

REAL LIFE: "The mindset breakthrough that helped me lose 18st 8lbs"

Slimming World magazine

AUG/SEPT 2023

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Ambia has lost 5st
'My fresh start at 40'



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- School's out strategies
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Reach for your summer weight loss dreams with expert advice, tried-and-trusted recipes and inspiring real-life stories

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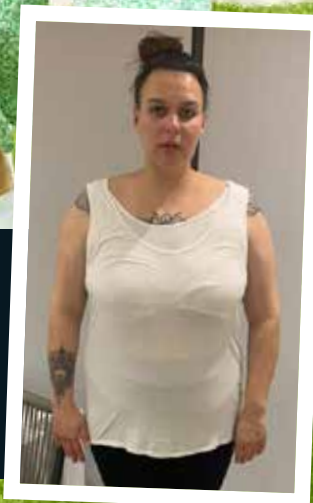
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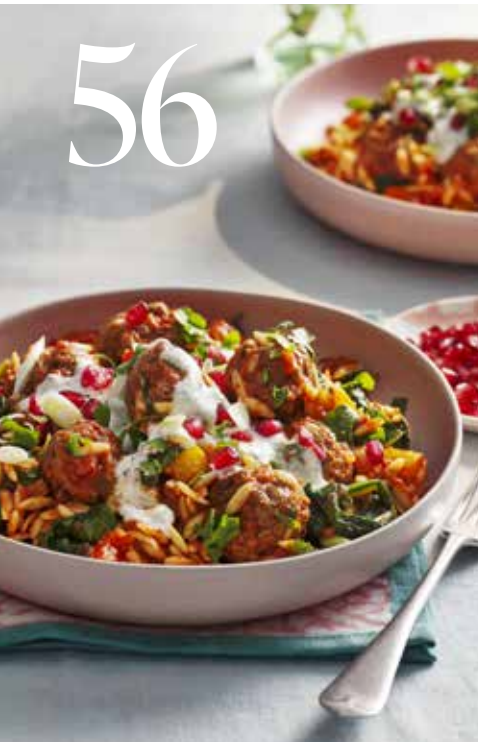
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COVER & CONTENTS CREDITS Cover – photograph: Paul Buller. Styling: Rachel Fanconi. Hair & make-up: Liz Kitchiner. Ambia wears: Dress, Closet London. Shoes, Aldo. Earrings, Coeur De Lion. Right-hand ring, Sif Jakobs Jewellery. Left-hand rings, both Ania Haie. Left – photograph: Paul Buller. Styling: Katrina Howley. Hair & make-up: Sarah Bullett. See p119 for stockists





Recipe index

Your at-a-glance guide to all the delicious dishes in this issue and Syns per serving

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- 45 Cajun spatchcock chicken with orange slaw Free SP
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- 46 Dr Pepper chicken with creamy mash, ½ Syn
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SWEET THINGS

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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 Primula Cheese 'n' Chives/wholemeal roll/reduced-fat mozzarella as a Healthy Extra
**Deduct 7 Syns if using the wholemeal pitta bread as a Healthy Extra

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● See page 73 for a full list of Syn values of advertised products.

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For many of us, high summer is a time when life changes tempo – whether it's a well-earned getaway, the juggle of school holidays or your diary bulging with barbecues. So it can be ever so tempting to press pause on your weight loss until life gets back to normal, only to feel frustrated when you start the autumn back at square one. It doesn't have to be that way. This issue of *Slimming World Magazine* is here to **help you enjoy the season while keeping your weight loss on track**. On page 31, we've a slimmer's guide to surviving the school holidays, while we reveal the three essential mindset questions that will fire up your motivation on page 100. We're also firing

up the barbie, with some **American-inspired recipes that are slimming friendly**...and so much tastier than a burnt sausage! (Turn to page 38.)

And because hot days and sultry nights bring their own challenges, there's an A-Z of summer health on page 108 to **help you feel confident and comfortable whatever the weather**. When it comes to inspiration, there's nothing quite like hearing it from someone who's reached their dream weight, so we have a host of **uplifting real-life stories** – including **cover star Ambia who lost 5st 1½lbs** while enjoying her food more than ever! With all that weight loss magic under your belt, all that's left is to raise a glass to your season of success with a Prosecco spritz (see page 11).

Here's to a summer of making precious memories – while building the future of your dreams!

SARA WARD, EDITOR

MEET SOME OF THIS ISSUE'S SLIMMERS



Adam Henley's half the man he was – no wonder he's *Slimming World's Greatest Loser 2023*...

Adam lost 18st 8lbs – p116



Losing over 11st helped Alison Berry conquer her fears. She's now a self-confessed adrenaline junkie!

Alison lost 11st 1½lbs – p23



Tom Walker-Drake's weight was affecting his self-esteem and health. Now his zest for life is back.

Tom lost 8st 5lbs – p90



Liv Canniffe shares the highlights of her weight loss journey and what she's learnt along the way.

Liv lost 4st 3lbs – p122

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

GET IN TOUCH!

We'd love to hear what you think about the magazine. Write to us at *Slimming World Magazine*, Clover Nook Road, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 4SW, call 01773 546 071, or email us at editorial@slimmingworld.co.uk



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Elderflower & mint spritz

FOR ONE: fill a glass with ice, then pour over 10ml elderflower cordial and 60ml chilled Prosecco. Top up with soda water or diet lemonade. Add a sprig of fresh mint and serve.

SYNS PER SERVING 3

Pink grapefruit gin spritz

FOR ONE: fill a glass with ice, then pour over 10ml gin (pink gin if you like!) and 60ml chilled Prosecco. Top up with soda water or diet lemonade. Add a slice of pink or red grapefruit and serve.

SYNS PER SERVING 3½

Raspberry rosé spritz

FOR ONE: fill a glass with ice, then add 1 tbsp pomegranate seeds and pour over 60ml chilled rosé Prosecco. Top up with soda water or diet lemonade. Decorate with raspberries on a cocktail stick and serve.

SYNS PER SERVING 2½

Meet Ambia

Ambia Ali, 40, lives in Manchester, with her husband, Syed, and her mum, Aisha

Height: 5ft

Starting weight: 13st 5½lbs

Weight now: 8st 4lbs

**WEIGHT LOST:
5st 1½lbs**

Ambia is a target member of Joanne Newbery's Slimming World group in Didsbury, Greater Manchester



Ambia's bright new beginning

At 39, with her health declining and weight rising, Ambia Ali didn't know what her future would hold. Now, after losing 5st in just 12 months with the help of her family and support squad at group, she's starting her 40s the fittest and healthiest she's ever been

BEFORE

I thought I couldn't lose weight because of my medication



Coming through the door, I could smell the aroma of delicious spices bubbling away. My mum, Aisha, had been making one of her signature dishes – a traditional karahi lamb curry. As she caught sight of the takeaway kebab in my arms, she sighed. 'Home-cooked food is so much better for you, Ambia,' she said. I knew she had a point. Mum's curries were the stuff of legend and I knew she'd have spent hours at the stove. But ready-made food, takeaways and meals out just seemed so much more exciting to me, whether it was going for a pizza with friends or grabbing a sandwich from the shop for lunch. I was in my 20s and enjoying life, and as I still fitted into my size 8s, I didn't see a reason to change my eating habits.

Another excellent cook joined the family when I met my husband, Syed, who was a chef. I still stayed wedded to my takeaways, though, and after we got married I noticed I was beginning to gain weight. I had epilepsy and I put my increasing size down to a change in my medication. As my dress size continued to creep up, I felt less and less like myself, and before long I'd stopped socialising altogether and bothering to do my hair and make-up. I remember the day I lost my love of clothes shopping, too: I had >

to return a size-14 leather jacket I'd been excited about when it was far too tight. I was that much in denial that I wrote to the company telling them their sizes were too small! In March 2020 when lockdown started, my weight gain seemed to accelerate. Soon I had to order new clothes in a size 16 and by the following year they were too tight as well. As well as epilepsy, I also had an underactive thyroid, and I had blood tests every three months. At one appointment my GP weighed me and, at 5ft tall and over 13½st, my body mass index (BMI) was in the obese range. 'Why don't you try Slimming World?' she suggested. 'I won't be able to lose weight because of my medication,' I replied. So I was puzzled when she said, 'Actually, I think you still could – it's possible.' Silently, I dismissed it. *How could that be, if they're what caused me to gain weight?* I thought, heading home feeling utterly defeated.



BEFORE
As my dress size crept up, I felt less and less like myself

On New Year's Eve in December 2021, a health scare changed everything – I felt dizzy when I walked upstairs and I was afraid to shower as I was sure I'd faint. I felt so tired that I spent the next few days in bed, and Mum and Syed were really worried. I went to my GP for a blood test and just hours later she called me back. 'Ambia, you need to go to A&E immediately,' she said. 'Can I go tomorrow?' I asked, blearily. 'No, you need to go right now,' she said, 'otherwise, you might have a heart attack.' As Syed drove me straight to hospital, I sat in the car wondering if I was going to die. It turned out I was severely anaemic, which meant my body wasn't getting enough oxygen. I'd had bouts of anaemia in the past, but never anything like this. Thankfully, I was stabilised with blood transfusions and iron, but it had been a wake-up call. I thought: *I'm only 39 and my life is rapidly going downhill. What happened to the bubbly Ambia I used to be? And what on earth is 40 going to look like for me?*

Once I was feeling well enough, I decided to take my GP up on her suggestion of joining Slimming World. I found my local group and, in February 2022, Syed dropped me off at the door. I was a bag of nerves, but my Consultant, Joanne, was reassuring from the word go. 'You've picked a great day to start,' she beamed. 'It's our taster day.' After she'd explained Slimming World's approach to me and the other new members, including all the food we could eat while Food Optimising, I quietly took a seat at the back to

see what this 'taster day' was all about. Lots of the members had brought in on-plan dishes they'd made at home. There was a delicious cheese and broccoli soup, as well as meringue swirls and jellies. I couldn't believe that people could eat food like this and lose weight. Joanne took me to one side to weigh in privately and she must have seen me cringe when the scales showed 13st 5½lbs. Putting her hand on my arm, she said: 'There's no judgment here, only support.' And as I thought back to the chatty, friendly session I'd just been part of, I could believe it was true.

Back home, I was excited to get started, and Mum and Syed stepped right in, asking me how they could help. I told them all about the Slimming World plan and, like a pair of pros, they started adapting their usual recipes for me. Mum would make a delicious broth curry with white fish, aubergine, courgette, onion and garlic, cooked without oil. Syed perfected an amazing lower Syn version of his chicken curry, made with

lots of Speed Free Food swede and butternut squash. I was so grateful for their support as I was getting to grips with changing my habits, and in my first week I lost 7½lbs.

I couldn't wait to tell Mum, still in disbelief that those delicious meals could have had such an effect. 'I knew you could do it!' she said. I never really ate fruit or breakfast before, but now I was up for trying something new. I'd start the day with fat-free natural Greek yogurt with some ground cinnamon stirred through, topped with lots of fresh strawberries and blueberries. For lunch, I'd put together something another member had recommended: four Healthy Extra crackerbreads with bacon medallions (being Muslim, I used turkey rashers instead), two light cheese slices for 2 Syns each and a big mixed salad. Dinner meant a Food Optimising curry, courtesy of Mum or Syed, and I'd snack on apples and hard-boiled eggs, plus low Syn Slimming World Hi-fi bars and fruity yogurts for a sweet fix. Now 10 weeks in and nearly 2st lighter, I decided I'd like to begin getting active with the Body Magic physical activity support programme. Syed agreed to help me and we got started with walks in the park together, building up to 30 minutes. We'd do our own little fitness class at home, too: jogging on the spot, doing jumping jacks and stretching.

I'd set a target to lose 3st, and I got there in five months. I knew I hadn't quite finished my journey, though, and I told Joanne I'd >

“Now I'd hit my weight loss stride, my confidence was growing, and I was starting to feel like the real me again”



AMBIA WEARS

p12: Jacket and trousers, both Hobbs London. Top, Quiz. Shoes, Aldo. Earrings, Yaa Yaa London. Right-hand ring, Sif Jakobs Jewellery. Left-hand rings, Ania Haie

Right: Dress, Closet London. Shoes, LK Bennett London. Earrings, Yaa Yaa London. Ring, Sif Jakobs Jewellery

p16: Jumpsuit, John Zack. Jacket, Quiz. Shoes, Aldo. Earrings, blue-stone ring and cuff, all Yaa Yaa London. Other rings, all Ania Haie



BEFORE
I felt like my life was rapidly going downhill

like to lose another 2st. Now I'd hit my stride, I loved helping other members. One new member mentioned that she didn't think she'd be able to lose weight because she was also taking medication for an underactive thyroid. 'I'm on medication for that, too,' I said. 'And I've lost over 3st already!' Encouraging others and sharing tips also helped with my motivation – and my confidence was really growing. I'd always been bubbly and chatty before my weight gain, and then I'd gradually retreated into my shell. Now I was feeling like the real me again. I knew it was Joanne and the group's support and belief in me that helped me get over that hurdle.

I'd come so far, but while my friends and family encouraged me to have a special birthday celebration, I still felt reluctant to do anything big for my 40th. I kept thinking back to that day in A&E, just shy of a year earlier, and there was a small part of me

that felt like I'd be jinxing myself to go out celebrating. Luckily, they weren't taking no for an answer, so I agreed to a fancy Japanese meal with my friends. I wore a bright pink size-10 dress, and I treated myself to that leather jacket I'd had to return – but this time in a 10. It fitted me perfectly and I felt fabulous! Back home with the family, Syed had made a gorgeous cake and I was given two special gifts. From Mum, I received a beautiful designer watch I'd had my eye on for years, and from Syed I got a fitness watch so we could track our workouts together. Even though I adored the designer one, I found myself wearing the fitness one far more often!

The day before my one-year Slimming World anniversary, I hit my final target weight. I had tears in my eyes as the group cheered and clapped. 'Ambia, you're my inspiration,' one of the other members told me. *Me? Really?* I thought. I'd been my group's Woman of the Year and Miss Slinky, and it was the most amazing feeling in the world to think I was spurring someone else on. And I knew I couldn't have achieved my 5st weight loss without my support squad in group – not to mention



my support squad at home! Throughout my journey I'd kept having blood tests every three months, and at my next appointment to discuss them, the doctor glanced at the screen and said with a big smile, 'Your results have improved every single time I've seen you!' My BMI was now in the healthy range, and while I needed to take my medication, knowing my weight was no longer an issue gave me the very best feeling.

Celebrating Ramadan this year was even more special than usual. I knew I could use my Syns to enjoy samosas and pakoras as part of the festivities, and that including the food I love is all part of my Slimming World

journey. My attitude towards food has changed completely, thanks to being surrounded by support and understanding each week...and never any judgment! It amazes me how much I've changed after just 17 months of going to group. I've rediscovered my love of getting glammed up – although these days you're actually far more likely to find me in activewear in case I fancy doing some spontaneous exercise! I still marvel at how energised I feel now, and the fact that I haven't been anaemic since I started my weight loss journey. I'm so much more in control of my health. In fact, at 40, I'm the happiest and healthiest I've ever been! ●

“The change in me is amazing. I still marvel at how energised I feel now and I'm so much more in control of my health”

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HIGH DAYS AND HOLIDAYS

Summer's a time when we want to look and feel our best, yet with our normal routines going out of the window, each day brings a fresh challenge. In this section, you'll find practical advice for the season, everyday ways to get more active, and top tips from slimmers who've made weight loss work for them – whatever the weather!

