread, makes for a tasty, low Syn snack. Or top them with fat-free natural cottage cheese or plain quark to turn them into a more substantial between-meals filler.



Marmite Rice Cakes, 1½ Syns each; £2 for 110g, most major supermarkets

Spice it up

Based on chimichurri rojo, a fiery sauce from Argentina, this tongue-tlingling Syn free spice mix turns up the dial with jalapeños and paprika. Scatter on your steak before cooking for an extra kick – try it in our steak recipe above!



Capsicana Latin Flavour Argentinian Sizzling Steak Garlic & Paprika Seasoning Mix, Free £1.35 for 28g, Ocado, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose & Partners



La Famiglia Rana Fresh Pappardelle, Free £2.25 for 300g, Morrisons

Heck 60/40 Chicken, Red Pepper & Feta Chipolatas, ½ Syn each; £3 for 340g, Tesco



TOP SPOTS

We've suggested a few best buys for a delicious week on plan!



M&S Food Maple Syrup Flavour Porridge Sachets, 1 x 36g sachet is a Healthy Extra 'b'; £2.90 for 10 sachets, M&S and Ocado



Slimming World Hunter's Chicken, Free £4.50 for 430g, Iceland



Asda BBQ Beans Micro Grain, 2 Syns per pouch; £1.20 for 250g

You'll find these products in the freezer cabinets – look out for the symbol across the Food news pages



Maïke Engelhardt, Dorset 'I love a Greek salad with a Healthy Extra portion of feta cheese, olives in brine (1½ Syns for 8 olives) and a balsamic glaze (1½ Syns per level tbsp). It gives me a real taste of the Med!'



Ann-Marie Boucher, Cornwall 'For my prawn linguine, I fry onions, chilli and garlic, add passata and prawns until cooked, then toss through the pasta!'

YOUR MAKES!

The quick fixes and genius food tips you love – share yours on Instagram #SWMMagazineMakes

Louise Mcdowell, County Down 'I pop potatoes in the air fryer, fry onion, tomatoes, mushrooms and an egg, add baked beans and scatter over coriander for a great brekkie.'



Chloe Coupe, Kent 'For a super-quick burger in a bowl, cook lean beef mince and top with salad, gherkins, Healthy Extra cheese and burger sauce (2 Syns per level tbsp).'



Kate Fife, Tyne and Wear 'I top a Healthy Extra wholemeal muffin with tomato purée, mushrooms, ham and Healthy Extra cheese to make mini pizzas, and have with a salad.'

Three ways to eat: pak choi

Also known as bok choy, this tasty Speed Free Food is versatile and quick to cook

- For a veg-packed soup, separate the stalks from the leaves and finely slice the stalks. Fry with sliced red pepper and broccoli florets, crushed garlic and grated fresh root ginger for 3 minutes. Add enough vegetable or chicken stock to cover, bring to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes until the veg are tender. Wilt in the pak choi leaves, add soy sauce and lime juice to taste, and serve scattered with finely chopped chilli.
- Shred raw pak choi and toss with finely sliced deseeded cucumber, grated fresh root ginger, soy sauce, rice vinegar and

finely sliced garlic. Serve with cooked dried sticky rice and a fried egg for a quick lunch.

- Stir-fry quartered pak choi and thin-stemmed broccoli until tender. Add cooked dried noodles and raw king prawns, and stir-fry with a splash of oyster sauce until the prawns are pink and cooked through. Serve scattered with roughly chopped spring onions and lime wedges.



TOP TIP
Cook pak choi stalks with your bag of stir-fry veg, but keep the leaves to wilt in at the end



'Meatballs with a spicy Moroccan twist'

Asda Smoky Spiced Harissa Lamb Meatballs, 1 Syn per meatball; £3.20 for 340g

Catch on

Give summer salads and pasta dishes a no-fuss upgrade with these ready-to-eat king prawns. They come coated in a tasty garlic and parsley marinade, so you can just toss them into your dish and enjoy!



QUICK FIX

Sainsbury's Garlic & Parsley King Prawns, 1 Syn per pack; £3.75 for 150g



100% True Italian for Over 160 Years!



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Enjoy Cirio, an iconic tomato brand in Italy, beloved in more than 80 countries around the world.



BIT ON THE SIDE

TRIED & TASTED

Our testers' pick of super sauces to bring out at the BBQ...



1

1 Blue Dragon Reduced Sugar Sweet Chilli Sauce, 1 Syn per 1 level tbsp; £2.80 for 350g, most major supermarkets

Our taste testers couldn't tell the difference between this and the full-sugar version. They liked the mix of warmth and sweetness, and said it would be great over chicken.

2 Hellmann's Parmesan & Roasted Garlic Flavour Sauce, 1½ Syns per 1 level tbsp; £2.60 for 250ml, Asda

Given its kick of savoury, Parmesan-style cheese flavour and rich, creamy texture, this surprised our taste team by being suitable for vegans.

2

3 Levi Roots Original Reggae Jerk BBQ Sauce, 1 Syn per 1 level tbsp; £2.30 for 330g, Asda, Ocado and Sainsbury's

The spice in this sauce (from Scotch bonnet chillies) creeps up on you – which surprised some of our testers! They enjoyed both the heat and the flavour, but recommended using sparingly.

4 Heinz Classic Curry Sauce, 1 Syn per 1 level tbsp; £2 for 375ml, most major supermarkets

Milder than our testers had expected, the flavour was compared to a chip-shop curry sauce. They reckon it would go well with Slimming World chips!

3

4



Main attraction

For a meat-free roast with the most, this vegan joint is ready-stuffed.

Simply cook, slice and enjoy with lots of veg and spuds roasted in low-calorie cooking spray.

Sainsbury's Plant Pioneers Meat Free Chicken Flavoured Roasting Joint with a Sage & Onion Stuffing, 3½ Syns per pack; £3.50 for 280g

Great for people who are lactose intolerant, this tasty Cheddar is a Healthy Extra 'a'

Cathedral City Our Lactose Free cheese, 30g is a Healthy Extra 'a'; £2.80 for 200g, most major supermarkets



Salad days

Toss with fat-free dressing and serve on the side – this colourful mix of Speed Free Food veg is a feast for the eyes!

Tesco Rainbow Salad, £3 for 295g

Find the Syn values of all advertised products here

Each issue, we round up all the Syns for products featured on the food adverts, so you can be sure they'll fit smoothly into your Food Optimising week

- **Bannisters**, 4 Hasselback Baked Potatoes, ½ Syn per potato (without butter).
- **Belle & Co.**, Alcohol Free Sparkling Rosé and Sparkling wine, both 1½ Syns per 125ml glass.
- **Black Tower B**, Rosé and White wine (5.5% ABV), both 4 Syns per 175ml glass.
- **Cirio**, Passata Rustica, Pelati and Polpa, all Free.
- **Finn Crisp**, Original Sourdough Rye Thins, 6 thins count as a Healthy Extra 'b' or 1 Syn per thin.
- **Hartley's**, 10 Cal Strawberry Flavour Jelly, ½ Syn per 175g pot.
- **Heck**, Sweet Chilli Chicken chipolatas, ½ Syn per chipolata.

- **Hi-fi**, Lemon Drizzle, 2 bars count as a Healthy Extra 'b' or 3 Syns per bar, available in Slimming World groups and to our online members.
- **Kingsmill**, No Crusts Wholemeal bread, 3 slices count as a Healthy Extra 'b' or 2 Syns per slice.
- **Mug Shot**, Chicken & Sweetcorn Noodles, 1½ Syns per 54g sachet; Roast Chicken Pasta, 2 Syns per 55g sachet; Creamy Cheese Pasta, 3½ Syns per 68g sachet; Tomato & Herb Pasta (classic recipe), 3½ Syns per 64g sachet.
- **New York Bakery Co.**, Soft Seeded Bagel Thins, 1 bagel thin counts as a Healthy Extra 'b' or 6½ Syns.

- **Primula**, Cheese 'n' Chives, 55g counts as a Healthy Extra 'a' or 6 Syns; Cheese 'n' Ham, 60g counts as a Healthy Extra 'a' or 6 Syns; Cheese 'n' Prawns, 60g counts as a Healthy Extra 'a' or 6 Syns.
- **Riso Gallo**, My Risotto Perfetto, all dried, Porcini Mushroom and Saffron, both 1 Syn per 175g pack; Four Cheese, 2½ Syns per 175g pack.
- **Shloer**, Zero, Red Grape and White Grape Sparkling Zero Calorie Fruit Drink, both Free.
- **Slimming World**, Balti Beef Burgers; Beef Koftas; Soy, Garlic & Ginger Chicken Skewers; Veggie Bangers. All Free, from Iceland.
- **Soreen**, Lunchbox Loaves, Apple, Original Malt, and

Strawberry, all 4½ Syns; Banana, 5 Syns.

- **Sweet Freedom**, Caramel Syrup, Fruit Syrup and Golden Syrup, all ½ Syn per level tsp.
- **Yeo Valley**, Organic 0% Fat Super Thick Creamy Yogurt Natural, Free.

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Easy squeezy

Giving your dishes a tasty hit of cheese is a doddle with the delicious Primula range

When you pick up a tube of Primula's comfortingly creamy cheese, you're in for a real treat. Not only are the tubes squeezy easy to use, Primula is a source of calcium and protein and fits beautifully into your Food Optimising day.

With so many tasty varieties to choose from, there's an option for every cheese lover. In addition to Primula Original Cheese, there's Cheese 'n' Ham, made with real ham pieces (both are a Healthy Extra 'a' or 6 Syns when you use 60g), and Cheese 'n' Chives – a classic combo using real chopped chives (55g is a Healthy Extra 'a' or 6 Syns). And last but not least, there's

Primula cheese tubes are squeezy easy to use – and there's a variety for every cheese lover

Primula Light Cheese, which has all the same flavour with 40 per cent less fat (70g is a Healthy Extra 'a' or 6 Syns).

Primula Original Cheese is perfect for sandwich fillings or in a fluffy jacket potato, or you can get creative with the other Primula varieties. A squeeze of Primula Light tastes fab with salmon kebabs, and makes the flavour go further as a pasta sauce. Cheese 'n' Ham is a great topping for a cauliflower or pitta pizza, and Cheese 'n' Chives is lush melted over a juicy lean steak served with golden Slimming World chips... Whichever way you use your tube, Primula's fab flavours will excite your taste buds all week long!

LOVE TO
share

Spreading the joy with every squeeze...

Primula loves to share, and that's why all profits from the sales of its cheese are shared among charities and good causes, in the UK and overseas, through its owner, the Kavli Trust.

Primula Cheese is available from major supermarkets, £1.85 RRP for a 140g tube. For more information, visit primula.co.uk



all fingers and yums!

If this issue of *Slimming World Magazine* has you dreaming of far-flung flavours and balmy evenings eating alfresco, the Slimming World food range has four new treats in store. Our Middle Eastern-inspired beef koftas, Indian-spiced balti beef burgers, succulent soy, garlic & ginger chicken skewers and jumbo veggie bangers are all deliciously satisfying and super-speedy to prepare, from the comfort of your own kitchen. Simply gather your gang, whip up a Syn free slaw and serve!



soy, garlic & ginger chicken skewers



balti beef burgers



shop online at iceland.co.uk,
with free delivery when you
spend over £40



Serving suggestion. The full Slimming World range may not be available in smaller Iceland stores. Please check with your local store for more details. All stock is subject to availability. Minimum order of £25 required to use online order and delivery service. Additional £3 delivery charge payable on orders £25 to £39.99. Free delivery for orders over £40. Delivery address must be within the delivery catchment area. Delivery slots subject to availability. Customers must register online to use the service. Terms and conditions apply, see iceland.co.uk/terms for full details.

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THIN
SO YOU CAN
FILL 'EM IN



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COOK THE BOOK

Posh
porcini &
cherry
tomato
risotto,
recipe p74

Seize the tray!

If you fancy all of the flavour with less of the washing-up, every tasty recipe in the brand-new *Slimming World Tray-mendous!* cookbook uses just one dish

PHOTOGRAPHS: GARETH MORGANS

Posh porcini & cherry tomato risotto

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 2

Free

Vegan

READY IN 1 hour

30g dried porcini mushrooms

1 red onion, finely chopped

Low-calorie cooking spray

250g dried arborio rice

1 litre hot vegetable stock, suitable for vegans

250g cherry tomatoes (a mix of colours), brought to room temperature and halved

Small bag of rocket

1 First up, set your oven to 180°C/fan 160°C/gas 4. Tip the mushrooms into a bowl, cover with 200ml just-boiled water and leave to soak for 10 minutes. Drain the mushrooms, reserving the liquid, then roughly chop and set aside.

2 While the mushrooms are soaking, scatter the onion into a medium (about 30 x 20cm), non-stick roasting tin or baking tray, spray with cooking spray and season lightly. Stick the tin in the oven for 8 minutes.

3 Add the rice to the tin along with the mushrooms, strained mushroom liquid and stock. Bake for 45 minutes, or until cooked to your liking, giving it a good stir halfway through.

4 Take the tin out of the oven and give everything another good stir. Check the seasoning and toss through the tomatoes and rocket. If you don't need this to be vegan, a little grated fresh Parmesan or vegetarian Parmesan-style alternative will make a delicious final flourish (1 level tbsps is 1 Syn).

“Using just one tray means all the flavours blend deliciously while they’re cooking in the oven”



Sticky roast pork

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 2

SYNS PER SERVING 1½

SP

READY IN 50 minutes

500g frozen butternut squash chunks (or ½ large squash, peeled, deseeded and cut into chunks)

1 large red pepper, deseeded and cut into chunks

1 large red onion, roughly chopped

1 tsp garlic granules

Low-calorie cooking spray

2 tbsps tomato purée

2 level tbsps mango chutney

1 lean pork tenderloin (about 300-400g), visible fat removed

Small bag of watercress, to serve

Fat-free natural Greek yogurt sprinkled with black pepper, to serve

1 Put the oven on at 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Put the squash, red pepper and onion in a medium (about 30 x 20cm), non-stick roasting tin or ovenproof dish, sprinkle over the garlic granules and spray with cooking spray.

2 In a small bowl, mix the tomato purée and mango chutney. Brush this marinade all over the pork, then stick the pork on top of the vegetables and roast for 30-35 minutes, or until the pork's cooked through.

3 Take the tin out of the oven and set the pork aside on a plate to rest, loosely covered with foil. Return the veg to the oven for 5-10 minutes, or until lightly charred. Slice the pork and return to the tin. Scatter over the watercress and divide everything between 2 plates. Drizzle over the yogurt and add a twist of black pepper.

Portuguese peri-peri chicken

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 2
SYNS PER SERVING ½
READY IN 50 minutes

2 large sweet potatoes, cut into wedges
4 sweetcorn cobs (or 2 corn on the cob, halved)
Low-calorie cooking spray
2 skinless and boneless chicken breasts
2 level tsp peri-peri seasoning

FOR THE SALSA

2 tomatoes, finely chopped
1 small red onion, finely chopped
15g fresh coriander, finely chopped, plus sprigs to serve
Juice of ½ lime, plus slices or wedges to serve

1 Set your oven to 220°C/fan 200°C/gas 7. Put the sweet potato wedges in a medium (about 30 x 20cm), non-stick roasting tin or baking tray. Stand the cobs on a board and, using a sharp knife, carefully halve each cob lengthways, then halve each lengthways again to make 4 quarters – you should have 16 ribs in total. Add them to the sweet potatoes, spray everything with cooking spray and roast for 20 minutes.

2 While they're cooking, put the chicken breasts on a board. Cut lengthways from the thickest sides almost all the way through horizontally, so they open up like butterflies. Evenly sprinkle with the peri-peri seasoning and set aside. ('Butterflying' helps the chicken cook quicker and capture even more of the fiery spice.) Add the chicken to the tin and roast for a further 15-20 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through and the vegetables are tender.

3 While you're waiting, mix the salsa ingredients in a small bowl and season to taste. When everything's ready, spoon the salsa around the tin. Divide between 2 plates and serve with the lime slices or wedges, coriander sprigs and a big salad.

IF YOU LIKE THESE RECIPES...

...you'll love the new *Slimming World Tray-mendous!* cookbook, jam-packed with more than 60 Free and low Syn one-tray recipes, all simple and super filling. Ideas include brilliant brekkies and brunches, comforting classics, and date-night specials ● Group members will receive a free copy when they buy a six- or 12-week

Countdown course or Countdown extension from 28 May to 17 June ● From 28 May to 17 June, new Slimming World Online members who sign up to a Gold or Silver package, and those who resubscribe for three months or more, will receive a free copy ● On sale in Slimming World groups and to online members 18 June, £4.95/€7.95 RRP.



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“I’m so proud to be part of Slimming World’s life-changing team”

Vanessa was a senior training manager for a charity when she joined Slimming World as a member in 2014. She went on to lose just over 2st, before becoming the District Manager for Hampshire and West Sussex.

“Whether I’m running training sessions for my team, supporting our self-employed Consultants in their groups, recruiting new people to the team, or driving up to our Derbyshire Head Office for meetings, every day is different. It’s hard work, but there’s nothing more satisfying than helping a member achieve their weight loss dreams, or working with a Consultant to develop their business. It’s a unique role where I can combine a fulfilling, challenging management position with genuinely helping people to transform their lives.”

Slimming[®]
—WORLD—

touching hearts, changing lives

Destination desserts



*“These rose-scented puddings
are a refreshing way to finish
a meal on a summer’s day”*

Would you prefer coffee jellies in Japan, or meringue-studded frozen yogurt in Italy? Our flavour-packed puds will take your taste buds on a delicious four-stop trip around the world

PHOTOGRAPHS: MYLES NEW



Middle Eastern rose creams

You'll be transported to a sun-dappled cafe with these pretty-in-pink desserts

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 6

SYNS PER SERVING 5



READY IN 20 minutes, plus setting

50g cornflour

700ml skimmed milk

2 level tbsp caster sugar

1 tsp rose water

Few drops of pink food colouring

Low-calorie cooking spray

125g fresh raspberries, to decorate (optional)

Fresh rose petals, to decorate (optional)

10g roasted pistachios (shelled), finely chopped

YOU'LL ALSO NEED

6 x 125ml moulds

1 Put the cornflour in a bowl and whisk in 100ml milk until smooth. Put the rest of the milk in a non-stick saucepan, gently heat until steaming, pour into the cornflour mixture and stir well. Pour it all back into the pan and add the sugar. Cook over a medium heat for 3-4 minutes, stirring, until thick and glossy, then add the rose water and food colouring.

2 Lightly spray the moulds with cooking spray, then divide the milk mixture between them. Leave to set in the fridge for at least 3 hours and up to 48 hours.

3 Gently turn the creams out onto 6 plates. Decorate with the raspberries and petals (if using), divide over the pistachios and serve.

Japanese coffee jellies

Simple to make, elegant and sure to impress coffee lovers everywhere

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 6

SYNS PER SERVING 2½

READY IN 20 minutes, plus cooling and setting

1½ x 12g sachets powdered gelatine

800ml hot strong coffee

1 tsp vanilla extract

75g caster sugar

180g fat-free natural yogurt

YOU'LL ALSO NEED

18cm square cake tin

1 Put 100ml cold water in a bowl. Sprinkle the gelatine over the surface and leave to soak for 10 minutes. Add the coffee, vanilla extract and 60g sugar, and stir until the sugar has dissolved.

2 Line the cake tin with clingfilm and pour in the coffee mixture. Allow to cool, then leave to set in the fridge for at least 3 hours and up to 48 hours.

3 Gently turn out the jelly onto a board and peel off the clingfilm. Cut it into 4 squares, then cut each square into 9 cubes, so you have 36 cubes in total. Divide them between 6 glasses or bowls. Stir the rest of the sugar into the yogurt, then evenly drizzle it over the jellies. Serve straight away.

*“With a unique
bittersweet taste and
strong caffeine kick,
these stylish desserts
are perfect for lunch
with friends”*



Italian berry & meringue semifreddo

This indulgent, fruity alternative to ice cream is so cooling on a hot day

A LITTLE EFFORT

SERVES 6

SYNS PER SERVING 2½



READY IN 35 minutes, plus freezing

3 medium eggs, separated*

50g caster sugar

1 tsp vanilla extract

300g fat-free natural Greek yogurt

2 plain meringue nests, crumbled

300g fresh ripe strawberries, hulled, then 200g chopped and 100g halved or quartered

200g fresh ripe, or defrosted or partially defrosted frozen cherries, 125g roughly chopped

YOU'LL ALSO NEED

900g loaf tin

1 Line the loaf tin with clingfilm. In a bowl, whisk the egg yolks and sugar with an electric hand whisk for 2-3 minutes until really light and fluffy. Add the vanilla extract, then fold in the yogurt.

2 Beat the egg whites in a clean, glass bowl with a clean hand whisk until stiff and glossy looking (see p56 for how to get perfect peaks). Gently fold the whites into the yogurt mixture a third at a time using a metal spoon, being careful not to knock out any of the air.

3 Drop in the meringue and chopped fruit, and gently stir. Spoon into the loaf tin and freeze for at least 3 hours, or overnight.

4 Take out of the freezer and leave to stand for 15 minutes before you're ready to eat. Gently turn out onto a serving plate and peel off the clingfilm. Decorate with the leftover fruit, and cut into 6 equal slices to serve.

**Pregnant women, the elderly, babies and toddlers are advised not to eat raw or partially cooked eggs, unless eating eggs showing the British Lion stamp*





American Key lime pie

Originating in the sunny Florida Keys, this zingy centrepiece is spot on for summer

A LITTLE EFFORT

SERVES 8

SYNS PER SERVING 4½

READY IN 40 minutes, plus setting

10 reduced-fat rich tea biscuits

60g low-fat spread

2 tsp ground ginger

12g sachet powdered gelatine

500g fat-free natural Greek yogurt

4 level tbsp sweetener granules

150g plain light soft cheese

Zest of 3 limes and juice of 2

8 squirts of squirty cream (4 level tbsp)

YOU'LL ALSO NEED

20cm round loose-bottomed cake tin

1 Line the cake tin with baking paper. Pop the biscuits in a food bag, seal, then bash with a rolling pin to make crumbs (or blitz in a food processor). Melt the spread in a non-stick saucepan over a low heat, then stir in the biscuits and ginger. Tip the biscuit mix into the cake tin, then press down and smooth over with the back of a spoon. Chill in the fridge until you're ready to assemble.

2 Put 75ml cold water in a small saucepan and sprinkle over the gelatine. Leave to soak for 10 minutes.

3 While it's soaking, put the yogurt, sweetener, soft cheese, two-thirds of the lime zest and all the juice in a bowl. Beat with an electric hand whisk until smooth.

4 After the gelatine's been soaking for 10 minutes, tip the mixture into a small, non-stick saucepan and gently melt over a low heat. Stir it into the soft cheese mixture, then spread it over the base. Leave to set in the fridge for at least 3 hours, or overnight.

5 Top the pie with the leftover lime zest and add 8 squirts (½ level tbsp each) of cream, evenly spaced out around the edge. Cut into 8 equal slices (each with a blob of cream) and serve.

LOOKING FOR A HEALTHIER OPTION? PIECE OF CAKE.



Banana



Malt

Strawberry

Apple

50%
less sugar
than the average
cake bar*

**Low in
saturated
fat**

**Source
of
fibre**

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*To compare our nutritional values visit www.soreen.com/nutritionals

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delilah Beautiful Brows Collection

ABOUT YOUR BONUS GIFT

The first 50 readers to subscribe to the print edition will receive a Beautiful Brows Brow Line and Brow Shape duo from cruelty-free make-up brand delilah, RRP £40. With a retractable eyebrow pencil and a firm, built-in brush, the Brow Line is perfect for precise but natural-looking definition, while the smudge-proof Brow Shape tinted gel allows you to shape and fill in one easy step – simply choose from light-brown Ash or dark-brown Sable. For an instant confidence boost, you can't beat giving your brows some TLC!



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‘I feel like
Superdad
again!’

Meet Dan

Dan Lanphier, 34, is a software engineer. He lives in Swindon, Wiltshire, with his wife, Sam, and their daughter, Emily, seven

Height: 6ft 2ins
Starting weight: 20st 8lbs
Weight now: 13st 10lbs

**WEIGHT LOST:
6st 12lbs**

*Dan is a member of
Rachael Cousins' Slimming World
group in Swindon*



Weighing over 20st, Dan Lanphier was finding it harder and harder to leap into action when his daughter needed him. Now, with his self-esteem soaring after losing 6st 12lbs, he feels every bit the hero he's always been in Emily's eyes

There was a gasp behind me, followed by an excited little voice saying: 'Ooh, this is nice, Dad!' I turned to find my seven-year-old daughter, Emily, holding up a fitted T-shirt for me, and I knew from the look on her face that I had to immediately take it to the changing rooms and try it on, or else! When I emerged, I gave her a little twirl, grinning at the resounding thumbs up. I've never thought of myself as the kind of guy who'd have a personal shopper, but Emily seems to have assumed the role enthusiastically. Shopping with her is lots of fun, too - I love watching her joy as she picks out the fitted jeans and shirts that have become my new staples since losing over 6½st. And I have to say, she's great at choosing clothes that suit me after a journey that's transformed both our lives. The >



Now we're spending more of our fun time outdoors – the best thing about my weight loss is what it brings for Emily

change in my dress sense is probably the least of the benefits in Emily's eyes, though – now she has her active, energetic dad back again, and I can see from the way she looks at me that it means the world to her.