Round-the-clock FITNESS



When your schedule's packed, finding time (and energy!) to exercise can feel almost impossible. Cue our simple am-to-pm ideas, designed to slot seamlessly into your day

WORDS: LUCY GORNALL

For many of us it can feel like there aren't enough hours in the day to fit in fitness, so it's often the thing that gets sidelined when we're busy. Building little bits of activity into your day can be a game changer, and give you more energy to cope with everything you're juggling.

'Fitting activity into your schedule is a great way to get started with exercise – and create a routine you can turn into a habit,' says Dr Jacquie Lavin, Slimming World's special adviser on the science of weight management. 'And our Body Magic physical activity support programme is all about doing just that – helping you build the psychological commitment to upping your activity, redefining what you think of as exercise, and finding what works for you.' As well as being rooted in the science of mindset change, the Body Magic programme is personalised, so you choose when and where to start, and set your own pace.

Fit movement seamlessly around your daily routine with these simple ideas, or plan in some of your own. The more you stick to your new active habits day after day, the more likely they are to become second nature...and the sooner you'll be feeling the benefits inside and out!

7AM

Rise and shine

Believe it or not, your morning date with your toothbrush is a chance to get moving! Hooking a little activity onto a habit that's already ingrained makes it easier to stick to, like walking on the spot as you brush your teeth. 'If you have a little more time, help improve your flexibility and balance with a morning stretch session,' says Dr Jacquie Lavin. Slimming World members will find activity videos on the website and app – try five minutes of guided stretching or a quick and easy yoga-inspired workout.

MORE MORNING MOVES

- 1) Sit on your bed, then stand up without using your arms a few times – this helps build strength.
- 2) If you can, do the school run on foot or walk to work.
- 3) Drive to work? Park further away from the office, then walk, cycle to the station if you catch a train, or get off the bus or tube a stop earlier.

10AM

Max your midmorning

Do you spend your workday at a desk? Getting up and making a cup of tea is a great way to break up sedentary time – and sitting still less is one of the five active habits Slimming World members are encouraged to adopt for their overall health. 'For a little bit of everyday activity (another active habit), use a water machine further away from your desk for extra steps, or the loos on the next floor,' says Jacquie. At home, there are plenty more ways to slip in some active habits, from energetic chores to walking to the shops. If you're retired, volunteering, such as shopping for people who can't get outside, could really enrich your life emotionally as well as physically.

1PM

Take a (lunch) break

Wherever you are at lunchtime, a 15- to 20-minute stroll outside after eating can be a welcome break. The fresh air and exercise will lift your spirits, and if it's sunny, you'll get a hit of vitamin D, too! To make any walk more beneficial, turn it into a brisk one – that means you're doing moderate-

intensity cardio. Your breathing and heartbeat will be a little faster, and this counts towards your Bronze, Silver and Gold Body Magic awards if you're a Slimming World member. By the time you've hit Gold, you'll be doing the government recommendation of at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise a week. And all while making it a natural part of your routine!

Jog your memory

'Many smartwatches and fitness trackers have automatic notifications reminding you when to move throughout the day,' says Slimming World research associate Laura Holloway. 'If you don't have one, setting alarms on your phone can work just as well. Post-its can also be very useful!'

website start from just five minutes. From dance-based workouts to chair exercises, there are so many ways to get your heart rate up without leaving your living room. Or, when the

weather's nice, you could

head out into the garden. Weeding, sweeping, planting and mowing the lawn make you bend, lift, pull and push – putting all sorts of muscles to use.

3PM

The afternoon slump

Heavy eyes and a tired, sluggish feeling at about this time are all too familiar for many of us. But a little movement can help shake off those cobwebs, as well as add to your daily activity goals. Off on the school run? 'Set off a bit earlier and walk the long way round,' says Jacquie. 'If you're driving, don't stress about fighting for the spaces closest to school; park further away.' At home, take bits and bobs upstairs as you need to, rather than waiting to do all your tasks at the same time and carrying everything up in one go – each time you climb your stairs you're getting in some activity. At work, try standing up to take calls and turning a meeting into a walk and talk, or do a bit of stretching at your desk.

QUICK CHAIR STRETCH SESH

- Reach your arms overhead and gently lean left then right.
- Clasp your hands behind your back and push your chest out to stretch your chest and shoulders (you may need to stand up for this).
- Stretch your legs out in front of you as you gently lean down and reach forwards towards your toes.

4PM

Playtime or a pick-me-up

Use this time before the evening begins to move your body and do a bit of family bonding. 'Get outside in the garden or local park for a kickabout, play swingball or look for free tennis courts in the area,' says Jacquie. If you don't have little ones at home to entertain, the activity videos on the Slimming World members' app and

6PM

Dinnertime fun

Getting all the family involved in dinner prep benefits them as well. 'Whether it's chopping veg, stirring food in the pan or setting the table, it's all time away from sitting,' says Laura Holloway. 'While we're watching TV after dinner, my four-year-old daughter and I play games where we create activities for certain adverts. So we'll stand up and if an advert comes on for, say a car, we'll do five jumping jacks. If it's one for a supermarket, we'll balance on one leg, and so on. It's great fun, breaks up the time sitting down – and makes the ads pass quickly!' A short stroll after dinner can round off the evening nicely, too.

9PM

Bedtime wind-down

When you're settling down for the evening, some gentle stretches will help you get ready for bedtime. If you like a hot drink, squeeze in some final activity by clenching your bottom muscles as the kettle boils. Then, there's just time for a little balance on one leg as you brush your teeth, before you head to bed. Much like brushing your teeth, over time these changes will become routine as you gradually build up your activity. And with Slimming World's Body Magic programme to support you, you can rest assured you're never alone on the path to a fitter, happier you! ●

● 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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'Now life is full of adventure!'

Gone are the days when Alison Berry used to miss out on all the fun. Now, after losing over 11st and conquering her fears, she's not just existing, she's truly living

Alison, 64, is retired and lives in Hebburn, Tyne and Wear, with her husband, David, and daughter, Michaela. She's 5ft 5ins tall and weighs 11st, having lost 11st 1½lbs. Alison is a member of Carole Monk's Slimming World group in Hebburn

As I posed for the camera in the middle of a narrow rope bridge over the water, I couldn't stop smiling. A few years ago, I wouldn't have dared step foot on the bridge, let alone pause to take a photograph. Today, I'd been running from roller coaster to roller coaster at Toverland theme park in the Netherlands, and although I'd been on my feet all that time, I was ready for the next thrill!

I used to think I had a fear of wobbly bridges – I just couldn't walk across them, it didn't matter how long it took to walk round or how out of breath I got. And, at over 22st, roller coasters were a complete no-go. I was once told to get off a fun-fair ride in Newcastle when the safety bar wouldn't lock over me, and after that I became the world's best bag watcher. I'd pretend I preferred sitting on the sidelines, even though I was desperate to join in.

I had diverticulitis, a condition causing infections in the intestine, and after a particularly bad flare-up, I found myself in hospital with multiple organ failure. Although I pulled through, I was haunted by a dark thought: *if I died, would there be a coffin big enough for me?*

The next 10 months I spent recovering at home. My son, Scott, and his partner, Abby, came to visit with my gorgeous first grandchild, Joseph. Abby was planning to go back to work in a few months' time and asked if I'd look after him a couple of days a week. I was over the moon! I'd



My fear of bridges has gone – and I've become an adrenaline junkie!

always wanted to be a nana, and I couldn't wait to go swimming with him and take him to the park. Then I realised I wouldn't be able to do any of that. By then, I'd have a 10-month-old on my hands who was starting to be on the move – how was I supposed to keep up with him? I couldn't even bend down to cut my own toenails!

Abby had a copy of *Slimming World Magazine* and she showed me a story about a woman who'd lost 8st. She turned to me and said: 'I'm thinking of joining – would you come with me? I'd love the support.'

We walked through the double doors of the community hall for our first group and the room was buzzing with enthusiasm. Everyone was so friendly! Food Optimising

turned out to be a world away from the restrictive diets I'd tried before. I loved coming up with my own homemade recipes, including one for cheeseburger kebabs. Within 10 weeks I'd lost almost 3st and my diverticulitis symptoms cleared up. The condition would always be there, but I was no longer as uncomfortable as I used to be.

Going on to lose over 11st made me realise how much of my life I'd spent existing rather than living. In fact, I've become a complete adrenaline junkie. I've gone from not daring to step onto a bridge to doing a bungee jump off the Tyne bridge and abseiling down a wind turbine. Now my ambition is to do a wing walk. I wish I could bottle up this feeling and hand it out to other people – it really is quite magic! ●

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



'Family time feels better than ever'



Johdi Dinsdale's weight was taking the shine off being a new mum and her upcoming wedding. Now she's 5½st slimmer, brimming with energy and can't wait for the big day to arrive!

BEFORE
Physically, I couldn't do what other mums took for granted

Kneeling beside my little boy, Aubrey, I helped him scoop the wet sand into his plastic bucket and pat it down firmly with the spade. Just as we'd turned out a perfect sandcastle, the tide came swishing along the beach towards us, and we both leapt up and dashed away from the encroaching foam. Aubrey, then two, giggled as I picked him up and ran over to where my fiancé, Joe, was waiting with a towel to dry off our son's bare legs. 'I'd >

Meet Johdi

Johdi Dinsdale, 34, is an operations director. She lives in Hurst Green, Lancashire, with her fiancé, Joe, and their son, Aubrey, three

Height: 5ft 2ins

Starting weight: 15st 7½lbs

Weight now: 10st ½lb

WEIGHT LOST:
5st 7lbs

Johdi is a target member of Janet Barnes' Slimming World group in Nelson, Lancashire



My day on a plate

THEN

Breakfast White toast with peanut butter

Lunch White bread ham sandwich with crisps and chocolate brownies

Dinner Chinese takeaway of duck with pancakes and hoisin sauce, salt and pepper chips, rice, curry sauce and prawn crackers

Snacks Chocolate brownies and home-baked cakes

NOW

Breakfast Fat-free natural Greek yogurt with lots of berries

Lunch Omelette or a tuna salad with pickled pink onions, peppers, watercress, spinach, tomatoes and rocket

Dinner Portuguese peri-peri chicken with sweet potato from the *Slimming World Tray-mendous!* book, a Healthy Extra serving of halloumi and salad

Snacks Cooked skinless chicken breast pieces, fruit, or two Slimming World Hi-fi bars as a Healthy Extra

never have been able to get away that quickly a year ago,' I said with a laugh, as we wrapped Aubrey up and headed off along the beach at Lytham St Annes. Turning back, I saw Joe watching me with a smile as we bounded along the sand. I knew he was almost as grateful as I was that I had the energy to make the most of this beautiful family day out.

Only a year earlier, I'd dreaded leaving the house with Aubrey. I was convinced that everyone was looking at me and judging me because of my weight, and maybe – my deepest fear – even thinking I was unfit to be a mum. The truth was, I was judging myself. I got out of breath so quickly and I physically couldn't do the things most other mums took for granted, and it slowly ate away at my self-esteem. Everything had become Joe's responsibility, even changing our baby in public, because I knew if I knelt down on the floor I'd struggle to get back up again.

Tackling new challenges

I'd been a Slimming World member and almost at target in 2019. Then when we moved house and I learnt I was expecting Aubrey, I drifted away from group. I headed into the later stages of my pregnancy during the first lockdown, and took the advice about staying in very seriously. Now I was at home all the time, with the fridge and cupboards just steps away, and I'd developed a fierce craving for chocolate brownies. 'This is becoming a problem,' I chuckled to Joe. 'This child is going to be half baby and half brownie!' In June 2020, Aubrey was born and my deep love for him was the opposite to how I was feeling about myself – I'd grown so out of love with my own body it was affecting everything I did. If I walked into a room, my first thought was always: *I'm easily the biggest person here.* As soon as I could, I joined Slimming World. I attended group virtually, losing 2st – but nine months later, back at work and loving the chance to socialise again, I stopped going and regained what I'd lost and more. I desperately wanted to get back on track for Aubrey. 'I just want to be a good example for him,' I said to Joe one evening. 'I went through school being bullied about my weight – I don't want the same for Aubrey.' Every day felt like an effort, and the heaviest weight I was carrying around was the near constant self-loathing. Then it struck me: I'd done it before, so maybe it was time to give Slimming World a shot again now?

As I walked into Janet's group in August 2022, she greeted me with a huge smile; the evening was such a friendly, fun experience. At the end, Janet took me aside for my private weigh-in. I was full of fear as I stepped on the scales – 15st 7½lbs was the biggest I'd ever been. Seeing my stricken face, Janet said kindly: 'This is the moment where you're making a commitment to yourself to make a change.' It was such a relief to think of it that way. I suddenly felt as though I was at the beginning of a journey. I wasn't a failure. In that



'With the support of my group, I began to rebuild my shattered self-esteem'

moment, I started to believe I could succeed and, crucially, that I wouldn't regain any weight I lost this time. Just chatting to everyone made me feel focused and confident. I lost 10lbs in my first two weeks, which was so motivating.

The other thing spurring me on was staying for IMAGE

Therapy and getting personalised support for the week ahead. I could be completely honest about my struggles with my weight in group, and knowing they accepted me helped so much because it made me feel like I wasn't an awful person or a terrible mum – just human. With their support I gradually began to rebuild my shattered self-confidence. I soon started to see group as spending time with a bunch of friends, and we all loved throwing Janet a surprise party to celebrate her 19th anniversary as a Consultant.

I also learnt some amazing Slimming World mindset tools to help if there were stumbling blocks ahead, like the time when I was worried I'd go over my Syns on a family holiday abroad. 'The best way is to think about what you want out of your holiday, and also how you want to feel next time you step on the scales,' said Janet. 'Then visualise yourself >

BEFORE
I'd grown so out of love with my body, every day felt like an effort



there, and the situations that might crop up.' So I practised imagining being on holiday and making healthier choices in advance, and when I got there I was surprised at how easy it was to do it for real. And I was

delighted to find I'd lost weight when we returned.

At home, the Food Optimising meals I was cooking were going down very nicely with Joe and Aubrey. I'd choose things we could eat as a family, and Aubrey loved proudly letting us know he was at least partly responsible for making them. He became my little chef. He'd help me pick herbs from our pots in the garden to put on our favourite tuna pasta bake, and he became a dab hand at mashing up veg for our Sunday roast and swiping the veg peelings into the bin. Every time a meal was being served, he'd ask: 'Mum, did I make this one?' and beam up at me as I confirmed: 'Yes Aubrey, I couldn't have done it without you.'

Week by week, I lost weight consistently, which meant I could start thinking about something I'd been pushing to the back of my mind for years. Five years earlier, Joe had chosen a romantic evening sunset in Tenerife to drop to one knee to propose, but there hadn't been a time where I'd felt confident

enough about my appearance to set a date. Even fate didn't seem to be on my side. When we moved house, I lost my engagement ring – and that made the whole idea of getting married feel even further away.

That is, until Christmas 2022 when Joe slipped a replacement engagement ring onto my by-then much slimmer finger. Feeling far happier in my own skin than I had in years, it seemed like the right time to begin making plans and look for a wedding dress, which was now an exciting prospect! In January, I invited my mum, Paula, and Joe's mum, Gill, to go shopping with me, dying to show them a dress I loved. I stepped out of the changing room to reveal the gown of my dreams, and twirled around, hearing Mum breathe: 'It's beautiful.' As she and Gill gazed at me with smiles on their faces, that moment in the bridal shop brought everything home. With 2st still to go to my target, I already felt and looked better than I could have ever imagined a few months ago. I'd come so far, and I knew it was the support of my amazing group that had helped me turn my life around.

Finding fitness

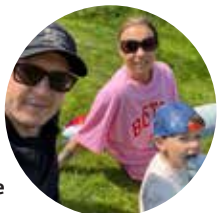
This March, I felt ready to add the final piece into my weight loss journey by starting the Body Magic activity support programme. I knew regular activity would support my weight loss, and I began by volunteering to walk our seven-year-old English bulldog, Neville, much to his dismay. He's quite stubborn and gets out of puff quite easily, so until then his walks had been little more than a gentle stroll. I could tell he was a bit miffed at having to step things up as we took longer walks in the countryside around our village. But I was on a roll, so I decided to give him a break and do some exercise on my own, following a couch to 5K programme. It took a few weeks and some burning in my chest, but as the weeks went by, I went from barely being able to run to doing the full 5km without stopping. It felt like such an amazing achievement that I immediately began training for this year's Race for Life 10K, a target I'm confident I can reach because I know that if you build your fitness up gradually, you really can do anything!

I hit my target of 10st in May this year and celebrated with a whole new wardrobe. I feel so different playing with Aubrey now I'm active and full of energy. I can get up off the floor with ease, or race about with him and never get out of breath. And my wedding dress? Now I've lost 5st 7lbs, it needs to be taken in. On the day in 2024 when I walk down that aisle to see my soon-to-be-husband smiling back at me, I'll spare a thought for the anxious, insecure new mother who was once frightened to leave the house. And I'll be saying a silent thank you to all the people who helped me get to this very best version of myself! ●

INTERVIEW: KEVIN DONALD; PHOTOGRAPHS: PAUL BULLER; STYLING: KATRINA HOWLEY
HAIR & MAKE-UP: SARAH BULLETT; SEE PT19 FOR STOCKISTS

Johdi's new life

I've come so far from the anxious person I used to be



I no longer dread leaving the house, and I have the energy to enjoy our days out together



It's lovely to make tasty Food Optimising meals we can sit down and eat as a family



Aubrey has become my little chef and loves helping out when I'm in the kitchen

'I'm active and full of energy, and I love being the healthy role model I always wanted to be for my son'



JOHDI WEARS

p24: Jacket, Primark. Vest, Matalan. Trousers, New Look. Sandals, Next. Sunglasses, Zara. Earrings, Mango. Bracelet, H&M

p25: Jacket, Next. Top and skirt, both New Look. Sandals and earrings, both ASOS

p26: Dress and sandals, both H&M. Sunglasses and earrings, both ASOS. Necklace, Primark. Bracelet, H&M. Hat, Marks & Spencer

p27: Shirt and top, both H&M. Jeans, Bershka. Sandals, Stradivarius. Earrings and necklace, both

ASOS. Bracelet, H&M. Bag, Primark

p28: Jacket and shoes, both H&M. T-shirt, River Island. Jeans, New Look. Earrings, Matalan

Right: Dress, New Look. Shoes, bracelet and bag, all H&M. Earrings, ASOS

AUBREY WEARS

p24: Shirt and hat, both Marks & Spencer. T-shirt, H&M. Shorts and sandals, both Next. Bubble maker, stylist's own

JOE WEARS

p24: Shirt, Marks & Spencer. T-shirt, H&M. Shorts and sunglasses, both ASOS. Trainers, Next

HEINZ SALAD DRESSING SPRAYS

DON'T LET IT ALL POUR OUT



School holiday



When your normal routine goes out the window, it doesn't mean your weight loss goals have to go right out after them. Read on for strategies to help you enjoy the summer break with your family *and* keep those slimming plans on track

WORDS: REBECCA WOOLLARD ILLUSTRATION: LIZ KAY

School's out for summer! And as much as we love spending more time with the little treasures, between being a full-time kids' entertainer and catering service, and juggling days in and out of work, those summer holidays can come with a few added slimming challenges. If you're stressing about how you'll stay on track, we're here to help. Because however busy your summer's looking, with a bit of forward planning and a few tried-and-trusted tricks, you can smash

your weight loss goals, while still joining in the fun. (The only thing we can't do is stop the kids squabbling over whose turn it is to go on the trampoline!)

Find a new routine

One of the key reasons the summer holidays can shake up your slimdown is the sudden change in routine, says Carolyn Pallister, head of nutrition, research and health at Slimming World. 'The trap is if you start to think, "I'll just put it on hold for now and get back to Food Optimising when the

kids go back to school!'. It's absolutely possible to stay on track, no matter what you've got in the diary. Planning ahead makes all the difference. If you're going out for the day, you could have your usual slimming-friendly breakfast in the morning, then take packed lunches if you're not sure what food will be on offer. And there are bonuses to that change in routine, too. Once after-school clubs have stopped for the summer, it might be a rare opportunity to sit down together at the table for dinner, without the usual dashing about! >



Enjoy the sunshine

Have you ever found yourself staring at the menu of an overpriced burger van where healthier choices are non-existent? For days out and summer activities, thinking ahead about what food will be available is a sure-fire way to protect your weight loss (and stop you from using up Syns on things you don't really fancy). Do a quick search online to find out what your options are. Are there places to get something Free or lower Syn, or would you rather take a Food Optimising picnic so you can eat as much as you like, and save cash, too? The bonus of deciding early is that you'll be able to add any extras to your weekly shop and avoid those unplanned trips to the supermarket. 'And while you're thinking about your picnic, you could plan some activity at the same time,' says Carolyn Pallister. 'Anything that gets you moving is a great start...you might even find a new family favourite!' A trip out that includes some active fun, such as Frisbee, bat and ball, or a scavenger hunt (you'll find ideas online), is also a great way to tire out young kids – every parent's dream!

Summer treats made slimming!

You don't need to miss out on all your family favourites – with a few Food Optimising swaps and tips, they're all on the weight loss menu

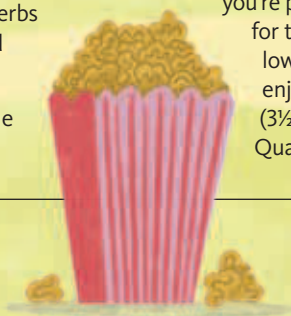
FISH AND CHIPS: A 220g serving of chip-shop chips is 14 Syns and a medium battered fish is 14½...so you're looking at 28½ Syns in total. To fit a chippy tea into your day for just 7 Syns, take the batter off the fish to make it Free, add Free mushy peas and share a portion of chips.

CINEMA-STYLE POPCORN: Switch your regular sweet popcorn (30 Syns) for our homemade version. Cook 25g plain popcorn kernels (4½ Syns without oil), drizzle over 1 level tbsp maple syrup (2 Syns) and stir. Or, for a grown-up, savoury version, scatter your popcorn with dried herbs like thyme or oregano, and a little salt.

ICE LOLLIES: Pick up some cheap lolly moulds at the

supermarket and it's easy to make your own Syn Free iced treats using diet soft drinks. You'll find plenty of delicious lolly recipes on the Slimming World members' website and app – and some of them include frozen Speed Free Food fruit, too (as do our lush lemonade lollies on p83).

CRISPS AND CHOCS: Fun-size bags of chocolates aren't just for the younger family members – a mini treat is a great way to satisfy your sweet tooth without using all the Syns of a larger bar. If you're planning to stock up on crisps for the kids, there are some great lower Syn multipacks you can enjoy, too, such as Pom-Bear (3½ Syns per 13g bag) and Quavers (4½ Syns per 16g bag).



Stock up and cut stress

Popping to the shops can be more challenging when you've got little ones to wake, dress, or tear away from cartoons, so it's great to have something on standby. Fill the fridge, store cupboard and freezer, and you'll be all set for making on-plan meals, as and when they're needed. And keep the fruit bowl full of your favourites, as you'll be more likely to reach for a piece when it's enticing and on display. Having a cupboard full of pulses, canned tomatoes, potatoes, and dried rice, noodles and pasta will all help with rustling up meals in no time, too. Keep frozen cauliflower, broccoli, green beans and other Speed Free Food veg in the freezer, so if you're caught short, you can still reach that weight loss loving

third of a plate. Planning your week's meals in advance can also take a lot of the day-to-day stress out of cooking and shopping. Get the family involved in choosing some from the magazine, website and app that really tickle their taste buds and they'll be more enthusiastic about their dinners, too. If you have time, batch cooking your favourites and filling up the freezer means you've got meals in the bank for those extra-busy days. And Slimming World's frozen meals (available at Iceland) are also there to help – they're all Free, and with plenty of family-pleasers to choose from, they're a great alternative to a takeaway when there's just no time to cook.

'While you're thinking about your picnic, you could plan some activity at the same time. Anything that gets you moving is a great start'





Make life easier

There are lots of ways to feed the family without spending ages in the kitchen, and the best thing is, they're easily adaptable to suit everyone's tastes. For lunch, quick pasta dishes and hearty salads, beefed up with protein like lean meat, fish or hard-boiled eggs, are great choices. At dinnertime, one-pan meals are a clever way to save time on the washing-up (Slimming World's new *Tray-mendous!* cookbook, available from your Consultant or via the online shop, is packed with smart ideas). Or go for simple crowd-pleasers like curry, chilli or bolognese, make twice what you need and freeze the leftovers for another day – a gift to the future you! Carolyn recommends 'build your own' meals to keep everyone happy. 'For things like burgers, loaded potato skins or baked potatoes, put out a range of different toppings on the table and let everyone create their own mix. It's fun for the kids, and means that the whole family can make their meals exactly how they like them – including you.'

Big days out

Theme park food choices are notoriously high in Syns and can really add to the expense – so to protect your weight loss (and your wallet), take a picnic. Food Optimising pasta salads, sandwiches using your Healthy Extra wholemeal bread or pittas with Free fillings, hard-boiled eggs, veg sticks and homemade houmous all travel well in a cool bag. And if you've kept your meals Free, you'll have Syns to spare for something you really fancy, like an ice cream – a small Mr Whippy with a cone and a flake is 8½ Syns. Some large-scale attractions have cafes with Free or low Syn options on the menu and, with any luck, there'll be a menu online, so you can plan ahead. Great choices include a jacket potato with baked beans and salad (skip the butter and salad dressing), or a salad bowl – load up on a rainbow of salad and lean meat, and ask for any dressing on the side, so you can decide how much you add. If you're a Slimming World member, you can use the app to tot up Syn values quickly and scan barcodes on packaged food, helping you make the best choices for your weight loss.

Be kind to yourself

Take heart if you're feeling deflated because your best-laid plans have gone sideways... 'There will be days when things do go a bit awry, and that's OK,' says Carolyn. 'It's just one day, and it's been fun, so don't spoil that by being hard on yourself afterwards. Treat tomorrow as a fresh start – one setback won't stop you getting closer to your weight loss dreams!'

WEIGHT LOSS LOVING SNACKS

Snacks don't have to mean Syns – these Healthy Extra options are great for day trips

HEALTHY EXTRA 'A' CHOICES

- 5 The Laughing Cow Light cheese triangles or 3 The Laughing Cow Original cheese triangles
- 4 Dairylea Light cheese triangles or 3 Dairylea Original cheese triangles
- 3 Seriously Tasty Original Cheese Squares
- 3 Babybel Light cheeses, 2 Mini Babybel Original cheeses or 2 Babybel Plant-Based cheeses
- 40g reduced-fat Cheddar/Emmental/smoked processed cheese, or 40g Daiya Medium Cheddar-Style Farmhouse Block
- 35g Edam

HEALTHY EXTRA 'B' CHOICES

- 40 pistachio nuts
- 35 unsalted peanuts
- 20 almonds
- 5 Real Foods Original/Sesame Corn Thins
- 4 Ryvita Original/Dark Rye Crispbreads
- 2 Slimming World Hi-fi bars (available from group or to online members)
- 60g dried apricots

Catch of the day

Net yourself a shoal of slimming-friendly meals with a little help from Frylight

From fish and chips to Mediterranean-style seafood pasta, there's an ocean of delights to enjoy when you're Food Optimising. As a Free Food and filling source of protein, fish and seafood can be a valuable part of your weight loss week. The Syns can notch up if your fish is fried, breaded or covered in sauces, though – unless you've got some weight loss loving tricks up your sleeve, that is!

Putting a low Syn spin on all sorts of seafaring faves is simple with Frylight on standby, as it's Syn Free when you're Food Optimising. With six versatile varieties to choose from – Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Sunflower Oil, Butter Flavour, Coconut Oil, Rapeseed Oil and Garlic Oil – it's a convenient way to bake, roast, stir-fry or grill your food.

A few sprays of Frylight Sunflower or Rapeseed Oil will soon get our fabulous fish fingers and chips going (recipe right). While our colourful prawn pasta (recipe far right) couldn't be easier. It pairs brilliantly with Frylight Extra Virgin or Garlic Oil, uses just a handful of ingredients *and* is ready in a flash – perfect when you're tight on time. So if you haven't caught on to Frylight yet, a slimming taste of the sea is just a spray away!



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



Fish fingers & skinny chips with horseradish tartare sauce

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING 2½

READY IN 1 hour

1kg floury potatoes, such as Maris Piper or King Edward, cut into skinny chips

Frylight

2 medium eggs, lightly beaten

50g panko breadcrumbs

600g skinless and boneless white fish fillets (such as cod, haddock or coley), cut into 12 large fingers

Lettuce and cucumber salad, to serve

Lemon wedges, to serve

FOR THE HORSERADISH TARTARE SAUCE

150g fat-free natural fromage frais

4 cornichons, finely chopped

15g fresh flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

1 tbsp capers in brine, drained, rinsed and patted dry

½ level tbsp horseradish sauce

1 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 and spray with Frylight. Season and cook for 40 minutes, or until golden, turning halfway.

2 While the chips are in the oven, you can start making the fish fingers. Put the eggs in a shallow bowl and the breadcrumbs on a plate. One by one, dip the fish fingers in the egg, shake off the excess, then gently roll all over in the breadcrumbs, shaking off any excess again. Lay on a large, non-stick baking tray in a single layer.

3 When the chips have been cooking for 25-30 minutes, turn up the oven to 220°C/fan 200°C/gas 7. Spray the fish fingers with Frylight and bake on the shelf above the chips for 10-15 minutes, or until the breadcrumbs are golden and the fish is cooked through.

4 When the chips and fish fingers are nearly ready, mix together all the sauce ingredients and season. Serve 3 fish fingers per person with the chips, a quarter of the horseradish tartare sauce, the salad and lemon wedges.



Prawn, tomato & chilli pasta

SUPER SIMPLE

SERVES 4

Free

READY IN 20 minutes

400g dried fusilli pasta

Frylight

400g cherry tomatoes

400g cooked peeled king prawns

4 large garlic cloves, crushed

1 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped

200g rocket

Zest and juice of 1 lemon

Fresh basil, roughly torn, to serve

1 Cook the pasta for 2 minutes less than the pack instructions. At the same time, spray a large, non-stick frying pan with Frylight and put over a medium heat. Add the tomatoes and cook for 1-2 minutes until beginning to soften. Add the prawns, garlic and chilli with a splash of water, and cook for 1-2 minutes until the prawns are piping hot.

2 Scoop out 250ml of the pasta cooking water, then drain. Add the pasta and rocket to the frying pan with half the pasta water. Cook for 1-2 minutes, stirring frequently, until the rocket is wilted and the sauce is light and glossy looking, adding more cooking water if needed.

3 Season to taste with the lemon juice and a little salt and pepper. Divide the pasta between 4 bowls. Top with the lemon zest and basil to serve.

Putting a low Syn spin on all sorts of fish and seafood dishes is simple with Frylight on standby – and a few sprays is all it takes to get your seafaring faves going!

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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 64

WHAT'S COOKING?