It was spending time with Emily that made me realise my weight was getting in the way of the life I wanted to be leading. As for so many other people across the country, lockdown hadn't been kind to my waistline. And it wasn't a few pounds, or even a few stones – between March 2020 and January 2022, I'd put on over 7st. For nearly two years I'd led a sedentary life. My job as a software engineer meant it was easy to work from home – and that in turn meant very little moving around. Plus, the food I fancied was always oven pizzas and takeaways, or a large lasagne ready meal with garlic bread.

One of the things Emily and I loved to do together was go to the climbing wall at our local sports centre. It was always a source of pride for me how quickly Emily adapted to any new activity. She easily negotiated the steps and crevices, and I was pretty good as well to begin with – then as my weight steadily rose, I found it harder and harder to keep up with her. Soon I only



had one top that covered my tummy fully when it was worn with the climbing equipment. If that top happened to be in the wash, I wouldn't go, and it wasn't long before Emily caught on to the fact that I wasn't as enthusiastic about climbing as I'd been before. It broke my heart when, picking up on my reluctance, she sweetly suggested: 'Maybe we could stay in today and play a game instead?'

Losing my spark

We were as close as ever, but the all-action dad Emily had grown up with was definitely getting less and less energetic. And there was no hiding how quickly my weight was going up. Emily and I had always loved wearing matching dad and daughter outfits. As well as having the same Batman T-shirts, there was our absolute favourite: T-shirts with complementary slogans that said 'Superdad' and 'Sidekick'. We'd get



BEFORE
As I gained weight, I felt less and less energetic



My day on a plate

THEN

Breakfast Four wheat biscuits with whole milk and sugar

Lunch Frozen pepperoni pizza or large lasagne ready meal with garlic bread

Dinner Takeaway chicken tikka, pilau rice and cheese naan

Snacks Chocolate bars and chocolate biscuits

NOW

Breakfast Two wheat biscuits with semi-skimmed milk

Lunch Leftovers from the previous night's Food Optimising meal

Dinner Slimming World chilli and rice, or cheesy chicken and leek pasta with bacon and peas

Snacks Wafer-thin roast turkey slices, frozen grapes, and marshmallows (1 Syn each)



of weight, it wasn't coming off at anywhere near the speed that I'd put it on.

Emily and I made charting my weight loss into a numbers game and at first I was enthused by it. Then, when I didn't get the results I'd been hoping for, the game was no longer fun. Seeing how defeated I was, my wife, Sam, said: 'I can't bear to see you putting yourself through this. Slimming World worked for me before and there's a group nearby. Shall we join together?'. I made some noncommittal noises, then went online to find out what Slimming World was all about - and my scepticism kicked in straight away. I couldn't see how, if you

ate as much Free Food as you wanted, you'd ever lose weight. But Sam wasn't taking no for an answer, and I didn't have a better solution. Exercise hadn't worked on its own, so I clearly needed to do something. 'OK, let's go along,' I said.

With no one available to look after Emily, we were grateful that we could take her with us. And as the Consultant, Rachael, explained how the plan was going to help us lose weight, my scepticism was fading fast. Next, I listened with interest as the members shared ideas and were given personalised support during the IMAGE Therapy part of the session. The atmosphere was happy and supportive, and I felt fired up to get cracking. Then my private weigh-in provided the only unwelcome news of the night: that I was 20st 8lbs - bigger than I'd ever been before by quite a margin.

Sam and I were definitely on the case in that first week in May 2022. We flicked through the member >

smiles and chuckles from people whenever we went out together wearing them, so when I tried to pull mine on and it was far too small, that really stung. Emily shrugged and suggested I try on something else, and while I smiled and agreed, I couldn't get it out of my head. Suddenly, I didn't feel like such a superdad any more. My first thought was exercise - surely that would do the trick? Back in my student days at the University of Warwick, I'd been a pretty good runner, so I pulled on my trainers and headed out the door. I hadn't realised how different it would feel now I was 20st, and after running 10km I arrived back in the house wheezing, scarlet in the face and feeling more exhausted than I could ever remember. It was torture...but I was doing this for Emily. The next day, I put myself through exactly the same gruelling run, and felt just as worn out afterwards. This carried on for four months, and though I lost a small amount

I'm feeling great in fitted jeans and shirts now I've lost 10ins off my waist

pack for recipe ideas, taking note to include plenty of Speed Free Food veg to get the best results. The first Food Optimising meals we cooked were chilli and a chicken and leek pasta – and they went down a treat.

Incredibly, when I returned to group a week later, I'd lost a stone...in just seven days! I could hardly believe it. Emily took my one-stone award sticker with excitement and proudly stuck it onto the back of my weighing-in book. Then the following week, I lost another 9lbs and won Slimmer of the Week. 'Get out, you're banned,' came a jovial call from the back of the group. 'Give someone else a chance,' said another. Everyone dissolved into laughter, including me. They'd applauded me loudly and I knew how genuinely happy they were for me – and the kind-hearted leg-pulling would actually prove to be a real spur.

Week after week, that fun, friendly atmosphere kept me looking forward to coming back, and I started to feel like the other members had become friends. And that became even more important when one week the scales didn't move. One of the members, Gillian – who'd adopted me as her 'group son' – saw the look of disappointment cloud my face. 'You're only human,' she said, 'don't be hard on yourself. Use that feeling to go on and have a great week, starting now.' Alongside an effective eating plan, I had a whole support squad of people who got it and could give me the motivational boost I needed to get back on track.

Picking up the pace

Emily loved the weeks when we had taster sessions at group. She couldn't wait to see what the members had come up with, as well as Rachael's latest recipes – especially if they happened to be desserts. Her favourite was cinnamon swirls, made by rolling out light puff pastry, adding ground cinnamon and cutting them into little rounds – and we found them as much fun to make at home together as to eat.

The weight was coming off steadily, and as time went by, I noticed my clothes getting looser and my running times getting faster. When I'd first started those lung-bursting 10km runs before I joined Slimming World, it was taking me over an hour – before collapsing back at home. As the months passed, I found I could do the same distance in around 45 minutes, and I was gradually



closing in on the 38-minute personal best I'd achieved when I was at university.

Emily was the first person to really benefit from the changes in her dad, and the games console started to be neglected as we took more of our fun time outdoors. Now I had the energy, I'd perch her on my back to play horses, or let her try out the karate moves she'd just learnt at her weekly class on me – sometimes with quite painful results!

Now when we go climbing, I can keep up with Emily again, and the beaming smile on her face when she sees me bounding ahead through the park on long family walks is brilliant to see. The very best

thing about my weight loss is what it brings for Emily. And while I love our clothes shopping trips together, sometimes it's nice to return to an old favourite. It felt great to pull on the Superdad T-shirt – still the very best thing in my wardrobe – to find that it fitted perfectly after losing 10ins off my waist. And while I know that in Emily's eyes I've always been Superdad, now I feel I'm somewhere close to living up to that title – and that really means the world to me. ●



DAN WEARS

p86, p87 and below: T-shirt, Universal Performance. Shorts, H&M. Climbing shoes and fitness watch, both Dan's own

p88: Jacket, New Look. T-shirt, H&M. Trousers, Uniqlo. Trainers, Matalan

p89: Top and jeans, both River Island. T-shirt, Uniqlo. Trainers, Matalan. Fitness watch, as before

Above: Top, Primark. Jeans, H&M. Trainers, River Island

EMILY WEARS

p87 and left: T-shirt and leggings, both Primark. Climbing shoes, Emily's own

p88 (left): Jacket, Uniqlo. Leggings, Primark. Trainers, Matalan

p88 (right): Shirt, Only Kids at Matalan. T-shirt, jeans and trainers, all Primark

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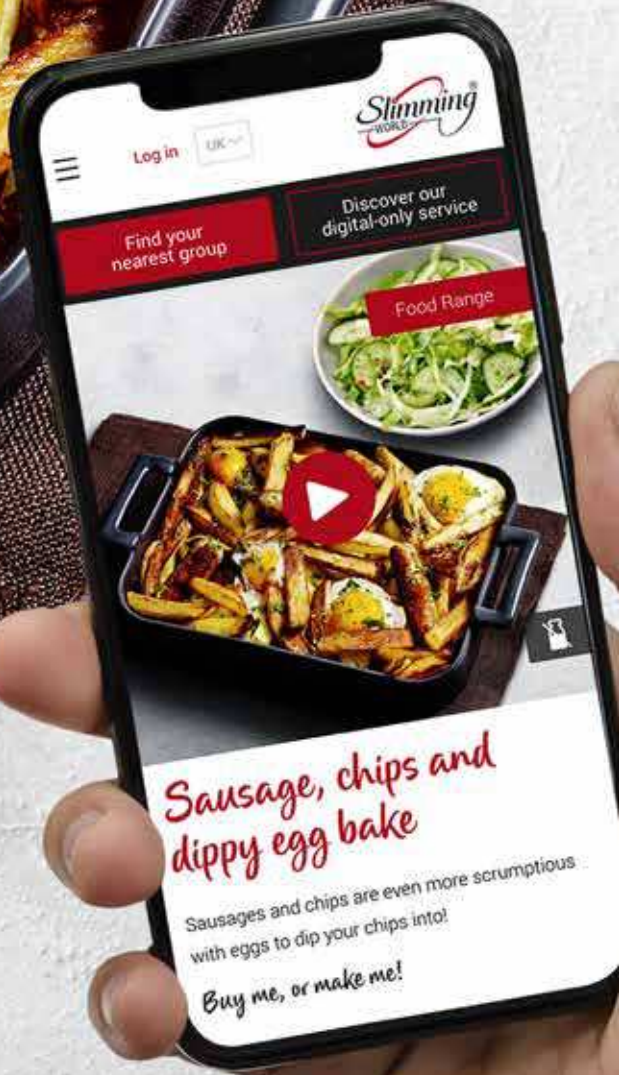
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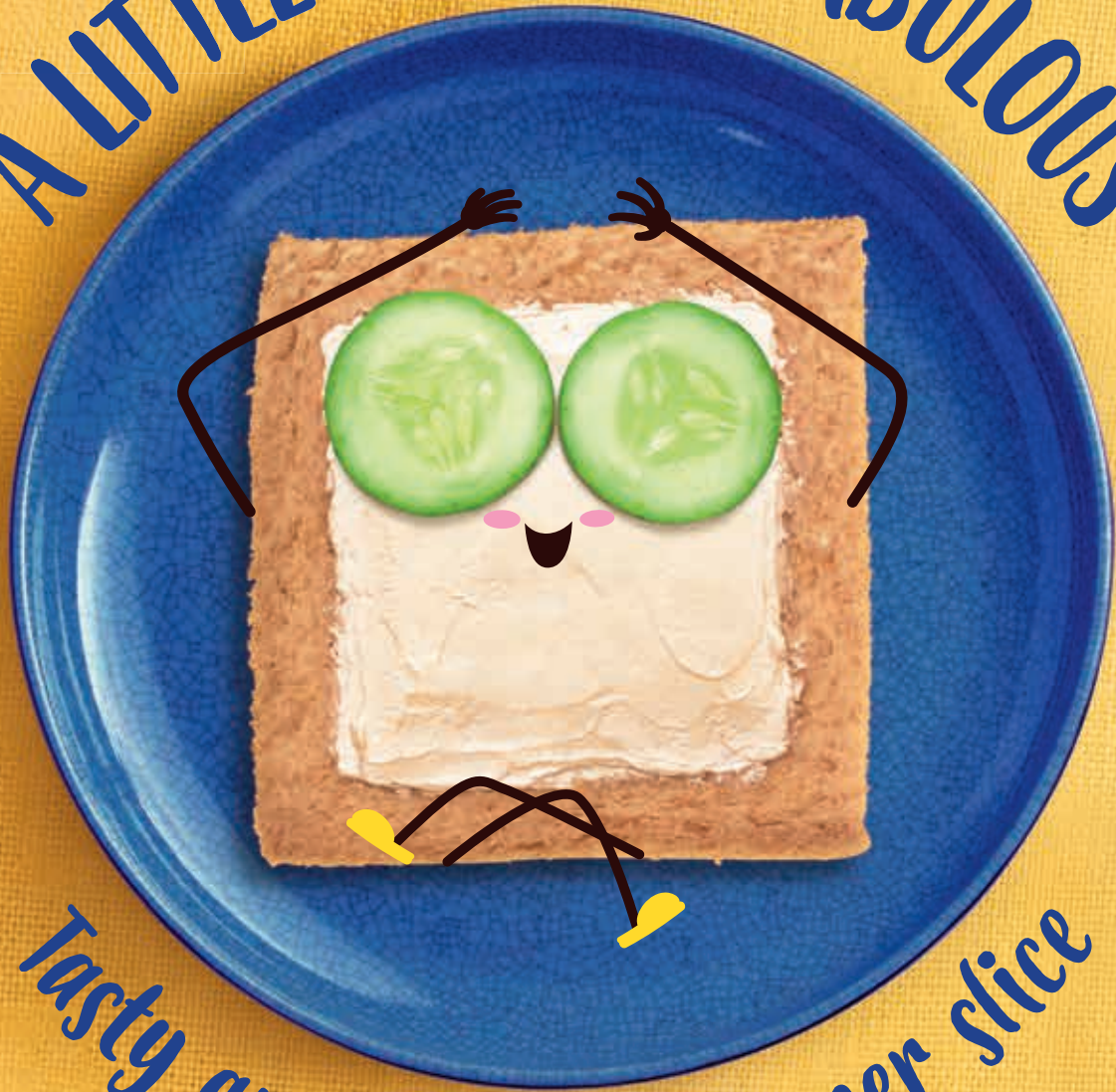
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A LITTLE SLICE OF FABULOUS



Tasty and 45 calories per slice



Loaf's Good!

MIND, *body* & soul

CREATE A STRONGER, HEALTHIER AND HAPPIER YOU FROM THE INSIDE OUT



SEE YOUR DREAMS FLOURISH

Many people put themselves under pressure without realising it. They're afraid to do anything they believe will slow down their weight loss, in fact terrified of the things that will mean long-term success. You must find a way to stop the misery – and the best way to do that is to break the cycle and to forgive yourself..'

*Margaret Miles-Bramwell OBE,
Slimming World's founder and chair*

Turn the page to see if you're stuck in that cycle, plus advice on breaking free.

IS PERFECTIONISM YOUR SLIMMING PITFALL?

If you find yourself feeling like you've failed when you miss your goals, you could be a perfectionist slimmer. Take our quiz to find out where you fall on the perfectionism scale, and get advice tailored to you

WORDS: CHRISTABEL SMITH

Remember how Mary Poppins described herself as 'practically perfect in every way'? Much as we love the fictional supernanny, the idea that any human being can aspire to be perfect is just as impossible as flying over London with an umbrella! And when it comes to weight loss, perfectionism can be a blocker. We might be able to be super strict for a week, month, or even more, but it's not doable long term (and it isn't much fun). Just as the 'perfect' person doesn't exist, nor does the 'ideal' slimmer. What's more, perfectionism can be a form of self-sabotage (there's more on that to come!). Find out how being kinder to yourself, and embracing the flexibility of Food Optimising so it fits around you, is the key to success that lasts. Then, take our quiz to find out if you'd benefit from giving perfectionism the push!



The spotter's guide to perfectionist slimming

1 FEELING LIKE YOU'VE 'BLOWN IT'
 'Structure and rules can be useful in some ways,' says Andrew Hill, Professor of Medical Psychology at the University of Leeds, 'yet when we make them too fixed, they become unmanageable. Feeling we've "broken the rules" can lead to harsh self-criticism and guilt.' We might also be clinging to past experiences of dieting that included restrictive portions, things you 'can't have,' or ideas about what is or isn't OK to eat. 'Put the past aside and choose to behave differently in relation to food,' he says. No food is off limits at Slimming World!

2 ALL-OR-NOTHING APPROACH
 Deborah Sanderson, director of training and development at Slimming World, explains what this looks like: 'It's when slimmers start with rigid expectations, strictly limiting Syns, planning things to the "nth" degree and weighing everything to the gram. While it may sound like a good thing to do, it can be just too hard to stick to. And if they go over the rigid Syn allowance they've set themselves, it can feel like a catastrophe. They'll tell themselves they can't do this, it's too hard, they haven't got the willpower – so they'll give up and not even try to follow Food Optimising. It's this reaction to a small setback that's likely to end up causing a gain.' On the flipside, enjoying the liberation of the plan day to

day is likely to help you feel more relaxed about your weight loss, and more accepting of any impulse decisions, making it easier to get back into the swing of things after life throws you curveballs.

3 SETTING YOURSELF UP TO FAIL
 'Perfectionists will look at what they didn't achieve, rather than what they did,' says Professor Andrew Hill. 'And often make their personal rules so exacting they're bound to be broken, which is a form of self-sabotage, and undermines self-esteem.' If you feel like you're your harshest critic, talk to your Consultant and your group, or online community, who'll be able to support you. They'll be able to share their strategies and tips to help you be kinder to yourself all along the weight loss way.

4 THINKING: 'I ALWAYS DO THIS'
 'It's better to think of "lapses" than "relapses",' says Professor Hill. 'We all have lapses – that doesn't mean we've failed. Eating more biscuits than you meant to doesn't make you "bad", or mean you've ruined your weight loss – so don't judge yourself. Instead, think of the days in a week you kept on-plan, and look at the bigger picture and the end goal of being healthier, with more energy.' If you tend to go straight to the negatives, try this. For the next few weeks, note down three things

each day that made you feel good: a kind word from a friend, your dog's wagging tail when you got home, or a tasty new recipe you found in *Slimming World Magazine*. As well as having a mini journal brimming with positivity to dip into, you'll be practising looking on the bright side of life, which you can also apply to your weight loss journey.

5 COMPARING AND DESPAIRING
 'What's perfection in a person?' asks Deborah Sanderson. 'No one can answer that because it's an illusion and would be different for everyone. When you strive for something that doesn't exist, nothing feels good enough, so there's always going to be that sense of disappointment. Whether it started as something a family member said when you were young, or is reinforced by idealised images on social media, aiming for perfection can damage your self-esteem. You're much more than what the scales say. We encourage you to set your own Personal Achievement Target, because we're not in the business of telling you what size you "should" be. And everyone will have their own view of what their dream weight is. Some know how much they want to weigh, others may need guidance. Or you might prefer interim goals, such as 2st at a time.' And when it comes to feeling your best, happiest, healthiest self, believe us – you'll know it when you get there!

Take our quick quiz to find out if you're a perfectionist

Simply tick all the statements that sound most familiar to you, and tot up how many of each symbol you've ticked. Then turn the page to find out more about maximising your slimming success – wherever you are on the perfectionism scale right now!

- ◆ If I've overeaten on a night out, I tell myself I've blown my weight loss for that week.
- I tend to guess how many Syns are in my food.
- When I look in the mirror, I focus on the bits of my body I like best.
- 'Prosecco Syns' definitely don't count at the weekend.
- ◆ I feel guilty if I don't cook from scratch every night.
- When I know there's a family wedding in the offing, I accept I might not see a loss on the scales that week.

- I used to like going swimming/ to a new class when I first started the Body Magic activity support programme, but I haven't been for ages.
- ◆ I'm good at Food Optimising in the week, but I'm rubbish at weekends.
- I don't fret if I gain or maintain weight one week, because I know I'm generally headed in the right direction.
- ◆ If I'm going to start exercising, I'll need to commit to it every single day.
- I started off losing weight, but now I'm beginning to rebel.

- I no longer panic about what I'll eat if I'm invited to a social do, because I know the best choices for my weight loss at buffets and restaurants.
- ◆ I buy clothes in the size I want to be, and not the size that I am now.
- For me, Body Magic's about things like walking the dog, not just joining a gym.
- I used to plan my meals for the week, but I've let that slip.
- ◆ I've ruined this week with an unplanned bit of cake/takeaway, so I may as well write it off until after my next weigh in.

- I gained weight on my all-inclusive holiday, but it's fine because I know how to get back on track.
- It's ages since I've thought about why I wanted to slim in the first place.
- I know myself as a slimmer and I can spot my triggers a mile off.
- ◆ If I don't follow Food Optimising 100 per cent all the time, there's no point trying.
- I like hearing all about target members' success, but I'll never have that kind of willpower.

See how you fared on p98 >

Where are you on the perfectionism scale?

Find the symbol you ticked most and take a look at the corresponding advice below. If it was a tie, read both. Most of all, remember there are no right or wrong answers – or perfect ways of being a slimmer – and we promise, wherever you are on the scale, you will definitely not be alone!

MOSTLY ◆

One of the most powerful images from Margaret Miles-Bramwell, Slimming World's founder and chair, is of the slimming 'corset that's too tight'. Being squeezed into underwear may make a difference at first, but as the Victorians discovered, it soon becomes so uncomfortable you can't wait to loosen the straps or take it off altogether! Deborah Sanderson says that those of us who are too hard on ourselves often don't realise how impossibly high we're setting our own bar. 'I've heard members say things like: "I stuck to my plan to the letter, then I went out at the weekend and blew it. There's no point in trying any more!" If that sounds familiar, talk to your Consultant about Flexible Syns, the Slimming World motivational tool designed to help those members who feel so guilty when they go over their Syn allowance that they feel they've ruined their weight loss and might give up. Flexible Syns will help those members take back control. Or if you're an online member, you'll find lots of useful resources under Features. Professor Hill recommends focusing on being kinder to yourself. 'There are ways to manage negative self-talk, such as keeping a record of your achievements, and forgiving yourself for what you see as "failures"', he says.

MOSTLY ●

Do you feel like you're not really committed to your weight loss? It's a place so many of us have been. And whether you're a long-term member feeling your motivation drift, or you've never really got started, Deborah advises getting back to basics and reconnecting with your 'why'. 'Ask yourself: why do I want to lose weight? And how important is it to me, really? Is it important enough to make changes to the way you eat and drink, and how active you are?' If you're a group member, make the most of IMAGE Therapy, where you'll get personalised support for the week ahead, learn more about what might be slowing down your progress, and be inspired by other members' success. 'It may be you've realised you're not really planning, checking or counting those Syns,' says Deborah. 'If that's the case, it may help to decide at the start of the day how many Syns you're going to have and what you'll spend them on. You'll be less likely to feel tempted to go over your Syns if you plan them in, because you'll be looking forward to savouring them.' If you're not a member, joining will make it easier to stay on track – in new research, 90 per cent of group members said they now feel more in control of their food choices*.

MOSTLY ■

You're at ease with yourself and it sounds like you've worked out how to fit Food Optimising into your daily life for good – a great place to be for sustained weight loss. The occasional slip-up, or a few pounds' gain, is not a disaster because you know how to get straight back in the game. And by finding that happy medium between perfectionism and not being committed to weight loss, you're like Goldilocks – finding the bowl of porridge that's not too hot, not too cold, but just right (as well as being a delicious Healthy Extra choice to start the day!). Your top strategy now is to keep an eye out for complacency, as it's when we stop counting Syns or measuring out Healthy Extras that things can begin to slide. And that's also true once you've reached target. 'Target members often worry about staying at their dream weight long term,' says Deborah. 'If you're at that point, you'll be supported to follow Slimming World's Slim for Life programme, which will help you find your personal route to maintaining your target weight for good. On top of that, knowing yourself as a slimmer is the key, because that means you'll be aware of your personal danger zones and have the strategies in place to work around them.' ●

Reframe your 'flaws'

Have you heard of Kintsugi, the ancient Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with gold, silver or platinum? It shows how imperfections are beautiful and to make the best of what you see in the here and now, rather than dwelling on what might've been better. Songwriter Leonard Cohen put it another way: 'There's a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in.'



*SURVEY OF 2,000 SLIMMING WORLD MEMBERS, MARCH 2023
PHOTOGRAPHS: GETTY IMAGES

UNIQUELY THIN AND CRISPY FINNISH CRISPBREAD



HIGH
FIBRE

100%
WHOLE
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20 KCAL
PER SLICE

SIMPLE STRATEGIES

‘How can I shift those last few pounds?’