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

#SWMagazineMakes

Mango & raspberry no-churn sorbet, recipe p86

120
brilliant recipes,
ideas & tips in
this issue

Sizzlin' food *with* friends



**FROM LEFT TO
RIGHT:** Chloe,
Danny, Jenn,
Matt and Helana

Consultant Jenn Higgins hosts an American-style barbecue for her group members Chloe, Danny, Matt and Helana – and it's one heck of a feast! From pulled pork burgers and Cajun chicken to chilli steaks, these all-star eats will go down a storm at any alfresco get-together

LIFESTYLE PHOTOGRAPHS: DAVID CUMMINGS FOOD PHOTOGRAPHS: MAJA SMEND



GET YOUR BBQ GOING

If you have a charcoal barbecue, the quickest and easiest way to light it is with a chimney starter. They're widely available and they pile up the coal with a firelighter underneath, so the heat is drawn up through the coals. Otherwise, just make a small pile of charcoal in the base of your barbecue, put a couple of firelighters on top and allow them to burn into the charcoal. Once the coals are burning, add a few more on top, wait until they've all turned white, and then spread them out a bit and start to cook. If you have a gas barbecue, just follow the instruction manual.



Chilli steaks & chips with charred corn salad

Just when you thought steak and chips couldn't get any better, we added a spiced-up, summertime twist

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

Free

READY IN 50 minutes

1kg floury potatoes, such as Maris Piper or King Edward, cut into chips

Low-calorie cooking spray

1 tsp mild chilli powder

½ tsp ground cumin

4 lean rump steaks, visible fat removed

FOR THE SALAD

1 red onion, finely sliced

Juice of 1 lime

2 large cucumbers, halved lengthways

4 corn on the cob

50g fresh coriander, chopped

1 tsp sumac (optional)

1 If you're using a charcoal barbecue, light it now (see *Get your BBQ going* on the previous page). 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 and spray with cooking spray. Season and cook for 40 minutes, turning halfway.

2 While the chips are cooking, mix the onion and lime juice. Season and set aside. Drag a teaspoon down the centre of each cucumber to remove the seeds, then slice diagonally and put in a large bowl. When

the barbecue's ready, add the corn and cook for 8-10 minutes, turning until charred in places. Set aside to cool.

3 Rub the chilli and cumin over the steaks and season. Cook on the barbecue for 3-4 minutes on each side for pink to well done. Set aside to rest. Slice the kernels off the corn. Add to the cucumber with the onion, lime juice and coriander. Scatter with the sumac (if using) and season. Slice the steaks and serve with the chips and salad.

Just a little chilli and cumin gives these juicy steaks a lip-smacking kick'



‘There’s so much fun and laughter’

Jenn Higgins, 51, is a Slimming World Consultant with groups in South Normanton and Huthwaite, Derbyshire. She lives in South Normanton with her partner, Kayleigh. Jenn is 5ft 11ins tall and weighs 14st 2lbs, having recently become a member again and losing 12lbs

When I joined Slimming World as a member 23 years ago, I never imagined the impact it would have. Not only did it lead to a new career as a Consultant, Slimming World’s head office was where I met my partner, Kayleigh.

Each and every one of my members has been very special to me. When I first started running my groups, there were only two men who joined, but gradually that number increased – as did the fun, laughter and general banter! I remember when Matt joined, he was a bit quiet and clearly wondering what he’d got himself into. It wasn’t long before the ladies in my group took him under their wing, though, making sure he felt included. Before long, he was the life and soul, sharing jokes and stories with us all every week.

Seeing my members become more confident and open about their journeys has been so rewarding. I love the way they’ve rallied around each other with mountains of support, encouragement and advice – especially the way they’ve inspired one another to take part in Slimming World’s Body Magic physical activity support programme.

Lately, with the weather hotting up, everyone’s been swapping barbecue tips. Some members worry about taking their own healthy choices along to eat, but I tell them, ‘Just be honest.’ I always find people are very accommodating when you tell them you’re trying to lose weight, especially if you explain how important it is to you. It doesn’t hurt if you bring something delicious along for the barbecue, too!

Often, I’ll take homemade lean beefburgers, or skinless chicken thighs marinated with herbs and spices ready to throw on the grill. I’ll also make a mixed bean salad, with coriander, fresh lime juice, chillies and fat-free vinaigrette. It’s not a problem if I don’t have time to make something from scratch beforehand, though. Last week, we went to a family barbecue and I took frozen Slimming World burgers from the Iceland range – they went down a storm!



JENN WEARS
p38 and above: Top, Wallis. Trousers, Boden. Sandals, Truffle Collection at ASOS. Earrings and bracelet, both Jon Richard. Ring, Lovisa



DANNY WEARS
p38 and above:
T-shirt, French
Connection.
Shorts, Next.
Trainers, Original
Penguin. Bracelets,
both Danny's own

'I've lost weight eating proper food!'

Danny Colbert, 46, is a buildings maintenance worker and lives in South Normanton, Derbyshire, with his wife, Sam, and son, Reece, 16. He's 5ft 11ins tall and weighs 14st 1½lbs, having lost 1st 8½lbs at Jenn's South Normanton group

On a sunshine holiday in Lanzarote, I had the fright of my life. I was suddenly gripped by crushing chest pains in front of my wife, Sam, and son, Reece. Sam called a doctor to the holiday complex, and it was an anxious wait wondering: *is this a heart attack?* It was a huge relief to learn that it was 'only' high blood pressure, but it was a wake-up call nonetheless.

I knew I'd been gaining weight - looking in the mirror was all the evidence I needed - and the extra pounds were making everything that bit harder. I played left back for a veterans' football team, and I was having so much difficulty covering the ground that I'd started to worry I might be on the bench if I didn't improve my fitness.

Sam had already joined Jenn's group with a friend, and now that holiday health scare had given me the push I needed to do something about my own weight. So in October 2022, I joined Jenn's group, too. As someone in a physical job, who likes a hearty dinner, it suited me that I could have big portions of my favourite foods, like pasta. I'd never been much of a cook, so Sam took on the task of adapting our family dishes to fit in with Food Optimising - like low Syn creamy chicken pasta topped with a Healthy Extra portion of cheese. And it wasn't long before the pounds started to come off.

After losing weight, Sam and I both found that we had a new lease of life. So much so that we started

looking for ways to make the most of all the extra energy...and the answer turned out to be roller-skating! I'm the last person I'd ever have imagined zooming around on roller-skates, but now it's our favourite thing to do as a family.

I'm slimmer, fitter and healthier than I've been in a long time. My blood pressure's at a healthy level and I'm moving around the football pitch much more easily, too. Sam used to joke about me having to hang up my football boots, but thanks to Slimming World, that's not going to be happening any time soon!





Boston baked beans with sausages

With bacon pieces, black treacle, garlic and herbs, these beans are next level!

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4
SYNS PER SERVING 1
READY IN 50 minutes

8 frozen Slimming World Pork Sausages (from Iceland)

Low-calorie cooking spray

1 fresh or dried bay leaf

3 sprigs of fresh rosemary

1 onion, finely chopped

2 garlic cloves, grated

4 rashers lean smoked back bacon, visible fat removed, sliced

2 tbsp tomato purée

2 level tbsp reduced sugar-and-salt tomato ketchup

A few dashes of Worcestershire sauce

1 tbsp red wine vinegar

1 level tbsp black treacle

3 x 400g cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed

Chopped fresh chives, to serve

600g cooked fresh or frozen broccoli, to serve

1 If you're using a charcoal barbecue, light it now (see *Get your BBQ going* on p39). When the barbecue's ready, spritz the sausages with cooking spray. Cook on the barbecue for 20-25 minutes, then slice.

2 Spritz a large, non-stick saucepan with cooking spray and put over a medium heat. Cook the herbs, onion and garlic for 5 minutes, adding a splash of water if needed. Add the bacon and cook for 5 minutes.

3 Tip the rest of the ingredients (except the chives and broccoli) into the pan with a can of water. Season, bring to a simmer and cook gently for 10-15 minutes. Pick out the bay leaf and rosemary, then divide between 4 bowls and top with the sausages and chives. Serve with the broccoli.



'Lemon, fresh herbs and breadcrumbs are a delicious topping for white fish'

Lemony sea bass with potato salad

The foil parcel method is perfect for fish, as it stops it drying out – and locks in all the lovely flavours

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4
SYNS PER SERVING 1
READY IN 45 minutes

4 sea bass fillets

2 lemons, 1 sliced and 1 zested

20g panko breadcrumbs

30g fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped

10g fresh chives, finely chopped

FOR THE SALAD

500g new potatoes, boiled and drained

1 red onion, finely chopped

2 tbsp fat-free natural Greek yogurt

1 level tbsp extra-light mayonnaise

1 tbsp capers, drained

2 tsp red wine vinegar

500g runner beans, trimmed, halved widthways, boiled and drained

20g fresh chives, finely chopped

1 If you're using a charcoal barbecue, light it now (see *Get your BBQ going* on p39). Take a large sheet of foil and cover with a sheet of baking paper. Put 2 sea bass fillets

in the middle of the baking paper, skin-side down. Cover with the lemon slices, then put the other fillets on top, skin-side up. Season, then bring up the sides of the foil and scrunch together to make a parcel.

2 For the salad, tip the potatoes into a bowl with the onion. Stir together the yogurt, mayo, capers and vinegar, and season. Add to the potatoes along with the runner beans and chives, and gently stir so everything's coated in the yogurt mixture. Set aside.

3 When the barbecue's ready, put the sea bass parcel on and cook for 15 minutes, or until the fish is white and flaking. Toast the breadcrumbs in a non-stick pan over a medium-high heat. Toss with the lemon zest, parsley and chives, and season.

4 Open the parcel, turn the top 2 fillets the right way up, then evenly scatter over the breadcrumb mixture. Divide the sea bass and potato salad between 4 plates to serve.



HOW TO SPATCHCOCK

This method is ideal for barbecues as it increases the surface area of the chicken.

You can either ask your butcher to do this for you, or follow these steps: flip over your chicken, then using a sharp pair of kitchen scissors, cut down one side of the parson's nose (the arrow-shaped 'tail'), all the way along the backbone. Now cut down the other side and remove the backbone. Flip it back over and press down hard on the breasts. You'll hear the wishbone snap and the chicken will flatten out.

Cajun spatchcock chicken with orange slaw

Team smoky spices with a citrus side for a mouthwateringly good combo

A LITTLE EFFORT

SERVES 4

Free

SP

READY IN 1 hour 15 minutes

3 sprigs of fresh thyme

1.8kg whole chicken, spatchcocked (see *How to spatchcock left*)

Low-calorie cooking spray

1 tsp Cajun spice mix (see *Cook's notes on p37*)

Juice of 1 lemon

FOR THE SLAW

3 large oranges, peel and pith removed with a sharp knife, cut into segments

½ small red cabbage, shredded

½ white cabbage, shredded

2 carrots, coarsely grated

Juice of 1 lemon

Fresh coriander leaves, to serve

1 Preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Put the thyme in the middle of a wide, shallow, non-stick roasting tin. Sit the chicken on top and spritz with cooking spray. Scatter with most of the Cajun spice mix and pour over the lemon juice. Roast for 40 minutes. If you're using a charcoal barbecue, light it when the chicken's been roasting for 20 minutes (see *Get your BBQ going on p39*).

2 Put all the slaw ingredients in a bowl and stir together. Season and set aside.

3 When the barbecue's ready, add the chicken and cook for a further 15-20 minutes, turning now and then. Discard the thyme, and the skin and visible fat from the chicken. Slice and evenly scatter over the rest of the Cajun spice mix. Serve with the slaw.





Dr Pepper chicken with creamy mash

Our marinade makes for sweet and sticky chicken that's surprisingly low in Syns...

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING ½

READY IN 1 hour, plus cooling

330ml can Dr Pepper Zero

2 level tbsp reduced-sugar-and-salt tomato ketchup

1 tsp smoked paprika

2 tbsp tomato purée

A few dashes of Worcestershire sauce

1 tbsp cider vinegar

8 skinless and boneless chicken thighs, visible fat removed

4 courgettes, sliced into 0.5cm thick rounds

2 peppers (1 red and 1 green), deseeded and sliced into large chunks

FOR THE MASH

800g floury potatoes, such as Maris Piper or King Edward, chopped into chunks

60g fat-free natural yogurt

1 egg yolk*

5 spring onions, finely sliced

20g fresh chives, finely chopped

1 Put the Dr Pepper, ketchup, paprika, tomato purée, Worcestershire sauce and vinegar in a small, non-stick saucepan, and bring to the boil. Turn down the heat to medium and bubble for 10 minutes until the marinade has reduced by two-thirds. Leave to cool to room temperature. Put the chicken in a bowl and pour over the marinade.

2 If you're using a charcoal barbecue, light it now (see *Get your BBQ going* on p39). Boil the potatoes for 12-15 minutes, then drain and put back over a low heat for 2 minutes to dry. Add the yogurt and egg, and mash well. Season, then stir in the spring onions and chives, and keep warm on the hob.

3 When your barbecue's ready, add the chicken (keeping the marinade) and veg. Cook for 15-20 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through – baste the chicken regularly with the marinade and turn every so often. Stop basting 5 minutes before serving so the marinade heats through. Divide between 4 plates with the mash and veg, and season.

**Pregnant women, the elderly, babies and toddlers are advised to have eggs showing the British Lion stamp if eating raw or partially cooked eggs. If not using British Lion eggs, always ensure the eggs are cooked through*



'My confidence is soaring – and it feels amazing!'

Chloe Fitchett, 27, is a physiotherapy assistant and lives in Nottinghamshire with her fiancée, Nikki. She's 5ft 3ins tall and weighs 11st 1½lbs, having lost 4st 6½lbs at Jenn's South Normanton group

Sitting on the seafront together, we watched as the sun slowly dipped below the sparkling waves. My partner, Nikki, and I were on holiday in Devon and I hadn't been too enthusiastic when she'd suggested an evening walk to see the sunset. Now, I was glad she'd persuaded me. 'It's beautiful...' I started to say, turning towards her – and then stopped. Nikki was on one knee, holding out a ring. 'Will you marry me?' she asked.

It couldn't have been a more perfect moment – all the more so because for the first time in our three-year relationship, the thought of being the centre of attention filled me with joy rather than fear. I'd always struggled with my weight, but it was during lockdown that my unhealthy eating really escalated. My mum had health issues and was considered vulnerable, which meant I'd had to move out and live on a university campus so I could continue in my job as a physiotherapy assistant in the NHS.

I found myself comfort eating because I missed my family so much, and as my weight went up, my self-confidence went in the opposite direction. When I joined Jenn's group in October 2021, the scales showed 15st 8lbs – the heaviest I'd ever been. In contrast to the critical way I'd been talking to myself, though, there was no judgment from anyone.

By now, Nikki and I had moved in together, and she loved all the Food Optimising meals I cooked. Slimming World's *Take 5* cookbook helped keep our dinners simple, and chilli made with lean mince and lots of veg became my signature dish. I also realised that, with a little bit of researching ahead for great menu choices, we could still enjoy meals out at the weekend. I didn't feel like I was missing out on anything and yet each week I was seeing losses on the scales.

By the time we drove down to Devon in May 2022, I'd lost over 2½st. With my confidence soaring, nothing held me back from saying yes to Nikki's proposal. Our wedding day is coming up soon and I can't wait for Nikki to see me in my beautiful size-12 dress. For the first time in my adult life, I feel happy with the way I look and it's the most amazing feeling.



CHLOE WEARS

p38 and above:
Dress, Lipsy London
at Next. Shoes,
Glamorous at ASOS.
Ring, Jon Richards

‘I’m head chef at home now’

Matt Gibson, 52, is a contracts manager. He lives in South Normanton, Derbyshire, with his wife, Liza, and they have two grown-up daughters, Natasha and Alisha. Matt is 5ft 10ins tall and weighs 16st 1½lbs, having lost 3st 9½lbs at Jenn’s South Normanton group

After dropping my wife, Liza, off at the supermarket where she worked, as usual I caught sight of the poster on the wall advertising the local Slimming World group. Up until then, I’d done a good job of ignoring it, but today, for some reason, it wouldn’t stop niggling at me.

I’d moved from an active job as a building site supervisor to being sat at a desk all day, and my weight had been steadily going up. Now, I was pushing 20st, and it was increasingly difficult to deny the effect it was having on my life. For years, I’d been a member of a rambling club, enjoying striding out over the Peak District every other Sunday. But my knees, feet and ankles were starting to ache under the strain of my extra weight, and I was getting out of breath very quickly.

The next time I dropped Liza off at work, I pointed out the Slimming World poster and said: ‘I think it’s about time I went along to that...’ And she didn’t disagree! Even so, as a guy working in a very male environment, I wasn’t entirely convinced a weight loss group was the place for me, and it took some courage to walk through Jenn’s doors in January this year. Straight away, though, I felt tremendous support from everyone there. And although at first I tended to stay quiet during group discussions in IMAGE Therapy, it wasn’t long before Jenn was having trouble shutting me up!

Joining Slimming World has turned out to be the best decision I ever made. I’m back walking in the hills every weekend and often cover around 15 miles altogether, completely wheeze- and pain-free. The real plus for me, though – and Liza – is that I’ve discovered a love of cooking! I’d never spent much time in the kitchen before, but hearing everyone’s recipe ideas and

tips in group inspired me to have a go at making my own Food Optimising meals from scratch. Soon I was knocking up everything from low Syn curries and diet-cola chicken to my favourite crustless quiche.

Liza’s thrilled to let me take over the cooking duties and has become a real fan of my new-found skills. In fact, she gives every meal I cook a score out of 10 – and I’m very proud to be able to say that I’ve never had lower than a seven!



MATT WEARS
p39 and above:
Shirt, ASOS.
Jeans, Matalan.
Trainers, Gola.
Watch, Matt’s own






Slow-cooked pulled pork burgers with rice salad

Cooked low and slow, then barbecued, our pork shoulder meat just melts in the mouth...

A LITTLE EFFORT

SERVES 6

 (pork only)

SYNS PER SERVING 6

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

READY IN 4 hours 40 minutes

1.2kg boneless pork shoulder joint, visible fat removed

1 tbsp hot smoked paprika

2 tsp ground cumin

½ tsp dried red chilli flakes

3 garlic cloves, crushed

3 tbsp tomato purée

2 tbsp cider vinegar

6 x 60g wholemeal rolls, split open

FOR THE RICE SALAD

250g dried basmati rice

1 cucumber, diced

1 red onion, finely sliced

Seeds from 1 pomegranate

25g fresh flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

25g fresh coriander, roughly chopped

FOR THE GREENS

Low-calorie cooking spray

300g spring greens, roughly chopped

Juice of 1 lemon

1 Preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Put the pork in a non-stick roasting tin. Mix the spices, garlic, tomato purée and vinegar, then massage all over the pork.

2 Cover with foil and roast for 20 minutes. Turn the heat to 150°C/fan 130°C/gas 2 and cook for 3 hours. Uncover, then cook for 30 minutes, or until the pork falls apart when pressed with a spoon. If it looks like it's drying out, add a splash of water. If you're using a charcoal barbecue, light it when

the pork's cooking for the final 30 minutes (see *Get your BBQ going* on p39).

3 At the same time, cook the rice following the pack instructions, then drain. Fluff with a fork and leave to cool. Once at room temperature, stir in the rest of the rice salad ingredients and season.

4 When the barbecue's ready, gently add the pork and cook for 30 minutes, basting with the juices every now and again for a lovely smoky flavour. Leave to rest for 10 minutes.

5 While it's resting, spray a large, non-stick frying pan with cooking spray and put over a medium-high heat. Fry the greens for 3-4 minutes until wilted. Season and add the lemon juice.

6 Shred the pork. Divide between the rolls, and serve with the salad and greens.

'I've been enveloped in love and support'

Helana Watson, 48, is a company director and lives in Newton, Derbyshire, with her husband, Leigh. They have three sons, Callum, 24, Hayden, 22, and Benjamin, 18. She's 5ft 10ins tall and weighs 12st 8lbs, having lost 4st 2lbs at Jenn's Huthwaite group

My weight loss journey hasn't been a straightforward one, and whenever the going's got tough, it's been so reassuring to know I have my friends at group to fall back on. I call them my security blanket - the people who are always there to pick me up when I need that extra bit of help.

Like a lot of mums, I spent years thinking only about my family and what they needed, and it had an effect on both my weight and self-esteem. So, in 2015, I decided it was time to do something for myself. Somehow, I managed to lose 2st on my own, but it took such a long time and felt so difficult, that when I heard friends talking about Slimming World, my ears pricked up!

As soon as I started Food Optimising, I knew I'd found something that would work for me, and within a year I'd lost 4st. Then, life took a turn for the worse. In 2017, I lost my lovely dad, and for a long while I was completely bereft. I felt like so much had been taken away from me...

One thing I knew for sure, though, was that no one could take my Slimming World group away. I knew they'd envelop me in love and support, and they did. Seeing them each week gave me something to focus on as I dealt with my grief - they were literally my reason for getting up in the morning. Whatever else I was going through, Jenn and the group were there to pick me back up with care and compassion.

One of the things they encouraged me to do was use the Body Magic programme to work some activity into my day. Much to my surprise, I discovered I loved running on the treadmill! We had one at home and I'd get up early to do a walk before breakfast. Soon, I was running, and then eventually sprinting towards the end. And it wasn't just my fitness that was improving, I was starting to feel the mood-boosting benefits, too.

That gave me the confidence to try kayaking - something I'd always fancied doing, but never believed I could. Now, my husband, Leigh, and I plan all our breaks and holidays around getting out on the water. I joined Slimming World to lose weight and ended up gaining a whole new attitude to life! ●



HELANA WEARS
p39 and above:
Dress, Karen
Millen. Sandals,
Ravel. Earrings
and bracelet,
both Jon Richard

RECIPES & FOOD STYLING: LIZZIE KAMENETZKY. PROP STYLING: MORAG FARUQHAR AND DAVINA PERKINS. INTERVIEWS: KEVIN DONALD
FASHION STYLING: SHARNA VALENTINE. HAIR, MAKE-UP & GROOMING: SARAH BULLETT AND LIZ KITCHENER. SEE P19 FOR STOCKISTS

Berry tasty!

Summer fruits are at their best right now, and you can enjoy the pick of the crop courtesy of Co-op 100 per cent British Berries



ON THE GO

It's easy to keep your Co-op British Berries cool and fresh if you're out and about. Line a sealable tub with kitchen paper that's been run under cold water and squeezed out, then pop in the berries

Mixed berry Eton mess

SUPER SIMPLE

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING 3½*

**Count 2½ Syns if using the sweetener*



READY IN 10 minutes

4 plain meringue nests

1 tsp vanilla extract

500g fat-free natural Greek yogurt

1 level tbsp icing sugar or sweetener granules

700g mix of fresh Co-op British blueberries, raspberries, and hulled and quartered strawberries

5g fresh mint leaves

1 Crumble the meringue nests into a bowl, keeping some in large chunks. In a separate bowl, mix the vanilla extract, yogurt and icing sugar or sweetener. Stir in half the meringue and half the berries, being careful not to break up the meringue too much.

2 Evenly layer up the yogurt and remaining meringue and berries in 4 dessert glasses. Top with the mint and serve with any leftover berries.

Co-op British Strawberries, £2.25 RRP for 400g, and Co-op British Blueberries and British Raspberries, £2.25 RRP for 150g, are available from Co-op stores in the UK (subject to availability)**



There's so much to love about summer – long light evenings, picnics in the park, and a whole host of sweet, brightly coloured British berries in season and ready to eat. And you don't have to grow and pick them yourself to enjoy them at their best!

Co-op 100 per cent British Berries are an easy and convenient way to enjoy fresh and delicious summer fruits. Because berries are Speed Free Food fruits, they make for a perfect snack, and they're great in all sorts of weight loss loving breakfasts and desserts. Plus, as they're brimming with vitamins and minerals, vibrant berries

can support your healthy balanced diet when you're Food Optimising.

For a fruity and filling start to the day, layer up Co-op British Berries with a Healthy Extra portion of cereal or overnight oats. And for a slimming-friendly alternative to strawberries and cream, topping a bowlful with fat-free natural yogurt or fromage frais is an easy swap. Or, for something simple yet sophisticated, our Eton mess recipe (right) hits the spot. Creamy yogurt, crunchy meringue and juicy Co-op British Berries is a classic summer combo that's simple to make – and tastes stunning!

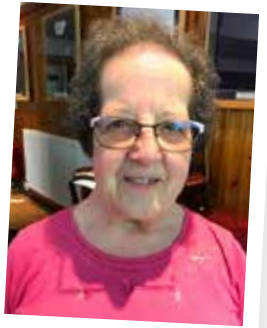
'I'd love a no-cook idea for hot summer days'

Slimming World member Sheila Kidney was after a quick and easy meal idea that didn't involve spending ages at the cooker – so we came up with this taste of sunshine!

Q 'While I love to share meals with friends, I'm not one for spending too much time in the kitchen, especially when the weather warms up. Can you suggest a Food Optimising recipe that's simple to prepare, tastes special and leaves me with time to head outside for a chat?'

Sheila, 76, lives in Gilmerton, Edinburgh. She's lost 2st ½lb and is a member of Helen Anderson's Slimming World group in Dalkeith, Midlothian

Our food editor, Rebecca Woollard, says: 'This colourful, filling and flavour-packed dish just shouts summer! It's ready in less than 30 minutes – and you don't even need to turn on your oven or hob.'



Hot smoked salmon couscous

SUPER SIMPLE

SERVES 4

Free

READY IN 25 minutes

- 250g plain dried couscous
- 2 medium courgettes, peeled into ribbons with a vegetable peeler (discard the seeded cores)
- Juice of 2 lemons, plus zest of 1
- 300g cherry tomatoes, quartered
- 1 bunch spring onions, finely sliced
- 80g watercress
- 150g fat-free natural yogurt
- 20g fresh dill, chopped
- 4 hot smoked salmon fillets

- 1** Put the couscous in a bowl and pour over 250ml just-boiled water. Pop a plate over the top and set aside for 10 minutes.
- 2** At the same time, put the courgettes in another bowl with half the lemon juice and a scattering of salt. Toss to coat, then leave to soak for 10 minutes.
- 3** When the couscous is soft, fluff up with a fork and spoon into a serving dish. Stir through the tomatoes, spring onions and watercress. Drain the courgettes, gently pressing out any excess liquid with the back of a spoon. Stir into the couscous.
- 4** Mix the yogurt with a third of the dill and the remaining lemon juice, and season. Flake the salmon over the top of the couscous and drizzle with the yogurt dressing. Scatter over the leftover dill, the lemon zest and some freshly ground black pepper to serve.



TOP SWAP
You can switch the salmon for 500g ready-cooked plain skinless chicken breast, shredded over the top – recipe stays Free

'The fresh dill and lemon zest are lovely finishing touches – I will use them again!'

PHOTOGRAPH: GARETH MORGANS. RECIPE: REBECCA WOOLLARD. FOOD STYLING: LOLA MILNE. PROP STYLING: MORAG FARQUHAR



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— FREE FOOD FESTIVAL —

Created by you...

With aprons at the ready, Slimming World members took to their kitchens to fine-tune their favourite dishes ready for this year's Free Food Festival competition. And the results are in...

PHOTOGRAPHS: GARETH MORGANS





1st place

Kev Smith



Kev, 44, has lost 2st 9½lbs at Leanne Saunders' Slimming World group in Daventry, Northamptonshire

'I was always convinced I couldn't cook – although Leanne, who's my partner

and my Consultant, would say, "It's not that you can't, it's that you won't!" Turns out she was right... Inspired by seeing the recipes on the packaging of the Slimming World Free Food range in Iceland, I started with a simple one-pan Spanish chicken, which turned out surprisingly well. Since then, I've been building up my confidence in the kitchen, and when I heard about the Free Food Festival competition, I decided to give it a go. I'm a fan of orzo and Leanne had introduced me to harissa spice mix, so I combined the two to create a pasta and meatball dish with a spicy twist. I couldn't believe it when I won, and Leanne couldn't be more proud!'

Harissa meatballs with orzo

Spice up your meatballs with a chilli twist – it's up to you how much you add

A LITTLE EFFORT

SERVES 4

Free



READY IN 1 hour

Low-calorie cooking spray

2 onions, finely diced

1-2 tbsp harissa spice mix – use 2 tbsp if you like things spicy (see *Cook's notes* on p37)

3 tbsp tomato purée

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

3 red or yellow peppers, deseeded and diced

1 tsp garlic granules or 2 garlic cloves, crushed

2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes

300g dried orzo pasta

100g fat-free natural yogurt

10g fresh mint, finely chopped

200g spinach

10g fresh coriander, finely chopped

3 spring onions, finely sliced

1 pomegranate, halved and seeds scooped out

1 Spray a non-stick frying pan with cooking spray and put over a medium heat. Add half the onions along with 2 tbsp water, and cook for 4-5 minutes until soft, stirring.

2 In a small bowl, mix the harissa and tomato purée with 1 tbsp water to make a paste. Put half the paste in a medium bowl

with the softened onions and mince, and season. Mix well and roll into 28 equal-size balls. Spray a large, deep, non-stick frying pan with cooking spray and put over a medium-high heat. Fry the meatballs for 5 minutes until brown all over. Set aside on kitchen paper to drain.

3 Wipe out the pan with kitchen paper. Add the leftover diced onions and the peppers with 2 tbsp water, and cook for 4-5 minutes. Stir in the garlic and the rest of the harissa paste. Tip the tomatoes into the pan along with half a can of water and bring to the boil. Add the meatballs to the sauce, turn down the heat to medium, and simmer for 15 minutes.

4 While the sauce is simmering, cook the orzo following the pack instructions and drain well. In a small bowl, mix the yogurt with the mint and season to taste.

5 After 15 minutes, stir the spinach through the sauce to wilt it. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the orzo. Season to taste and divide between 4 bowls. Drizzle over the mint yogurt and scatter over the coriander, spring onions and pomegranate seeds. Serve straight away.

COMING SOON!

As the winning recipe, Kev's dish will be rolled out to join Slimming World's Free Food range – look out for it at an Iceland store near you!





Jhopadee pie with cucumber raita

Curried mince with a tikka mash topping takes the classic cottage pie in a new direction

A LITTLE EFFORT

SERVES 4

Free



READY IN 1 hour 10 minutes

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

2 onions, finely diced

3cm-piece fresh root ginger, grated

3 garlic cloves, crushed

½ tsp each of ground ginger, turmeric and cinnamon and chilli powder

3 tbsp tomato purée

380g can spinach, drained and squeezed out

1 tbsp tikka curry powder (see *Cook's notes* on p37)

250g tomatoes, diced

600g green vegetables, such as broccoli and trimmed green beans

FOR THE TOPPING

1 tbsp ground turmeric

1 tbsp tikka curry powder (see *Cook's notes* on p37)

3 sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 3cm pieces

3 potatoes, peeled and cut into 3cm pieces

25g fresh coriander, finely chopped

FOR THE RAITA

500g fat-free natural yogurt

Juice of ½ lemon

1 garlic clove, crushed

1 medium cucumber, halved lengthways, seeds scooped out and grated

1 Dry-fry the mince with some seasoning in a large, non-stick frying pan until browned all over. Drain in a sieve and wipe out the pan with kitchen paper.