OUR EXPERTS



SUSAN KENT, 72, is a Slimming World member. She's lost 5st 3lbs and is a target member of Amanda Poole's group in Leicester



EVIE LOVELL is a registered nutritionist from Slimming World's nutrition, research and health team, who ensure Slimming World's services are in line with the latest advances in nutrition, health and weight management



SUE REDFERN is a Slimming World Consultant and runs a group in Mansfield Woodhouse, Nottinghamshire

Our experts offer their advice to a member who's finding things tricky during that final push to reach his weight loss goal and achieve his dream of getting to target



‘I'd love to reach my 14st target in the next few weeks so I can look my best for a wedding I'm going to, but the closer I get, the harder I seem to find things. I set a goal of getting there by Christmas, but I was still 1lb over and felt demoralised and angry with myself. I've put on a few pounds since then, too... I've lost 9st 7lbs in total – including 2st 7lbs since rejoining Slimming World after lockdown. I've stuck to Food Optimising, got my Platinum Body Magic award, and find the advice and support I get from my Consultant and group during IMAGE Therapy really helpful. Even so, I can't seem to break my habit of comfort eating after a stressful day at work, when I'll head straight for the fridge and make myself a cheese sandwich. It would mean so much to me to finally be at my goal weight.’



Kevin Armstrong, 53, is a behaviour manager in a secondary school and lives with his wife, Melissa, in Market Harborough, Leicestershire. He's lost 9st 7lbs and is a member of Katy Boddy's group in Market Harborough



SUSAN SAYS:

'Oh Kevin, I was tantalisingly close to target for weeks before I eventually got there, so I know exactly how you feel – it's ever so frustrating! Instead of being down on yourself for not hitting your target just yet, though, think about how well you've done and how far you've come. It really does help if you avoid getting too hung up on the few pounds you've got left to lose. Congratulate yourself on the 9st 7lbs you've lost already. You know you'll do it – and soon!

'Going to IMAGE Therapy every week, where I got personalised support for the week ahead, and having the backing of my Consultant and other members is what made the biggest difference for me. It's so helpful to see your weight loss journey through other people's eyes. When I was finding it difficult to lose those last few pounds, I was really honest with the group about my frustration, and their support and encouragement helped alter my mindset. Instead of thinking of myself as a failure when I stepped off the scales, I'd just be more determined to conquer any challenges and stick to the plan. I knew I would get there before too long.

'Comfort eating was a big issue for me as well. When our much-loved dog died, I got through my grief with slices of bread

and butter or peanut butter. Talking things through in IMAGE Therapy helped me recognise why I was doing that – and take steps towards changing my habits. As well as making sure I had on-plan snacks to hand, I knew I could reach out to other members whenever I was feeling vulnerable. We sent one another motivational texts throughout the week, and that really helped.

'Being a target member is great, so you have lots to look forward to. Feeling inspired by other members – and being an inspiration to them – helps keep me on track as I maintain my weight, and I'm sure it will do the same for you.'

EVIE SAYS:

'First of all, Kevin, congratulations on losing 9½st. It's a great achievement – you should be really proud. And you're not alone in feeling this way. For various reasons, many people find it tricky to lose those last few pounds, so be reassured that there's lots you can do to get to where you want to be.

'Take that post-work cheese sandwich, for example. There's no reason why you can't have it, enjoy it and stay on plan. The trick is to go back to basics and measure out your Healthy Extras. It's something that can be easy to forget about when you've been Food Optimising for a while, and the Sins can gradually edge up. For an on-plan sandwich, you could fill wholemeal bread (two slices from a small 400g loaf) or a 60g wholemeal roll with 40g grated reduced-fat Cheddar and plenty of salad. Grating the cheese makes it go further, too – plus, having it with Speed Free Food salad adds in more filling power, and feeling satisfied will help you stay on track.

'A temporary tactic that can help super-boost your weight loss is having one or two Extra Easy SP days each week. Fill at least half your plate with lots of Speed Free Food veg or salad, and the rest with filling protein-rich Free Food, like roast skinless chicken. You'll find more details about the Healthy Extras and Sins you can enjoy on

an SP day in your Food Optimising book. It can also help to set yourself a new activity goal, too – maybe doing a longer walk or giving something different a go – to get you really motivated. Lastly, try asking the target members in your group how they felt during that "final push" and how life's changed for them since. You'll find you're surrounded by ideas and inspiration!

SUE SAYS:

'This is something that lots of members can relate to as they near target, Kevin. Sometimes people feel a bit anxious about what comes next and whether they'll be able to sustain their weight loss. I had one member who fluctuated from half a pound to 2lbs off target for months until we worked out that it was exactly that fear that was standing in her way! Trust me, getting to target isn't the end of your Slimming World journey. It's the start of you staying slim for life. We'll still be there

to support and advise you every step of the way as part of Slimming World's Slim for Life programme.

'For now, it might help to think back to the start of your journey and all the changes you made, and the strategies you put in place to protect your progress. Tell your Consultant you're feeling frustrated, and she'll be able to recommend the best Slimming World tools, such as the SAS log (Slimmers Against Sabotage) to help you

spot areas where you may be sabotaging your week. Keeping a food diary can help, too. You've already identified post-work comfort eating as a sticky area, well done! Using the log could help you spot other little obstacles that you may be coming up against, without even realising, that you could plan new strategies around.

'Finally, just to say that actually, setting yourself a firm deadline, such as Christmas or a wedding, doesn't work for everyone. Yes, it can be a big motivator – or, as you've found, it can feel like a massive setback if you don't quite make it. So try not to put yourself under so much pressure and trust that you will get to where you want to be very soon. You've got this!'

“Getting to target isn't the end of your journey. It's the start of you staying slim for life and we'll still be there to support and advise you every step of the way”

Have you got a slimming dilemma?

If there's something that's sending your weight loss off track and you'd love our experts' help, email us at editorial@slimmingworld.co.uk or call on 01773 546 071.



Eating for the MENOPAUSE

Following a nutritious, balanced diet (hello Food Optimising!) is a great move for managing your weight and protecting your health during the menopause, and the food you choose can help ease common symptoms, too

WORDS: CHRISTABEL SMITH ILLUSTRATION: LAURIE HASTINGS

Do you remember the days when the menopause was still so taboo that it was only whispered about? Chances are you do, since it wasn't that long ago it was a subject shrouded in silence. Thankfully, in the last few years, there's been a menopause revolution, to the point where you might even find the abundance of information a little overwhelming. One thing many women worry about is that menopause weight gain is inevitable, so it's good to know that Food Optimising is a great way to manage your weight in your perimenopause and menopause years. And there's more positive news: alongside the help that your GP can give you, what you eat can actually help ease your symptoms and support your health during this transitional time.

When we talk about menopause, often we actually mean perimenopause, which are the years leading up to your last period. During this time your levels of the hormone oestrogen are reducing and you may start to experience symptoms. While this can throw up new slimming challenges, your weight loss goals don't have to go out of the window. With Food Optimising, you can eat to satisfy your appetite and your cravings (which is handy to know if your hormones are wreaking havoc), and keep your weight loss on track.

Here, Jennifer Kent, a dietitian at Slimming World, talks us through six simple ways that the food you choose as part of the Food Optimising plan can help ease common perimenopause and menopause symptoms, and boost your wellbeing. So you can enjoy feeling healthier and more resilient, with energy to spare!

1

EAT TO...HELP HOT FLUSHES

Hot flushes are one of the most experienced menopause symptoms. Phytoestrogens – sometimes referred to as 'nature's hormone replacement therapy' – may come to the rescue when eaten over time. They're similar to (but weaker than) the oestrogen we naturally lose, and you'll find them in foods including soya beans, tofu (Free if plain) and linseeds (2 level tbsp is a Healthy Extra). To see a sample seven-day menu that includes phytoestrogens, plus other beneficial foods, go to Features on the members' website or app and search 'menopause'.

2

EAT TO...EASE ACHES AND PAINS

Oestrogen protects joints and reduces inflammation, so as it drops we might end up feeling stiff and achy. The British Dietetic Association suggests foods containing omega-3 fatty acids might help – they're in lots of Free Food fish, including salmon, sardines (Free when fresh or canned in brine or tomato sauce) and kippers, as well as Healthy Extra walnuts, flaxseeds and chia seeds. And although getting off the sofa can

feel like the last thing you want to do when you're aching, being active could help. Low-impact exercise helps to lubricate your joints and can actually relieve niggling pain. Take more regular walks, or try yoga or swimming, and take note of anything that makes a difference. Slimming World's Body Magic activity support programme will help you build up from where you are now and form new wellbeing-boosting habits. >

3

EAT TO...BOLSTER YOUR BONES

It's normal for men and women to start losing bone density from about the age of 35. During the perimenopause, the drop in the hormone oestrogen also speeds up the rate that we lose calcium from our bones, so enjoying calcium-rich foods is even more important. Food

Optimising is a friend here, because along with your two Healthy Extra 'a' choices each day, such as certain types of cheese and milk, many other Free Foods also contain calcium (look for the 'C' symbol beside entries in your Food Optimising book). Free dairy options include fat-free natural yogurt, cottage cheese and fromage frais. And when it comes to veg, you're spoilt for choice – there are spring greens, kale, rocket, watercress...all Speed Free Foods!

Taking a vitamin D supplement helps with calcium absorption, too, and weight-bearing exercises are also great for bones. Just walking up and down stairs counts, and members can find weight-bearing activity videos on the Slimming World website and app.

4

EAT TO...PROTECT YOUR HEART

When oestrogen dips, our risk of heart disease increases...but if you're Food Optimising, you're already building in heart-healthy habits. You're cutting down on saturated fats and alcohol, while upping your intake of fibre, and when you cook from scratch you can dodge the salt added to many ready meals and processed food.

Another way to cut back on salt is to experiment with onion, garlic, herbs and spices for flavour, and switch to low-salt soy sauce and stock cubes. Meanwhile,

filling a third of your plate with Speed Free Food at each meal means you'll be eating plenty of fruit and veg – research suggests that members consume seven portions a day on average*! Eating small amounts of unsaturated fats and oils can be beneficial, such as unsalted nuts and olive oil, and you can enjoy these as Healthy Extras or Syns. Plus, any exercise that gets your breathing and heart rate up is a brilliant way to give your heart some TLC and reduce high blood pressure – even a brisk walk counts.

For more on the menopause, and managing your symptoms and weight, ask your Consultant for the free *You, your weight and the menopause* leaflet

6

EAT TO...GET BETTER SLEEP

When insomnia and night sweats are keeping you awake, it inevitably has a knock-on effect in the morning. We all know how it feels when our energy's low and we're practically drawn to those quick-fix high-sugar and high-fat snacks. Prepping ahead can protect your weight loss, because if you have overnight oats in the fridge, your favourite batch-cooked meals in the freezer and a stash of low Syn treats, you're less likely to veer off course. And while it may be tempting to unwind with alcohol, drinking close to bedtime can mess with the quality of your sleep. Give caffeine a miss in the afternoon, too, and you'll also notice the difference in bed – try decaf tea and coffee and herbal teas instead. To top it off, getting active (which can also boost your mood and help with stress) and losing weight are two more ways to naturally improve sleep. Food Optimising, plus Body Magic, plus group support equals weight loss and wellbeing before, during and after the menopause.

It really does add up! ●

● If your symptoms are affecting day-to-day life, speak to your healthcare team about support and medical treatments available. Talking things through with your GP will help you identify a personalised approach that could work for you

5

EAT TO...SOOTHE YOUR MOOD

Ups and downs in mood are very common when hormone levels are fluctuating. This can make you feel all over the place and you may be thinking: 'Am I going bonkers? I don't feel like myself'. Now's the time to reach out to your Slimming World community – you can bet someone will say, 'I know exactly what you mean, I thought it was just me!'. When you're feeling low, it's only human to turn to comfort food – who wouldn't fancy a creamy pasta dish or a bowl of chips to

boost the spirits? Fortunately, nothing is off limits with Food Optimising, including chunky golden chips and mac 'n' cheese. And if you're craving chocolate, your Syns are there for you. There's no need to feel hungry when you can eat generous meals three times a day, plus snacks. If your appetite feels bigger than usual, include plenty of protein and high-fibre foods (marked with 'P' and 'F' symbols in your Food Optimising book) to help you feel full for longer.

touch hearts, change lives

as a
Slimming World Consultant



Asia Ali,
Coventry



Charlotte McNally,
Buckinghamshire



Zaheer Bhatti,
Birmingham



Clare Caswell,
Warwickshire

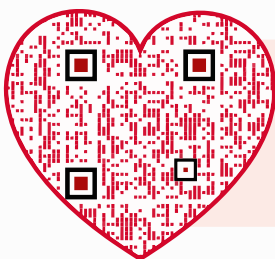
Inspirational, warm and caring, our Consultants know what it's like to struggle with being overweight, and they've experienced the joy of seeing their lives transformed. Now they're dedicated to helping others achieve the same success!

your *journey*
continues here...

If you're a member on your way to your final target weight and you'd love to share with others the support, motivation and success you've experienced, we'd love to hear from you.

As well as the satisfaction that comes from making a real and lasting difference to people's lives, as a self-employed Consultant you'll reap the rewards of:

- ✓ **flexible hours** that fit around family life
- ✓ an **excellent income**
- ✓ **first-class training** and **support**
- ✓ and all the other benefits that come with **running your own business**



Scan the QR code or visit
slimmingworld.co.uk/become-a-consultant
to discover more about this hugely rewarding role
and enquire about opportunities near you.

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pick & mix YOUR FITNESS

Building five key active habits into your life is brilliant for your overall health...and easier than you might think. Each of the activities that follow tick off at least two!

THE 5 ACTIVE HABITS



SITTING STILL LESS

Engages muscles, gets blood flowing and helps boost metabolism. Long periods of sitting can increase our risk of certain health conditions



EVERYDAY MOVEMENT

Builds activity into our day-to-day lives. The more time we spend being active, the greater the physical and mental wellbeing benefits



BALANCE & FLEXIBILITY

Maintains muscle strength and improves co-ordination and posture, lowering our risk of injury and falls



MODERATE-INTENSITY CARDIO ACTIVITY

Gets the heart pumping, and lungs and big muscles working. This helps to burn energy and increase fitness levels, and brings many health benefits



BUILDING STRENGTH

Helps maintain bone strength and muscle health, and keeps us strong, as well as maintaining our metabolic rate (how quickly we burn calories)



Cycling

As all that pedalling works major leg and glute (bottom) muscles, cycling builds strength, which helps to maintain your metabolism so you burn calories more efficiently. It's also a moderate-intensity cardio activity – it speeds up your breathing and heart rate – and counts towards your Bronze, Silver and Gold Body Magic awards. When life is busy, though, how do you find time to exercise? One secret is hooking it onto something you already have to do, such as your daily travel, says Laura Nolan. 'Cycling is perfect for this, because we all have places we need to be! So if you use your bike rather than taking the car for a regular journey – like going to and from work – it just becomes part of your week. Plus, if your employer participates in a Bike2Work Scheme, this can make getting a bike cheaper.'

OR TRY... Spinning. This fast-paced gym class to music on a stationary bike can motivate you to cycle faster and harder.

They say variety is the spice of life, and that's definitely the case when it comes to getting active! When you combine different types of physical activity, you enjoy even more of the health benefits. In fact, Slimming World's Body Magic physical activity support programme encourages you to build in five active habits that each bring multiple wellbeing boosts.

'On these pages you'll find lots of ideas for ways to work the five active habits into your week,' says Laura Nolan, a registered nutritionist at Slimming World. 'And even if you're doing one kind of exercise regularly, finding ways to include all the habits will be fantastic for your health.' Use our colour-coded key (above) to find out which activities tick them off, and discover the best combination for you...



Dancing

Who said fitness can't be fun? 'Breaking up your TV time with a little ad-break boogie is a joyful way to get a quick health boost,' says Laura. 'That's because however active you are already, sitting still for long periods of time can increase your risk of conditions including type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure.' Of course, just getting out of your chair for a stretch works, too – but busting out some moves comes with other benefits. Dancing is good for balance and flexibility, and if it's more than a little boogie – say you go to a dance class, or keep on going until you're warmed up and breathing faster – then it supports heart health and counts as moderate-intensity cardio activity. Plus, while dance may be the last thing you'd think of for strength-building, it can also tick that box when the moves use your body weight.



OR TRY... Slimming World's activity videos on the members' website and app. There are 16 dance-inspired routines from five to 30 minutes.



Taking the stairs

Whether you work in an office or are at home looking after little ones, if you've got a set of stairs to hand you can tick off nearly all the active habits! 'Popping upstairs to bring down the washing or to chat to a colleague are great ways to break up any sitting time,' says Laura. 'While going up and down stairs at work throughout the day to use a loo or water cooler is an easy way to fit in everyday activity.' If you want to do five or 10 minutes towards your Bronze Body Magic award, marching up and down the stairs is a moderate-intensity cardio exercise. Now slow it down and feel your leg muscles push against your body weight each time you take a step – that means it's also a strength-building activity, which helps to maintain muscle when done regularly.

OR TRY... Step aerobics classes. Get cardio and strength benefits with a non-stop class that really steps it up.



Gardening

There's nothing like sitting out in the garden when the weather's nice. And if you break up that sitting time with a quick bit of weeding or watering, you've smashed the sitting-less habit! Spend a while doing bits and bobs in the garden and you're getting in some everyday movement, and any activity you do in the course of your day adds up to a big win. When gardening gets

more intense – vigorously raking leaves or pushing the lawn mower perhaps, or digging a vegetable bed – it ticks off moderate-intensity cardio, too. And when it's working your muscles, it's also a strength-building activity!

OR TRY... Housework. Like gardening, you can do a bit – or a full-on energetic cleaning spree.



Walking

'Finding ways to walk a little more is a fantastic first step to building a regular active habit,' says Laura. 'By increasing the time or length of our walks, at our own pace, we can gradually become more active without feeling like we're exercising much at all! Even a gentle stroll, walking around while you're on the phone, or going to the kitchen to make a cup of tea, can help to make your day less sedentary. And that's a big hitter when it comes to supporting your general health. 'Brisk walking counts towards your Bronze, Silver and Gold Body Magic awards,' says Laura. 'It's brisk when you notice your heart rate and breathing speed up, but you can still hold a conversation.' Make your walks more interesting by tuning in to Slimming World's walking podcasts on the members' website and app – you'll find them under Body Magic and you can listen as you stride along.

OR TRY... Nordic walking. Using two specially designed poles, it gets your arms and shoulders working, too. >



Swimming

Aches and pains can put us off getting active – but if we can find comfortable ways to move more, that could help ease them. For a great low-impact exercise, look to the swimming pool. ‘The water takes pressure off your joints and supports your body weight,’ says Laura. ‘At the same time, it also acts as resistance, so it’s still really good exercise, and has the bonus that you won’t feel hot and sweaty.’ Many leisure centres have facilities to help people with mobility issues get into the pool, too. As swimming is particularly good for core muscles, it improves your balance. And whichever stroke you choose, as long as you can feel your heart rate and breathing speed up, you’ll be doing that magic moderate-intensity



cardio activity that forms the core of the Body Magic physical activity support programme. To ramp up your swim further, increase the number of lengths you do or how long you spend in the pool.

OR TRY... Aqua aerobics. This fitness class uses the water (and floats) for a cardio workout.



Tai Chi

If you’ve seen the videos of elderly Chinese people doing early morning poses in the park, you know what Tai Chi looks like. Research suggests taking part in this low-impact martial art could help reduce the risk of falls as we get older – in fact, it’s one of the activities that’s suggested by the NHS to improve strength and balance for older people. ‘And although it’s called a martial art, there’s actually no physical contact with others, so it’s a lot less scary than it sounds,’ says Laura. ‘Instead, it focuses on movement, co-ordination and balance using your body weight.’ There’s also a mind-body aspect to Tai Chi, so you’ll find classes and online sessions that combine it with meditation, which can be a brilliant stress buster.

OR TRY... Beginner-friendly strength exercises from the NHS. In their Live Well section online, you’ll find simple routines and videos to follow.



Zumba

Dance-based cardio workouts like Zumba can be a lot of fun – and because you’re concentrating on following the steps, it can feel less tiring than jogging on a treadmill, for example. What’s more, while you’re dancing along to the upbeat music, you’ll be doing moves designed to build strength without really noticing. Love music? It can be really motivating for all kinds of exercise, so finding tunes that pep you up is a top tip for keeping up the pace as you work out.

OR TRY... Bounce fitness. This class takes place on mini trampolines and again uses music to fire you up!



Pilates

‘While we might think strength exercises are mostly about lifting weights, so many other things count,’ says Laura. ‘Pilates, for example, uses your body weight to build strength through mat-based poses and moves, and helps with balance and flexibility.’ Pilates includes lots of exercises that work your core muscles, too – the ones around your spine, tummy and hips – helping with balance, stability

and posture. Classes vary in difficulty, so if you’d like to give it a go, choose one aimed at beginners. Search for classes in your local area or for videos online with a qualified Pilates instructor.

OR TRY... Yoga. A similar mat-based practice that improves flexibility and balance. Yoga focuses on breathing, too, which can help with relaxation.



Exercise in a wheelchair

If you're a wheelchair user, there are plenty of ways to get more active and bag those health and wellbeing benefits. 'Gradually increasing what you're doing, such as going further or faster in your manual wheelchair, counts as everyday activity,' says Laura. 'And if you feel your heart beating faster and your breathing speed up, that's the moderate-intensity cardio activity that counts towards your Body Magic awards.' Using hand weights at home, or going to an adapted gym, can help you build strength. Or check out the seated activity videos on the members' website and app for fun routines that are suitable for many wheelchair users.

OR TRY... Something new! Visit everybodymoves.org.uk for sports in your area for people with disabilities.



Playing with the kids

Mums, dads, grandparents, aunts and uncles...and anyone with little bundles of energy in their lives – the more time you can spend racing around after the kids, the better! 'Everyone benefits when family time gets less sedentary,' says Laura. 'And breaking up time watching TV or on games consoles with other activities is a great way to tick off some of the active habits.' Getting up from the sofa for any reason means you're sitting still less, while fitting fun in through the day, like a push on the swing after school, aces the everyday movement habit. Then, if you're looking to reap the body benefits of moderate-intensity cardio exercise, you could head outside. A kick-around with a ball, playing Frisbee...anything that gets your heart rate and breathing going a little faster counts. Finally, lifting kids helps build strength, too – anyone for a piggyback?

OR TRY... A sports day! Set up silly races and challenges to get everyone up and moving. There could even be prizes.



- If you're planning to start a new activity programme, we recommend you check with your GP first – especially if you have an existing health condition, such as high blood pressure, diabetes or asthma. If you're pregnant, check the suitability of the activity with your midwife.

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Picnic chic

Reached your next weight loss milestone? Celebrate with one of these colourful buys – and get ready to relax in the sun...



Polka Peacock Picnic Rug,
£12, Dunelm



Hearts Melamine Dinner Plate,
£10.50, Sophie Allport



Summer Pineapple Straw Tumblers,
£4 each, Wilko



Lemon Picnic Platter,
£10, Marks & Spencer



Flamingo Picnic Jug,
£8, B&M



Wicker Picnic Basket,
£12.99, Homesense



Melamine Tableware Pasta Bowl, £10, ProCook



Summerhouse Riviera by Navigate Family Coolbag 20L,
£24.99, Dobbies Garden Centres



Melamine Beakers,
£12 for set of four, Anyday at John Lewis & Partners

Alfresco fun!

Change you can believe in

“The true, lasting solution to weight loss is a change of heart, a change of thinking, a change of lifestyle and a discovery that you can find success”

With the holiday season on the horizon, seeking out a quick fix to get beach ready can be hard to resist. While those fads might let you down, there is a community that never will, says Margaret Miles-Bramwell

Are you a wedding slimmer? A pre-summer holiday slimmer? A pre-Christmas slimmer?

Do you diet for these special times because you know these are the times you want to look your best, captured on camera for all eternity? And will you be tempted to use one of the hundreds of quick-fix, semi-starvation, latest-fad methods to help you save the day? And do you know, deep down in your soul, that any weight lost is going to be back quicker than you can say 'ultra low-cal diet'? Or will you be so desperate, and feel such a failure, that you'll submit to having a so-called 'miracle' weight loss jab, or even going under the knife?

At the risk of losing my reputation as a 'nice' person, I have to say, don't be daft! Look, let's be straight and clear about this. Either you're already a member of Slimming World and already losing weight, or you want to lose weight so have bought the magazine in the hope that within its beautiful and glossy pages you will find the miracle you seek. Well, actually you will, if the advice and inspiration you find here encourages you to join Slimming World and get the most amazing revelations – about you!

It's tempting to go for the quick fix, I know. An advert that always appealed to me (naming no names) was the one that said: 'Bang – and the dirt is gone!' That got me straight away with the promise of no-effort cleaning. Just like you, I like things clean, but I don't have time to clean everything to my satisfaction, so 'Bang – and the dirt is gone!' really works. How I'd love to be able to say, 'Come to Slimming World. BANG – AND THE WEIGHT IS GONE!'. I wish it could be as simple for fixing weight problems as it is for cleaning stubborn stains! But I think we all know, deep down, that it's not.