2 Put the pan over a medium heat, add the onions along with 2 tbsp water and cook for 4-5 minutes until soft, stirring. Add the fresh ginger, garlic, ground ginger, turmeric, cinnamon, chilli powder and tomato purée, and cook for 2 minutes.

3 Tip the browned mince back into the pan along with 300ml water. Bring to a simmer, then cook over a low heat for 15 minutes until thickened. Season to taste.

4 While the mince is cooking, preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6 and make the topping. First, bring a large saucepan of water to the boil with a little salt and add the turmeric and curry powder. Add the potatoes and boil for 15 minutes. Drain well, then mash with most of the coriander.

5 Tip the mince into a medium, 3-litre baking dish. Mix the spinach with the tikka curry powder and spread it over the mince, followed by the tomatoes. Top with the mash, season with black pepper and cook in the oven for 25-30 minutes until golden.

6 While the pie is in the oven, mix together all the ingredients for the raita and season with a pinch of salt. Tip into a small serving

2nd place

Rosa Legeno-Bell



Rosa, 36, has lost 2st 2lbs and she's a Slimming World Online member

'I help secondary schools make their history curriculum more diverse and representative – and I think that's reflected in my

Free Food Festival recipe, too. It was my friend, Nia, who helped me come up with the idea of blending different cuisines when we were talking about a delicious curried mince dish I'd made. We realised we could use it to create an Indian-inspired version of cottage pie. Jhopadee is Hindi for cottage – so we christened it Jhopadee pie!

bowl, top with a twist of black pepper and set aside. Boil the veg for 3-4 minutes until tender, then drain. Divide the pie between 4 plates and serve with the raita and vegetables.

simply the best

Salmon & dill linguine

Who doesn't love a delicious pasta dish that's ready in no time?

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 2

Free

READY IN 20 minutes

200g dried linguine

Low-calorie cooking spray

75g sugar snap peas, halved lengthways

75g green beans, trimmed and halved lengthways

75g broccoli florets, cut into bite-size pieces

1 small red pepper, deseeded and finely sliced

1 bunch spring onions, finely sliced

1 garlic clove, crushed

2 skinless and boneless ready-cooked salmon fillets, around 80g each

100g fat-free natural Greek yogurt, at room temperature

15g fresh dill, chopped

1 Cook the linguine following the pack instructions. While the linguine is cooking, spray a large, non-stick frying pan with cooking spray and put over a medium heat. Add the sugar snap peas, beans, broccoli, pepper and spring onions, and stir-fry for 5 minutes until starting to soften.

2 When the linguine is ready, drain and keep a cup of the cooking water. Add the garlic and 2 tbsp of the linguine water to the frying pan, and cook for 1 minute.

3 Take the pan off the heat and tip in the cooked and drained linguine. Flake the salmon fillets into the pasta, and add the yogurt and most of the dill. Stir everything together gently, being careful not to break up the salmon too much. Add a little more of the linguine water to loosen if it's looking dry. Divide between 2 bowls and scatter over the rest of the dill to serve.

3rd place

Joy West



Joy, 67, has lost 2st 9½lbs at Russell Palmer's Slimming World group in Nailsea, Somerset

'Food Optimising has become a way of life for me. While I have lots of Slimming World cookbooks, I still

like to come up with my own recipes – it's fun finding out which ingredients go well together. I developed this as a way of using up some salmon and vegetables left over from the day before. It was so tasty, I wrote it down so I could recreate it, not for a minute thinking it would end up winning me a Free Food Festival prize!'





Fiesta time!

Alfresco eating with family and friends is even tastier with Primula Cheese 'n' Chives

You've taken the covers off the garden chairs, set the table, and you're ready to serve up a Mexican-inspired feast that's also deliciously slimming friendly. So, the last thing you usually want to see is drizzle...that is, unless it's a drizzle of Primula Cheese 'n' Chives!

It's a source of calcium and protein, and 55g of Primula Cheese 'n' Chives is a Healthy Extra 'a' when you're Food Optimising (or 6 Syns). And its wonderfully cheesy flavour, teamed with the hit you get from real chopped chives, lends itself to squeezing over all sorts of tasty low Syn summer dishes.

Use Primula Cheese 'n' Chives in a pasta salad, over baked potatoes, or as a topping for a Slimming World burger. Or, drizzle it over our tasty fajita-loaded wedges (right) for a colourful garden party crowd-pleaser that will wow your guests, whatever the weather!

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 'n' Chives is available from major supermarkets, £1.85 RRP for a 140g tube. For more info, visit primula.co.uk



Chicken fajita-loaded wedges

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING 6

Deduct 6 Syns if using the Primula Cheese 'n' Chives as a Healthy Extra

READY IN 1 hour

1kg floury potatoes, such as Maris Piper or King Edward, cut into wedges

Low-calorie cooking spray

1 red onion, sliced into thin rings

2 limes, 1 juiced, 1 cut into wedges

4 skinless and boneless chicken breasts

3 tbsp fajita seasoning (see Cook's notes on p37)

3 peppers (any colour), deseeded and sliced

2 onions, sliced

220g Primula Cheese 'n' Chives

15g fresh coriander, leaves picked

1 Preheat your oven to 200°C/ fan 180°C/gas 6. Spread the wedges on a large, non-stick baking tray in a single layer and spray with cooking spray. Season and cook for 45 minutes, turning halfway.

2 In a small bowl, mix the red onion with the lime juice and ¼ tsp salt. Set aside to pickle lightly.

3 Put the chicken between 2 sheets of baking paper and use a rolling pin to flatten to about 1cm thick (you may need to do this in batches). Evenly coat the chicken in half of the fajita seasoning. Put a large, non-stick frying or griddle pan over a high heat. When it's hot, cook the chicken for 3 minutes on each side, or until cooked through. Set aside on a board to rest for 5 minutes, then cut lengthways into 1cm-wide slices.

4 While the chicken's resting, spray a large, non-stick frying pan with cooking spray and put over a medium-high heat. Stir-fry the peppers and onions for 7 minutes. Add the rest of the fajita seasoning and cook for 1 minute, stirring.

5 Put the Primula Cheese 'n' Chives in a small saucepan and put over a low heat for 1-2 minutes until warm. Tip the wedges into a serving dish and top with the peppers, onions and chicken. Use a teaspoon to drizzle the Primula Cheese 'n' Chives evenly over the top. Scatter over the pickled onions and coriander. Divide between 4 plates and serve with lime wedges.

Kitchen SECRETS

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

Get to know your gadgets

When you're making dips, soups, salsas and sauces, it can be hard to know which gadget is best for the job. So the good news is a food processor and stick or jug blender will cover all your needs!

Processors whizz food around between two blades. They're best for dry mixtures like houmous or tomato salsa, rather than liquids.

Blenders work with centrifugal force, sucking your ingredients up into the blades, then throwing them out again once blitzed. Their smaller blades and sucking action mean they should be used for soups, sauces and thinner purées – and you'll get super-smooth results if you blend your ingredients for long enough.



IN SEASON...

Peaches and nectarines

Did you know these beautiful blush stone fruits are in fact the same thing? It just depends on whether or not they have a 'fuzzy' gene! They're at their best right now, so here are a few ways to enjoy them



IN A SALAD Chop ripe (but not too soft) peaches or nectarines into a salad with rocket, sliced spring onions, torn mint leaves and a splash of balsamic vinegar. Serve with grilled chicken breast – delish!

AS A SALSA Dice peaches or nectarines, then mix with chopped chives, finely diced red onion, a little red wine vinegar and some salt and pepper. Spoon over grilled white fish, prawns or lean pork steaks.

FOR BREKKIE The night before, make up overnight oats by layering a Healthy Extra portion of plain porridge oats with fat-free natural yogurt, then cover and chill in the fridge. In the morning, top with sliced peaches or nectarines, some lemon zest and a swirl of fat-free natural yogurt.

FINISH WITH A FLOURISH

Finely slice spring onions into long strips and soak in iced water for 15 minutes. They'll curl up and turn crisp – perfect on stir-fries, fish fillets or lean pork steaks.



LET THE JUICE LOOSE

To soften up hard lemons or limes, roll them firmly on your worktop before slicing and squeezing. The pressure will break down the cell walls and help them juice more easily.

Step-by-step sticky rice

Thai-style sticky rice has a slightly different cooking method to normal long grain or basmati. Follow our steps for spot-on results



1 Put your dried sticky rice in a bowl, cover well with cold water and mix with your hands. The water will turn cloudy as the rice releases its starch.



2 Drain and rinse briefly, then repeat four or five times until the water is almost clear. Drain for the final time, then tip into a saucepan.



3 Cover with water to around a thumbnail's depth above the rice. Bring to a simmer, then bubble for 1 minute. Add the lid and cook on low for 15-20 minutes.



4 Once tender and all the water has been absorbed, gently scoop it out with a shallow spoon so you don't break the grains. Serve straight away.



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Just £4.95/€7.95 RRP to Slimming World members in group. If you're a member of Slimming World Online you can buy a copy through the online bookshop. 10p/€0.10 from every book sold goes to our SMILES charity partners (SMILES registered charity number 1061429).


SMILES


touching hearts, changing lives



Veggie superstars

Whether you're vegetarian, flexitarian or just want to try something new, here's an entire week of slimming veggie meals – plus ideas for meat and fish lovers, too

'The recipes were easy, filling and cost effective – and I lost 1½lbs'



Taste tester

Clare Ellams, 40, lives in Stoke-on-Trent with her fiancé, Rob, and two sons, Lkke and Reggie. She's lost 4st 7lbs and is a Slimming World Consultant with groups in Silverdale and Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire

See your week's menu at a glance below

Monday	BREAKFAST TROPICAL MUESLI: pour milk from your Healthy Extra 'a' allowance over 40g no-added-sugar muesli (a Healthy Extra 'b'). Split a passion fruit, scoop out the pulp and spoon over the muesli with chopped fresh mango	LUNCH FETA & GREENS FRITTATA: fry grated courgette in low-calorie cooking spray until softened. Add a handful of frozen peas and pour in beaten eggs. Cook until the eggs are almost set, then finish under the grill. Crumble over 45g feta cheese (a Healthy Extra 'a') before grilling	DINNER Veggie chilli & jackets Free V
Tuesday	BREAKFAST SUNSHINE PORRIDGE: make up 40g plain porridge oats (a Healthy Extra 'b') with water or milk from your Healthy Extra 'a' allowance. Stir through a pinch of ground nutmeg and top with chopped fresh mango	LUNCH COUSCOUS SALAD: make up plain dried couscous (without butter or oil). Add halved cherry tomatoes; chopped cucumber, pepper and coriander; rinsed canned chickpeas; rocket and lemon juice. Sprinkle over flaked almonds (2½ Syns per ½ level tbsp), if you like	DINNER Ratatouille pasta bake 6 Syns <i>Deduct 6 Syns if using the mozzarella as a Healthy Extra 'a'</i> V
Wednesday	BREAKFAST BERRY BOWL: dollop fat-free natural yogurt over 40g no-added-sugar muesli (a Healthy Extra 'b'), then top with fresh raspberries and chopped strawberries	LUNCH BROCCOLI PASTA: boil short dried pasta shapes following the pack instructions, adding broccoli florets for the last 3 minutes. Drain, then stir through fat-free vinaigrette, sliced spring onions and fresh basil leaves. Grate over 40g reduced-fat Cheddar (a Healthy Extra 'a'), if you like	DINNER Borlotti bean casserole with fried eggs Free V SP
Thursday	BREAKFAST TOMATOEY BEANS ON TOAST: toast 2 slices wholemeal bread from a small 400g loaf (a Healthy Extra 'b'). Stir halved cherry tomatoes into piping-hot baked beans, then pour over your toast	LUNCH MUSHROOM JACKETS: cook a baking potato until soft. Fry sliced chestnut mushrooms in low-calorie cooking spray. Add a crushed garlic clove and a couple of handfuls of spinach. Stir in a dollop of fat-free natural yogurt and a little lemon juice. Split the potato and spoon over the mushrooms	DINNER Gingery tofu & broccoli stir-fry Free V
Friday	BREAKFAST TROPICAL MUESLI: pour milk from your Healthy Extra 'a' allowance over 40g no-added-sugar muesli (a Healthy Extra 'b'). Split a passion fruit, scoop out the pulp and spoon over the muesli with chopped fresh mango	LUNCH BUTTER BEAN SOUP: boil sliced leeks and rinsed canned butter beans in enough vegetable stock to cover them by about 3cm. Once the leeks are soft, add in a few handfuls of frozen peas, then blitz until smooth and grab a spoon!	DINNER Coconutty sweet potato curry 3½ Syns Vegan
Saturday	BREAKFAST COOKED BREKKIE: roast halved tomatoes in the oven. Slice 45g reduced-fat halloumi (a Healthy Extra 'a') and fry with eggs and sliced mushrooms in low-calorie cooking spray. Serve with the tomatoes	LUNCH NOODLE SALAD: cook dried medium egg noodles following the pack instructions. Drain and run under cold water. Slice carrot, mangetout and spring onions into long thin strips. Toss together the noodles and veg, then dress with soy sauce and lime juice. Leave for 10 minutes, then serve	DINNER Aubergine pittas & chips 7 Syns <i>Deduct 7 Syns if using the pitta bread as a Healthy Extra 'b'</i> V
Sunday	BREAKFAST POTATO & SPINACH HASH: fry rinsed canned new potatoes and sliced onion in low-calorie cooking spray until golden, breaking them up with a fork. Wilt in spinach, then top with an egg fried in cooking spray	LUNCH HALLOUMI PITTA: cut 45g reduced-fat halloumi (a Healthy Extra 'a') into cubes. Mix with fat-free natural yogurt, 2 pinches of curry powder (see <i>Cook's notes</i> on p37), and chopped spring onions and coriander. Use to fill a 60g wholemeal pitta bread (a Healthy Extra 'b') with rocket and spinach	DINNER Greek-style summer veg pie 3 Syns V

SNACKS & TREATS ● Fresh blueberries, FREE ● Fresh cherries, FREE ● Hard-boiled eggs, FREE ● Quorn Vegetarian Ham Slices, FREE ● Breadsticks, 1 Syn each ● Honey, 1 Syn per 1 level tsp ● Chocolate fingers, 1½ Syns each ● Light salad cream, 1½ Syns per 1 level tbsp ● Olives in brine, 1½ Syns for 8 ● Frozen yogurt lolly, 2 Syns ● Reduced-alcohol lager, 4 Syns per 330ml bottle ● Cheese curls, eg Quavers, 4½ Syns per 16g bag ● Plain fairy cake, 4½ Syns ● Reduced-fat plain houmous, 4½ Syns per 3 level tbsp ● Smooth peanut butter, 4½ Syns per 1 level tbsp ● White 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 plain Quorn and plain tofu, eggs, pasta, potatoes, pulses, lean meat, poultry, fish, 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

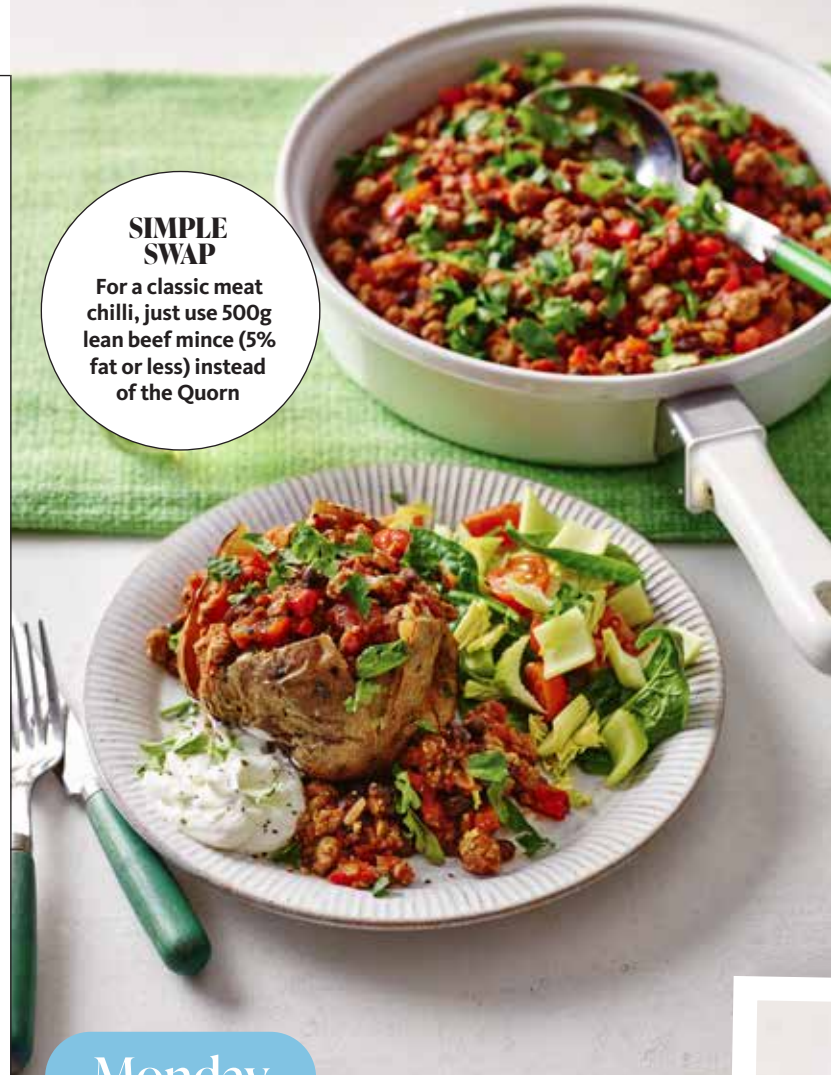
Foods and drinks that pose a risk to your weight loss – those high in fat or sugar, as well as alcohol – can be enjoyed as carefully counted Syns. We recommend you plan 5 to 15 Syns into your day (see the bottom of page 61 for ideas).

Make simple swaps

To help protect your weight loss, fry veg with water, use low-calorie cooking spray rather than fat or oil, and dry-fry mince. Choose the leanest meat and trim off any visible fat, such as the white bits off bacon, and remove skin from poultry. Swap cream and crème fraîche for fat-free natural yogurt, plain quark, or plain unsweetened soya yogurt with added calcium. You can 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!

SIMPLE SWAP

For a classic meat chilli, just use 500g lean beef mince (5% fat or less) instead of the Quorn



Monday

Veggie chilli & jackets

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

Free

V* (chilli only)

READY IN 1 hour 40 minutes

4 baking potatoes, pricked with a fork

Low-calorie cooking spray

1 red onion, finely chopped

2 red or orange peppers, deseeded and finely diced

1-2 tsp fajita seasoning to taste, some can be quite spicy (see Cook's notes on p37)

2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes

500g frozen Quorn Mince

400g can black beans, drained and rinsed

2 celery sticks, sliced

250g cherry tomatoes, halved

80g spinach

80g fat-free natural Greek-style yogurt, to serve

10g fresh coriander, chopped, to serve

- 1 Preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Put the potatoes in to bake for 1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes (depending on their size) until soft.
- 2 About 25 minutes before they're done, spray a large, non-stick saucepan with cooking spray and put over a medium-high heat. Fry the onion and peppers for 5-6 minutes, stirring often, until softening. Turn down the heat to medium, add the fajita seasoning and fry, stirring, for another 2 minutes.
- 3 Add the chopped tomatoes with a can of water, the Quorn Mince and black beans. Bring to a simmer and cook for 10-15 minutes until the chilli is rich and thickened. While it's simmering, mix together the celery, cherry tomatoes and spinach.
- 4 Put the potatoes on 4 plates. Cut a cross into the tops, then open them out. Spoon over the chilli, then add a dollop of yogurt and a twist of black pepper. Scatter over the coriander and serve with the salad.

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

Ratatouille pasta bake

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING 6

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

V

READY IN 1 hour 15 minutes

Low-calorie cooking spray

2 red peppers, deseeded and chopped into chunks

2 red onions, cut into wedges

2 aubergines, chopped into chunks

2 courgettes, chopped into chunks

2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes

2 garlic cloves, crushed

300g short dried pasta shapes (we used fusilli)

280g reduced-fat mozzarella, torn into small pieces

10g fresh basil leaves, to serve

80g rocket, to serve

1 Preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Spray a large, non-stick baking tray with cooking spray. Add the peppers, onions, aubergines and courgettes, and spread them out. Spray the veg with cooking spray and roast for 40 minutes until caramelised and soft, turning halfway.

2 While they're roasting, put the tomatoes in a large saucepan with the garlic. Bring to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes until reduced and thickened. Season and set aside. Now boil the pasta for 3 minutes less than the pack instructions (it will finish cooking in the oven), then drain and toss into the tomato sauce.

3 Once the veg are ready, stir them through the pasta mixture, then spoon everything into a large baking dish. Evenly scatter over the mozzarella and bake for 20-25 minutes until the mozzarella has melted and is turning golden. Season with black pepper and scatter over the basil. Divide between 4 plates with the rocket.

7-day eating plan



Wednesday

Borlotti bean casserole with fried eggs

SUPER SIMPLE

SERVES 4

Free

SP V

READY IN 40 minutes

Low-calorie cooking spray

1 red onion, finely sliced

3 celery sticks, finely sliced

1 fennel bulb, trimmed and finely sliced

2 garlic cloves, finely sliced

2 x 400g cans borlotti beans, drained and rinsed

300g cherry tomatoes

3 sprigs of fresh rosemary, leaves of 1 chopped

500ml vegetable stock

150g spinach

4 medium eggs

2 lemons, 1 juiced, 1 cut into wedges to serve

1 Spray a large, deep, non-stick frying pan with cooking spray and put over a medium heat. Fry the onion, celery and fennel for 5-6 minutes until softening. Add the garlic and fry for 2 minutes until fragrant.

2 Add the beans, tomatoes, whole rosemary sprigs and stock. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook for 15-20 minutes until the stock has reduced and thickened. Add the spinach and cook for another 2 minutes until wilted.

3 When the casserole's ready, take out the rosemary sprigs and spray a separate non-stick frying pan with cooking spray. Fry the eggs until cooked through. Season the casserole and add lemon juice to taste. Divide between 4 shallow bowls and top with the eggs. Scatter with the chopped rosemary, add a twist of black pepper and serve with the lemon wedges.



Thursday

Gingery tofu & broccoli stir-fry

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

Free

V

READY IN 30 minutes

396g plain firm tofu, drained and cut into cubes

1 head of broccoli, chopped into florets, stalk finely sliced

4 tbsp dark soy sauce

6cm-piece fresh root ginger, peeled and coarsely grated

3 garlic cloves, crushed

2 limes, 1 juiced, 1 cut into wedges to serve

Low-calorie cooking spray

400g chestnut mushrooms, halved

1 bunch of spring onions, chopped into thirds, then green thirds finely sliced

250g dried medium egg noodles

1 Sit the tofu on several sheets of kitchen paper, then top with some more (this will help to dry it out and firm it up). Set aside until needed. Put the broccoli in a colander in the sink and pour over a kettle of just-boiled water. Pop a plate over the top of the colander and leave the broccoli to steam and soften for 5 minutes.

2 Mix together the soy sauce, ginger, garlic and lime juice, and set aside. Spray a large, non-stick wok or frying pan with cooking spray and put over a medium-high heat. When hot, stir-fry the broccoli, mushrooms and unsliced spring onions for 5-6 minutes until softened. At the same time, boil the noodles following the pack instructions. Drain, reserving a ladle of the cooking water, and set aside.

3 Mix the cooking water into the soy sauce mixture. Turn the heat under the veg up to high. Add the tofu, then once sizzling, pour in the sauce. Bubble for 2-3 minutes, stirring gently, until the sauce has thickened, then stir through most of the sliced spring onions.

4 Tip the noodles into the wok and stir well to coat them in the sauce. Divide between 4 bowls and scatter with the rest of the spring onions. Serve with lime wedges.

SHELLFISH TWIST

Swap the sweet potato for 400g raw peeled king prawns – add to the curry for the final 5 minutes



Friday

Coconutty sweet potato curry

SUPER SIMPLE

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING 3½

Vegan * (curry only)

READY IN 45 minutes

Low-calorie cooking spray

1 red onion, finely sliced

2 peppers (red, orange or yellow), deseeded and finely sliced

2 garlic cloves, crushed

2 tsp mild or medium curry powder (see Cook's notes on p37)

3cm-piece fresh root ginger, peeled and coarsely grated

400ml can reduced-fat coconut milk

600g sweet potatoes, chopped into 2cm chunks

400g can chickpeas, drained and rinsed

250g dried basmati rice

2 limes, 1 juiced, 1 cut into wedges to serve

20g fresh coriander, two-thirds roughly chopped

1 Spray a large, deep, non-stick frying pan with cooking spray and put over a medium heat. Fry the onion and peppers for 5-6 minutes, stirring often, until softening. Add the garlic, curry powder and ginger with a splash of water, and fry for 2 minutes until fragrant.

2 Add the coconut milk with a can of water, then the sweet potatoes and chickpeas. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook for 25 minutes until the sauce has thickened up and the potatoes are tender. When the curry has 10-15 minutes left, cook the rice following the pack instructions, then drain.

3 Season the curry, then stir in the lime juice and chopped coriander. Spoon the rice into 4 bowls, then divide over the curry. Scatter over the rest of the coriander and serve with the lime wedges.



Saturday

Aubergine pittas & chips

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING 7

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

READY IN 50 minutes

1kg floury potatoes, such as Maris Piper or King Edward, cut into chips**Low-calorie cooking spray****4 aubergines, each sliced into 8 wedges****2 x 400g cans butter beans, drained and rinsed****200g fat-free natural Greek-style yogurt****1 garlic clove, crushed****Zest and juice of 1 lemon****20g fresh chives, finely sliced****200g cherry tomatoes, quartered****4 x 60g wholemeal pitta breads****80g rocket**

1 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 and spray with cooking spray. Bake for 40 minutes, or until golden and crisp, turning halfway.

2 When the chips have been in the oven for 10 minutes, spread the aubergines on a large, non-stick baking tray and spray with cooking spray. Add to the oven (above the chips) and cook for 30 minutes – after 15 minutes, turn the aubergines and swap over the trays so the chips are on top. Add the butter beans to the aubergines for the last 5 minutes to warm through. While everything's cooking, in a large bowl, mix together the yogurt, garlic and lemon juice, and most of the lemon zest and chives, and season.

3 Add the aubergines and beans to the bowl with the tomatoes, and toss everything together for 1 minute. Lightly toast the pittas. Open them up and fill with the rocket and aubergine mixture, then scatter the rest of the lemon zest and chives over the filling. Serve 1 pitta per person with the chips.



EASY ADDITION

If you eat chicken, use 2 courgettes and stir in 200g cooked shredded skinless chicken breast after the spinach

Sunday

Greek-style summer veg pie

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING 3



READY IN 1 hour 15 minutes

1kg floury potatoes, such as Maris Piper or King Edward, peeled and chopped into small chunks**4 courgettes, sliced into 2cm rounds****Low-calorie cooking spray****1 red onion, finely sliced****2 garlic cloves, crushed****2 tsp cumin seeds****400g cherry tomatoes****320g spinach****2 level tsp cornflour****2 x 39g sheets filo pastry**

1 Preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Spread the potatoes on a large, non-stick baking tray and the courgettes on a separate non-stick baking tray. Spray them both with cooking spray and roast for 30 minutes, turning the courgettes halfway.

2 As the potatoes and courgettes roast, spray a large, deep, non-stick frying pan or wok with cooking spray and put over a medium heat. Fry the onion for 5-6 minutes until softening. Add the garlic and cumin seeds with a splash of water, and fry for 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes and fry for 3-4 minutes.

3 Add the spinach in handfuls with 50ml water, stirring it in as it wilts. Once it's wilted, take the pan off the heat and stir in the roasted courgettes. Turn the potatoes and roast for a further 30 minutes on the bottom shelf. Season the veg mix, then spoon into a large, ovenproof dish. Sift over the cornflour and give the filling a good stir.

4 Scrunch the filo over the top to cover the filling and spray with cooking spray. Turn down the oven to 180°C/fan 160°C/gas 4 and bake above the potatoes for 25-30 minutes. Leave the pie to stand for 5 minutes, then divide between 4 plates with the potatoes.



MAKE IT MEATY

Use 2 aubergines, then add 2 cooked sliced lean lamb leg steaks (visible fat removed) to the pittas



Say YES to Pudding!
Find us in the jelly aisle



FOOD *news*

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



TOP SWAP
Don't fancy fish? Serve with baked skinless chicken or sliced plain smoked tofu instead – recipe stays Free



Mackerel with couscous & orange salad

Free

To serve 4, preheat your grill to high. Roughly chop **350g tomatoes**, and halve and deseed **1 red chilli**. Blitz half the chilli with the tomatoes in a food processor until smooth. Pour into a large bowl. Stir in **300g plain dried couscous** and add 200ml just-boiled water. Cover with a plate and leave for 5-10 minutes until

the couscous is soft. Spray **4 unsmoked mackerel fillets** with **low-calorie cooking spray** and season. Grill on a baking tray covered with foil for 4-6 minutes, or until cooked through. While the mackerel's cooking, peel and segment **3 large oranges**, slice **320g sugar snap peas** lengthways, and finely chop

30g fresh coriander and the leftover chilli. Gently fold the orange segments, sugar snap peas and most of the coriander through the couscous, then season. Spoon between 4 plates and top with the mackerel fillets. Scatter over the remaining coriander and chilli, and add a twist of black pepper. Enjoy!



Applewood Smoky Cheddar Original Bite, 2 x 15g sticks are a Healthy Extra 'a'; £1.50 for a pack of 5, Asda and Morrisons

Slimming World Naked Beef Burrito Lunch Bowl, Free £3.75 for 400g, Iceland



TOP SPOTS

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



Jason's Sourdough Ciabattin Wholemeal loaf, 1 slice is a Healthy Extra 'b'; £2 for 580g, Tesco

Quorn Burgers, 1 Syn each; £2.50 for 6, Morrisons and Sainsbury's



Ickle pickle

Just a few of these sweet, tangy pickled onion slices will jazz up salads and sandwiches (drain first to avoid soggy bread!). Or bring them out at the BBQ – they make a tasty topping for Food Optimising burgers or lean steaks.



Tesco Fire Pit Sweet Pickled Red Onions, Free £1.50 for 340g

Fizz factor

Switch up your summer drinking with this fruity little number. Serve in a long glass over ice for a refreshing, sunny-day thirst quencher, or chill in the fridge to take with you to go. You could even pour it into lolly moulds and freeze into a fruity ice pop!