One of the problems Slimming World has faced for the last 54 years is that we are incredibly sensible. Common sense

isn't too exciting – or is it? Well, it may not make for good sound bites, but the true, lasting solution to weight loss is a change of heart, a change of thinking, a change of lifestyle and a discovery that you, who in the past have found ways to fail, time and time again can, at last, actually find success. On my travels to Japan I came across a quote that resonated with me: 'Potted plants will die unless their roots are cut, and people age fast unless they change their thinking'. On the other hand, being open to change helps us grow stronger.

So what I can say, hand on heart – and wanting more than anything else in the world for you to find YOUR very own success, the solution to one of the most tormenting problems of your life – is 'Come to Slimming World – AND THE WEIGHT IS GONE!'. There isn't a bang. Just a sensible, effective and so much easier way to bring health and happiness – to you, your family, and everyone else that you know when you, your family and friends see the miracle of YOU. At Slimming World you'll find love, friendship, support, inspiration and motivation that works. We have the understanding. We have the skills. We have the experience. We have the knowledge. And we have the love.

Yours, as always and forever



Margaret Miles-Bramwell OBE
is Slimming World's founder and chair



Rachel's secrets to forever weight loss



Discovering she could lose weight eating filling food was a turning point for Top Target Consultant Rachel Falcus. After breaking free from yo-yo dieting, she shares how she's stayed slim for 14 years!

Sitting on the sofa together with Chinese takeaway cartons on our laps, my husband, Craig, and I were indulging in our usual Saturday night tradition. Back in our teens when we met, we often had a big night out on the town, before getting a kebab on the way home. We had so much fun, but I'd always dread the morning after. That's when the guilt hangover would kick in: I'd start berating myself for my unhealthy choices, and deciding which diet I was going to embark on next. By the time we'd settled into married life, I'd already tried every fad going: carb-cutting, detoxing, fasting, shakes... Every time I'd be desperate to get back to eating takeaways and ready meals as soon as possible – and, of course, the moment I did the pounds crept on again.

After having my two boys, James and Liam, I gained another 3st. I felt really unhappy with my weight, but I'd come to believe that I was hopeless at weight loss and lacking in willpower. Then, one morning, when Liam was three months old, I got talking

to a woman at a local baby group who'd lost weight with Slimming World and had gone on to run groups herself. My first thought was that she looked fantastic, and when she started talking about all the things she ate my ears really pricked up. 'I love the Slimming World chips...' she was saying.

Chips? How could she still eat chips and look like that? I thought about the joyless, restrictive plans I'd tried before – they'd never delivered what they'd promised, they'd left me feeling bad about myself, and they'd certainly never involved chips! This sounded so different, I decided there and then I'd try it for myself.

On the morning of my first group, I took the boys with me, and I felt so nervous as I got them out of the car. The second we were through the doors, though, it was as if I was surrounded by warmth. Everyone was chatting away, and the Consultant came over to me, smiling broadly, and asked if I'd like a tea or coffee. I settled James, then two, in a chair beside me with the colouring book and pencils I'd brought for him, while Liam sat

After trying every fad diet going, I'd decided I couldn't lose weight

Meet Rachel

Rachel Falcus, 42, is Slimming World's Top Target Consultant 2023. She lives in Newcastle with her husband, Craig, and they have three children: James 18, Liam, 15, and Emily, eight

Height: **5ft 4ins**

Starting weight: **15st 2½lbs**

Weight now: **10st 7lbs**

**WEIGHT LOST:
4st 9½lbs**

Rachel runs Slimming World groups in Killingworth and West Moor, Tyne and Wear



“
I'm confident
in a way
I never was
before, and I'm
enjoying life
more than ever

happily in his buggy as I listened to the new-member talk. Next came IMAGE Therapy, the part of the session where the members celebrated their weight losses and made plans for the week ahead with the Consultant's help. For years, I'd genuinely felt like my issues around my weight were all my own, not really shared by anyone else. And here I was, surrounded by people who'd been feeling the same way as I did – who understood.

Back home, I was feeling determined to finally put my yo-yo dieting behind me and make some

lasting changes. I stocked up on lean meat, cheese from the list of Healthy Extra choices, and loads of fresh veg. I realised I could cook pretty much anything I wanted and make it slimming friendly by using the tips in my Food Optimising book. One of the first things I tried was a crustless ham, cheese and onion quiche, which I made using eggs and plain quark, and it became one of my lunchtime go-tos.

Each week I looked forward to IMAGE Therapy, where I'd get motivation for the next seven days, as well as lots of recipe inspiration. The other members always had great ideas for family meals, and it's where I first heard about Slimming World 'meatzza'. The moment I got home, I couldn't wait to tell Craig about my latest find. As I described the lean-mince base, topped with tomato purée and a Healthy Extra portion of cheese, he said: 'It sounds great, let's have it tonight'. I laughed – 'I thought you'd be on board!'. We piled it high with sliced pepper and onion, too, and it was so good! I realised that if I chose recipes I'd really look forward to eating, I wouldn't feel deprived and willpower wouldn't have to come into it.

The power of support

That wasn't to say I didn't have setbacks. One week, after I'd been losing weight steadily, I put on 2lbs. I felt so disappointed that I headed straight for the door. At least, that was my plan... 'What's up Rachel?' asked another member as I made my way across the room, head down. 'I've gained this week when I thought I'd done really well,' I said. 'You'll lose it next week I'm sure,' she said, putting a caring hand on my shoulder. 'Stay and get support. We've all been there.' I did stay, realising that if my group didn't feel horrified about my gain, then neither should I. Next week, the scales were back to moving in the right direction.

At first, I'd just tuned out when people at group started talking about Slimming World's Body Magic activity support programme. With school memories of straggling at the back during cross-country runs, and always being the very last to be picked for a team, exercise was a complete no-no. Then, after I'd lost my first 2st, I started thinking about how I'd love to tone up and I read the Body Magic section of my member pack for the first time ever.

As I hadn't exercised since school, the idea of starting off slowly and breaking it down into manageable steps really appealed. So I began by just taking the dog for longer walks, and I was surprised when I actually enjoyed myself. After a while, I started going to a weights-based exercise class at my local gym, then I started spinning, too. I was going to classes three or four times a week and I worked my way through all of the Body Magic awards. Now, alongside Food Optimising and getting the support of group week after week, being active had become a natural part of my life, and in just over a year I hit my target weight of 10st 7lbs. Back at home after celebrating on the scales at group, I couldn't wait to tell Craig – as he hugged me, I still couldn't quite get over the fact I'd got all the way to target while enjoying my food. If only I'd known years ago that I could actually lose weight without depriving myself!

As I started maintaining my weight, I realised it wasn't enough for me that Slimming World had >

what a feeling



After finishing the London Marathon (left), and on holiday with my mam, Lorraine; son, James; husband, Craig; daughter Emily; and son, Liam



Before I lost over 4½st (above), then at target (top) running my own group

changed my life – I wanted to shout from the rooftops how I'd done it and save others from dreary diets! So in 2010, when I heard about Slimming World's opportunity events where you could find out more about being a Consultant, I decided to go along. That was the beginning of a second Slimming World journey for me, that eventually led to me leaving my job in the civil service to become a full-time Consultant. It turned out to be brilliant for family life, as it gave me the flexibility

to be around more for my children – including our daughter, Emily, who came along in 2014.

Six years later, life took an unexpected turn as we went into lockdown. My Slimming World groups temporarily went virtual and my gym closed. For something new to try, I started using a couch to 5K app. I'd always assumed I'd be out of breath and dripping with sweat if I went for a run – but because I was building up gradually, it wasn't as hard as I'd thought. Once I'd managed 5km, I just kept on upping the distance. Running became something I loved, and two years later, in 2022, I ran the London Marathon as part of Slimming World's team for Cancer Research UK.

Our bright future

I wasn't the only one whose life had changed either: Craig lost 5st! To begin with, he was just eating the same meals as me at home, then eventually he realised he wanted the support and encouragement of group to help him stick to the plan. And he loved it so much he decided to train to become a Consultant, too. We loved swapping the brilliant ideas we heard at our respective groups, and now on Saturday nights we made our own 'takeaway' curry using a Slimming World Rogan Josh Sauce from Iceland. I'd add chicken and whatever vegetables took our fancy. We even found a recipe for low Syn onion bhajis on the Slimming World app. Being able to look forward to a weekend fakeaway is one of the things I love about Food Optimising. We didn't have to give up our



Saturday night tradition, we just had to lighten it up. Only now it's all five of us around the table, chatting and laughing together over food we love.

Looking back to 15 years ago, it's hard to recognise myself. We go swimming as a family and for long walks, and I know that as well as helping me to maintain my weight loss long term, being active is creating precious memories and future healthy habits for my family. Emily and I go horse riding, too – something I would never have dreamt of doing at my biggest. I'm so full of energy, and I'm confident in a way I never was before I lost weight – and believe me, I'm enjoying every second! ●

I ♥ my role!

Finding out I'd won Slimming World's Top Target Consultant 2023 was such an honour, and it's the very best recognition I could ask for. The thing is, I feel like a winner every day. I'm living a life I'd never dreamt of, and I love what I do: helping others to achieve their weight loss dreams. My members are fantastic and they keep me motivated week after week. I never would have imagined finding my own happy weight would lead to such an amazing career opportunity.

If you're inspired by Rachel's journey and would like to find out more about becoming a self-employed Slimming World Consultant, visit slimmingworld.co.uk/become-a-consultant

WORDS: SARAH VENESS. PHOTOGRAPH ON P115: DAVID CUMMINGS. STYLING: CHARLOTTE SAWYER. HAIR & MAKE-UP: SARAH BULLETT. RACHEL WEARS: DRESS, BELT AND SHOES, ALL NEW LOOK. EARRINGS: JOANNA LAURA. CONSTANTINE AT FENWICK. BRACELET, BRANCH, RING, CLAIRE'S. HOLIDAY PHOTOGRAPH: WALT DISNEY WORLD, FLORIDA. SEE P119 FOR STOCKISTS

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Kate Dallas-Wood is happier and healthier after losing 7st 13lbs – and has a whole new wardrobe! See her story on p12

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TERMS & CONDITIONS

The Francis Hotel Competition (p49)

1. Visit slimmingworld.co.uk/magcomps to enter online on or before the closing date, 13 July 2023. Alternatively, send your entry form by post to The Francis Hotel Competition, *Slimming World Magazine*, Clover Nook Road, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 4SW. Entry form must be received by the promoter on or before the closing date, 13 July 2023. **2.** Only one entry per person is permitted. No purchase necessary. **3.** The competition is open to UK and Republic of Ireland residents aged 18 or over, except employees of Slimming World (or any other company that trades under the name Slimming World), Miles-Bramwell Executive Services Ltd, The Francis Hotel, or anyone professionally connected with this promotion (this does not include Slimming World's self-employed Consultants and Team Developers). **4.** No bulk or third-party entries will be accepted. No responsibility is accepted by the promoter for entries lost, damaged or delayed in the post. Proof of posting not accepted as proof of delivery. By submitting a competition entry, you are agreeing to be bound by these terms and conditions. **5.** The winner will be chosen at random by the promoter from all qualifying entries within 28 days of the closing date of the competition. They will receive a stay for two (winner and guest must be aged 18 or over) comprising: two nights' accommodation for two people sharing a Feature king bedroom or Superior twin bedroom; a bottle of Champagne on arrival; a full cooked or continental buffet breakfast on both mornings (including tea, coffee and fruit juice); a two-course lunch on one day from the set lunch menu; and a three-course dinner from the All Day Dining Menu (excluding drinks) on both nights in the hotel's Boho Marché restaurant. All subject to availability. Travel to and from the hotel and any other expenses are not included in the prize. The winner and their guest are responsible for ensuring they have valid and appropriate travel insurance. Dinner and lunch reservations will be made at the time of booking your break. The prize must be taken by 31 August 2024, excluding 23-27 December 2023 and 30 December 2023 to 2 January 2024, and is subject to availability. **6.** No correspondence will be entered into and the promoter's decision is final. The winner will be notified in writing by 10 August 2023 using the details provided on the entry form. Visit slimmingworld.co.uk/privacy-policy to find out how your data is handled. If Slimming World cannot contact the winner or the winner fails to claim the prize by 7 September 2023, the winner will forfeit the prize and the promoter may draw another winner. The prize is nontransferable and there is no cash alternative. The prize value is correct at time of going to press. The prize cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer or any existing bookings. **7.** By entering, the winner agrees to take part in publicity relating to the competition. The winner's name and county will be published in the Nov/Dec 2023 issue of *Slimming World Magazine*, unless a written objection is submitted to editorial@slimmingworld.co.uk. **8.** Slimming World is not responsible for: (i) any loss, damage or liability to entrants in relation to their entering the competition or accepting the prize; (ii) any failure by the winner to comply with The Francis Hotel's terms or instructions; (iii) any delay or failure due to an event outside Slimming World's reasonable control; (iv) any costs associated with the prize; (v) any terms or decisions of The Francis Hotel in relation to the fulfilment of the prize. **9.** The promoter is Miles-Bramwell Executive Services Ltd trading as Slimming World. Promoter's address: Clover Nook Road, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 4SW. The prize provider is The Francis Hotel, Queen Square, Bath BA1 2HH. **10.** Miles-Bramwell Executive Services Ltd is part of a group of companies that operates the Slimming World business through a network of self-employed Consultants. Full details can be obtained from the promoter upon request. **11.** The laws of England and Wales apply to this competition.

The Francis Hotel Reader Offer (p49)

1. Offer valid until 29 February 2024, excluding 23-27 December 2023, 30 December 2023 to 2 January 2024, and Saturdays between 23 November and 10 December 2023 when the Bath Christmas market takes place, subject to availability. To book, visit franchishotel.com/sworld and quote offer code: SW23 to receive your 20 per cent discount. **2.** You'll pay from £339 for a two-night stay at The Francis Hotel, based on two people sharing a Classic double or twin bedroom. Offer includes: a full cooked or continental buffet breakfast (including tea, coffee and fruit juice) each morning, a two-course lunch from the set lunch menu on one day, plus a one-hour guided relaxation and sound bath for two at the nearby Soul Spa. Lunch reservation can be made at the time of booking your break. Reservations for the guided relaxation and sound bath can be made with The Francis Hotel at franchishotel.com/sworld using offer code: SW23 at the time of booking your break. Offer subject to availability. **3.** Guests must be aged 18 or over. The offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other promotional offer or discount. Offer applies to new bookings only.

Frylight Competition (p38)

1. Visit slimmingworld.co.uk/magcomps to enter online on or before the closing date, 13 July 2023. Alternatively, send your entry form by post to Frylight Competition, *Slimming World Magazine*, Clover Nook Road, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 4SW. Entry form must be received by the promoter on or before the closing date, 13 July 2023. **2.** Only one entry per person is permitted. No purchase necessary. **3.** The competition is open to UK and Republic of Ireland residents aged 18 or over, except employees of Slimming World (or any other company that trades under the name Slimming World), Miles-Bramwell Executive Services Ltd, Dairy Crest Limited trading as Saputo Dairy UK, or anyone professionally connected with this promotion (this does not include Slimming World's self-employed Consultants and Team Developers). **4.** No bulk or

third-party entries will be accepted. No responsibility is accepted by the promoter for entries lost, damaged or delayed in the post. Proof of posting not accepted as proof of delivery. By submitting a competition entry, you are agreeing to be bound by these terms and conditions. **5.** Twenty winners will be chosen at random by the promoter from all qualifying entries within 28 days of the closing date of the competition. The winners will each receive an Outback Spectrum 2 Burner Hooded barbecue, subject to availability (gas bottle not included), worth £349.99 (prize value based on the retail price quoted on outbackbarbecues.com at time of going to press), plus free kerb-to-kerb pallet delivery by Outback International UK Ltd to a UK or Republic of Ireland address. The barbecue hood and body will arrive factory assembled; the trolley base will need to be built and attached to the main cooking unit. The prize is subject to availability and Dairy Crest Limited trading as Saputo Dairy UK reserves the right to provide any or all of the 20 winners with a substitute prize of the same nature and value. The product should be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Slimming World is not responsible for any harm or loss caused as a result of using the product. **6.** No correspondence will be entered into, and the promoter's decision is final. The winners will be notified in writing by 10 August 2023 using the details provided on the entry forms. Visit slimmingworld.co.uk/privacy-policy to find out how your data is handled. If Slimming World cannot contact a winner, or a winner fails to claim the prize by 7 September 2023, that winner will forfeit the prize and the promoter may draw another winner. The prize is nontransferable. **7.** By entering, the winners agree to take part in publicity relating to the competition. Specifically, the winners' names and counties will be published in the Nov/Dec 2023 issue of *Slimming World Magazine*, unless a written objection is submitted to editorial@slimmingworld.co.uk. **8.** Slimming World is not responsible for: (i) any loss, damage or liability to entrants in relation to their entering the competition or accepting the prize; (ii) any failure by the winners to comply with Outback International UK Ltd's terms or instructions; (iii) any delay or failure due to an event outside Slimming World's reasonable control; (iv) any costs associated with the prize; (v) any terms or decisions of Outback International UK Ltd in relation to the fulfilment of the prize. **9.** The promoter is Miles-Bramwell Executive Services Ltd trading as Slimming World. Promoter's address: Clover Nook Road, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 4SW. The prize provider is Dairy Crest Limited trading as Saputo Dairy UK, 5 The Heights, Brooklands, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 0NY. **10.** Miles-Bramwell Executive Services Ltd is part of a group of companies that operates the Slimming World business through a network of self-employed Consultants. Full details can be obtained from the promoter upon request. **11.** The laws of England and Wales apply to this competition.

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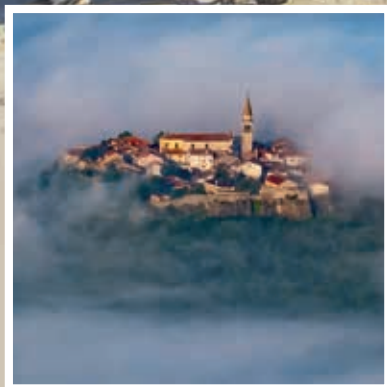
Congratulations to our Jan/Feb 2023 competition winners!

Frylight ProCook Casserole Set Competition

Sally Amey, Suffolk; Pam Anson, Warwickshire; Amanda Barnes, Dorset; Deborah Brick, West Midlands; Iain Craig, Argyll; Nicola Cudmore, Rhondda Cynon Taf; Adele Dark, Gloucestershire; Charlotte Dear, Northamptonshire; Angie Dodd, Staffordshire; Pauline Fallis, South Yorkshire; Vicky Gibson, East Yorkshire; David Heads, Northumberland; Heather Hughes, Pembrokeshire; Hayley Hyde, Hampshire; Beverley Kemp, Essex; Maurice Lambert, East Yorkshire; Wendy Lee, Worcestershire; Celia Marsh, Gwent; Stephanie Martin, Hampshire; Mary Mellor, Bristol; Karen Newnham, Essex; Faith Pidduck, Cheshire; Ann Ramsbottom, West Midlands; Natalie Roberts, Leicestershire; Judith Rodgers, Leicestershire; Hilary Russell, Northamptonshire; Judith Salmon, Suffolk; Mike Sharman, West Midlands; Christine Shelley, Suffolk; Carol Simpson, Devon; Leslie Stones, Manchester; Chrissy Strange, Devon; Ceri Tindale, Cornwall; Helen Tucker, Kent; Janice Watson, Fife

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The things I know now...

Brodie Marks, 37, works at Slimming World head office. She lives in South Normanton, Derbyshire, with her husband, David, and their sons, Harrison, nine, and Oscar, three. Brodie is a target member of Sue Rutter's Slimming World group in Selston, Derbyshire. She is 5ft 7ins tall and weighs 10st 7½lbs, having lost 4st 5lbs

● Food Optimising gives you freedom

Before I began working at Slimming World 16 years ago, I'd tried every diet going – and none had worked. Food Optimising couldn't have been more different! I was amazed by how simple it was and that I could enjoy eating as much Free Food as I liked.

● Being a healthy mum is my motivation

After Harrison was born in 2014, I stopped going to group and regained all the weight I'd lost. When getting pregnant for a second time proved more difficult, I felt really low. Food became a way to comfort myself and my weight spiralled further. When we found out Oscar was coming along, we were absolutely over the moon. I knew then that I wanted to be a healthy mum to my two boys, so in January 2020 when Oscar was three months old, I went back to group.

● Having family onside really helps

My eyes first met my husband David's over the coffee machine at work and, thanks to a little matchmaking from colleagues, we've been together for 15 years! He doesn't go to group, but he's a whizz at making Food Optimising spag bol and homemade burgers and chips. And when we don't fancy cooking, we have the Slimming World frozen meals from Iceland – all four of us love them.

● Me-time is important, too

Like lots of mums, I'd got used to putting all my focus on the kids. Going to group became my special time. Hearing the members talk about Slimming World's activity support programme, Body Magic, encouraged me to start running again – something I hadn't done in years. I did the London Marathon last year and it felt amazing to find that part of myself again. It was a wonderful way to celebrate my new life at target. ●





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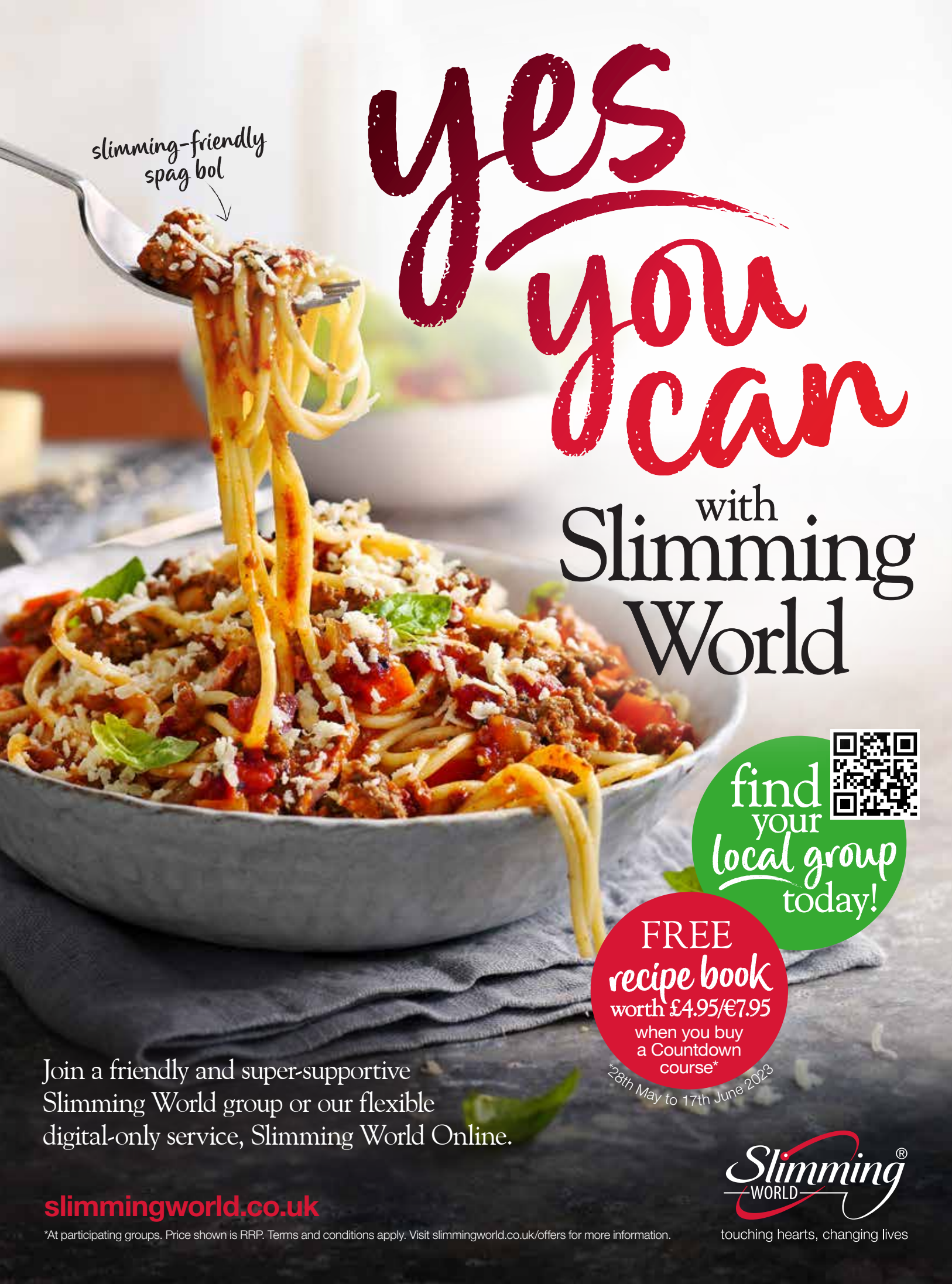
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