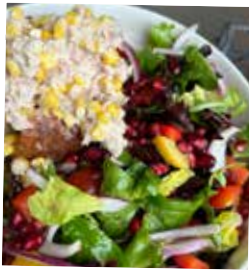


Sparkling Ice Orange Mango Flavoured Sparkling Water, Free £1.45 for 500ml, Sainsbury's



Asda Flavoursome 4 Honey, Ginger & Chilli Thin Cut Beef Steaks, 1½ Syns each; £5 for 400g

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



Sharon Jervis, Devon 'My jacket potato topping is so easy and tasty – drained canned tuna in spring water mixed with sweetcorn and 1 level tbsp light mayo (2 Syns). I add a mixed salad topped with pomegranate seeds.'



Chris Whitley, Cornwall 'For a filling curry, I cook squash, garlic, onions, chilli, pulses and ground spices in 300ml plain, unsweetened coconut drink (3 Syns) and stock.'

YOUR MAKES!

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



Fatma Kocabas, Hertfordshire 'I top a bed of Speed Free Food green salad with ready-cooked Tesco Piri Piri Chicken Breast Pieces (1½ Syns per 180g pack), 1 level tbsp reduced-fat plain houmous (1½ Syns), pickled slaw and a squeeze of lemon juice.'



Emma Foster, Lancashire 'For a Middle Eastern-inspired meal, I have Slimming World Beef Koftas from Iceland and Healthy Extra feta drizzled with fat-free natural yogurt and sriracha (½ Syn per level tbsp). Great with salad and a Healthy Extra wholemeal pitta.'

Three ways to eat: courgettes

Easy, delicious ideas to make the most of this in-season Speed Free Food...

- Boil dried pasta following the pack instructions. While it's cooking, peel courgettes into ribbons with a vegetable peeler (discarding the seeded cores). Put in a bowl with some lemon juice and a little salt, and allow to soften. Drain the pasta and toss through the courgettes and juices with some finely chopped fresh mint and black pepper. Top each serving with 5g (1 Syn) grated fresh Parmesan or vegetarian Parmesan-style cheese.
- Cut courgettes into thick slices on the diagonal, spray with low-calorie cooking

spray and roast at 200°C/ fan 180°C/gas 6 for 30-40 minutes until golden and caramelised. Toss with fresh basil leaves and serve with griddled skinless chicken breasts and boiled new potatoes.

- Add 2 grated courgettes to your chopped onion when you're making your favourite Food Optimising risotto. As they wilt right down, it's a great way of packing in some extra Speed Free Food veg. You'll hardly notice them in the finished dish!

- For more delicious recipes using courgettes, see pages 52 and 79

EASY PREP

There's no need to peel courgettes – just trim both ends, then ribbon, slice or grate!



FAKE IT EASY!



This takeaway-style kebab has a spicy marinade

Aldi Oakhurst Peri Peri Chicken King Kebab, 3 Syns per ¼ pack; £5.79 for 924g

Mochi melts

A Japanese dessert of sorbet balls encased in soft rice dough, these mochi make for a cleverly self-contained sweet treat. Wait a few minutes for one to soften enough to eat, then enjoy every moment!

Little Moons Very Berry Mochi Sorbet Refreshos, 3 Syns each; £5 for 6, Asda, Morrisons, Ocado, Tesco and Waitrose & Partners



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*Based on using 5 sprays per cook compared to a standard oil serving size of 15ml/1 tbsp

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Tastes Like Sugar



NICE ICE, BABY

TRIED & TASTED



Our testers' pick of this summer's mini ice cream sticks



Jude's Salted Caramel Crunch Minis, 4½ Syns each; £4.65 for 6, Ocado and Sainsbury's  


Our testers thought these sweet and very indulgent ice creams tasted much higher in Syns than they are! They liked the crunchy coating and rich caramel flavour.



Aldi Gianni's Mini Viennese Vanilla Ice Creams, 4 Syns each; £1.79 for 5  

Reminiscent of a certain classic 80s dessert, this had fewer fine layers of chocolate than we expected. Testers enjoyed the soft, fluffy whipped ice cream and the tasty contrast of dark chocolate.



Wall's Mini Milk Vanilla, Strawberry and Choco, 1½ Syns each; £2.40 for 10, Asda, Ocado, Sainsbury's and Tesco 

By far the best value for Syns according to our taste team. The verdict was while less indulgent than some options, they're great to have in for a quick, low Syn ice cream fix.




Sainsbury's Indulgence Mini Caramelised Biscuit Chocolate Sticks, 6½ Syns each; £2.90 for 8  

White chocolate studded with caramel biscuit crumbs and a cinnamon-spiced centre – there was a lot going on here to justify the higher Syns. Overall, they got a big thumbs-up from our testers.



Dip with zip

This classic veg-stick dip is also a zingy finishing touch for a Food Optimising burrito bowl (or any other Tex-Mex dish you love).

Holy Moly Jalapeño & Red Pepper Guacamole, 1 Syn per 1 level tbsp; £2.55 for 150g, Ocado, Sainsbury's and Waitrose & Partners 

Refreshing, citrusy
& aromatic – it's
just the tonic!

**Tesco Low Alcohol G&T
& Reduced Calorie Tonic**, ½ Syn
per can; £4 for 4 x 250ml 



Rice 'n' easy

Pan-fry this rice in low-calorie cooking spray with your favourite lean meat and veg for an Indian takeaway-style biryani – without the sky-high Syns!

**Ben's Original One Pan Creations
Indian Biryani Style Rice Pouch**,
1½ Syns per pouch; £2 for 250g,
most major supermarkets 



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.

● **Frylight**, cooking spray, all varieties, Free.

● **Hartley's**, 10 Cal Strawberry Flavour Jelly, ½ Syn per 175g pot.

● **Heck**, Chicken Italia burgers, 2 Syns per burger; Simply Chicken burgers, 1 Syn per burger; Sweet Chilli Chicken chipolatas, ½ Syn per chipolata.

● **Heinz**, Balsamic with a Hint of Garlic Salad Dressing Spray, 1 kcal spray, ½ Syn per 10 sprays; Chilli & Lime Salad Dressing Spray, 2 kcal spray, 1 Syn per 10 sprays.

● **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.

● **Shloer**, Zero, Red Grape and White Grape Sparkling Zero Calorie Fruit Drink, both Free.

● **Slimming World**, Beef & Pork Meatballs; Creamy Tomato Sauce; Sweet & Sour Sauce; Tikka Masala Sauce. All Free, from Iceland.

● **Splenda**, Minis, one tablet, Free; Granulated Sweetener, 1 level tsp, Free, and ½ Syn per level tsp.

● **Sweet Freedom**, Choc Pot Chocolate Spread, ½ Syn per level tsp; Choc Shot, ½ Syn per level tsp; Hazelnut Syrup, ½ Syn per level tsp; Raspberry Syrup, ½ Syn per level tsp.

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dinner at the double

Food Optimising is a family-friendly lifestyle, so you can always cook and eat together – no matter who's joining you at the table. And for those times when there's *no* time, our food range is ready and waiting. One pack of meatballs, a tub of our creamy tomato sauce, pasta plus your favourite Speed Free Food veg, and hey presto – dinner for four, done in a few simple steps.

Clean plates all round, guaranteed!

+





+

=

try these next!



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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as a
Slimming World Consultant



Asia Ali,
Coventry



Charlotte McNally,
Buckinghamshire



Zaheer Bhatti,
Birmingham



Clare Caswell,
Warwickshire

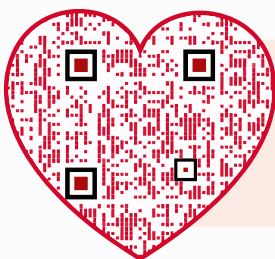
Inspirational, warm and caring, our Consultants know what it's like to struggle with being overweight, and they've experienced the joy of seeing their lives transformed. Now they're dedicated to helping others achieve the same success!

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COOK THE BOOK

Watermelon &
feta barley bowl,
recipe p78

Salad days

These three seasonal recipes from *Slimming World's Take 5 Second Helpings* cookbook use just five ingredients, so you can keep mealtimes simple this summer

PHOTOGRAPHS: GARETH MORGANS

YOUR STORE CUPBOARD

There are just three ingredients we haven't counted in the total for each recipe. You've probably got them in your kitchen already!

- Salt (sea salt for the best flavour)
- Black pepper (freshly ground whole peppercorns, if possible)
- Low-calorie cooking spray

RECIPE FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Watermelon & feta barley bowl

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING 2½



READY IN 1 hour

- 250g dried pearl barley
- 400g frozen soya beans (edamame)
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 500g watermelon, rind removed, cut into small chunks
- 110g reduced-fat Greek-style salad cheese, broken into small chunks

1 Cook the pearl barley following the pack instructions. When it's almost ready, drop the soya beans into a large saucepan of boiling water and cook for 2 minutes. Drain the pearl barley and soya beans, tip both into a large bowl and leave them to cool.

2 Stir the lemon juice into the pearl barley and soya beans, then gently stir in the watermelon. Divide between 4 bowls, and evenly scatter over the cheese. Season with salt and pepper before you serve.

“Step away from the side salad – these summer specials make fresh and filling main meals”



White bean & tuna salad

SUPER SIMPLE

SERVES 4

Free

READY IN 10 minutes, plus marinating

- 2 small red onions, sliced into rings
- Juice of 1 small lemon, plus wedges to serve
- 2 x 400g cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 x 200g cans tuna in spring water, drained and flaked
- 200g watercress, roughly chopped

1 Put the onion rings in a large bowl, sprinkle over the lemon juice and season with salt and pepper. Leave to marinate for 20 minutes (this will soften the onion and improve the flavour).

2 Add the beans, tuna and watercress to the onion, and toss well. Divide between 4 bowls, add a twist of black pepper and serve with the lemon wedges.



IF YOU LIKE THESE RECIPES...

...you'll love *Slimming World's Take 5 Second Helpings* cookbook, packed with more than 60 five-ingredient feasts! Choose from Free and low Syn meals such as jerk prawns with coconut rice, an awesome Quorn and peanut butter chilli, and a tasty toad-in-the-hole. Whatever food mood you're in, you'll find something fabulously filling and delicious to help you reach your weight loss goals. This five-star cookbook is loaded with five-star recipes! ● On sale in Slimming World groups and to online members, £4.95/€7.95 RRP.



Chicken, courgettes & giant couscous

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

Free

READY IN 30 minutes

300g dried giant couscous

2 large courgettes, sliced

4 skinless and boneless chicken breasts

20g fresh mint

150g fat-free natural Greek yogurt

1 Put the couscous in a sieve and rinse well under cold running water, running the grains through your fingers until the water is clear. Tip into a saucepan, add 1 litre just-boiled water and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 7 minutes, or until tender. Drain well.

2 While the couscous is cooking, heat a non-stick griddle or frying pan over a high heat. Spray the courgettes and chicken with cooking spray, and season lightly. Cook the courgettes in batches for 1½ minutes on

each side, or until tender. Keep warm. Turn the heat to medium-high and cook the chicken for 6 minutes on each side, or until cooked through. Place on a board and slice.

3 While the chicken's cooking, set aside 4 mint sprigs and chop the rest. Mix half the chopped mint into the yogurt with a splash of water and season to taste. Spoon the couscous onto plates, top with the courgettes and chicken, and drizzle with the yogurt. Scatter over the rest of the chopped mint, top with the sprigs and serve hot.

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to lead the best?*

(✓)

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slimmingworld.co.uk/dmcareers



“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.”

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Delightfully ICY

Check out these deliciously chilly treats... Just the thing to cool you down when the temperature's feeling hot, hot, hot

PHOTOGRAPHS: KATE WHITAKER





“Take a trip down memory lane with our twist on an old-school favourite, bursting with fruity flavours”

Lemonade, apple & blueberry ice lollies

Our refreshing ices will keep everyone sweet when the sun is shining

EVERYDAY EASY

MAKES 8
SYNS PER LOLLY 1½



READY IN 40 minutes, plus cooling and freezing

600ml apple juice
2-3 sprigs of fresh mint, leaves picked
Good squeeze of lemon juice
300ml diet lemonade
120g fresh blueberries

YOU'LL ALSO NEED
8 x 120ml lolly moulds
8 x wooden lolly sticks

1 Put the apple juice and mint in a saucepan and heat until hot but not boiling. Set aside for 30 minutes for the flavours to infuse.

2 Strain the apple juice into a bowl and leave to cool completely. Once cool, add the lemon juice and lemonade.

3 Divide the blueberries between the lolly moulds, then pour over the lemonade mixture. Add a lolly stick to each, then freeze for at least 5 hours until solid. To serve, briefly dip the moulds into a bowl of just-boiled water until the lollies release.



Vegan strawberry & banana ice cream

Wafers, sprinkles and fresh strawberries add ice-cream parlour-style fun

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

SYNS PER SERVING 4



READY IN 15 minutes, plus freezing

2 medium over-ripe bananas

125g fresh strawberries, hulled and chopped, plus extra, hulled and quartered, to serve

200g Alpro Plain Greek Style yogurt

1½ level tbsp golden syrup

1 tsp vanilla extract

4 vegan ice cream wafers

1 level tsp vegan hundreds and thousands sprinkles, to decorate

1 Peel and slice the bananas. Put the bananas and chopped strawberries in a freezerproof container, seal and freeze overnight.

2 Once solid, tip into a food processor. Add the yogurt, golden syrup and vanilla extract, then blitz until smooth. Spoon into a freezerproof container, seal and freeze for at least 2 hours (see *Top tip* above).

3 Divide the ice cream between 4 dessert glasses. Add a wafer to each and a few strawberry quarters. Evenly scatter over the sprinkles and serve straight away.

TOP TIP

Once this ice cream is ready, it's best eaten on the same day – the longer it's kept in the freezer, the harder it will become

Chocolate & cookie dough ice cream bombe

Exploding with flavours and textures, this makes a great party-piece pudding

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 10

SYNS PER SERVING 5



READY IN 30 minutes, plus freezing

2 x 473ml tubs lower-calorie ice cream, one cookie dough, one chocolate (we used Halo Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough and Top Goey Brownie)

2 bananas

3 reduced-fat digestive biscuits, roughly broken

2 plain meringue nests, roughly crushed

1 Leave the tubs of ice cream to soften at room temperature for about 10 minutes until they're spoonable, but not melting. While they're softening, line a 1.2 litre Pyrex bowl with a double layer of clingfilm, with enough overhanging to cover the top.

2 Peel and slice the bananas. Line the base and sides of the bowl with half the bananas. Spoon in half the cookie dough ice cream. Top with the rest of the bananas, then the biscuits, followed by the rest of the cookie

dough. Scatter over half the meringue, then add half the chocolate ice cream. Add the remaining meringue and chocolate ice cream. Push down with the back of a spoon, cover with the clingfilm and lightly press down with your hands. Freeze for at least 3 hours.

3 Turn out onto a serving plate and peel off the clingfilm. Leave for 10 minutes until slightly soft. Cut into 10 equal slices with a hot, sharp knife. Serve straight away.



chill out



MAKE IT LAST

If you've kept your sorbet in the freezer for a while, leave it to stand for 15 minutes before serving, then blitz once more

“Fresh raspberries give this ultimate summer dessert its glorious hot-pink colour”

Mango & raspberry no-churn sorbet

The dash of vodka is a clever trick to stop it from freezing solid

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 8
SYNS PER SERVING 3½



READY IN 10 minutes, plus freezing

- 3 ripe mangoes, peeled, stoned and chopped
- 150g fresh raspberries
- Juice of 2 limes
- 1 level tbsp vodka
- 3 level tbsp caster sugar
- 4 ice cubes

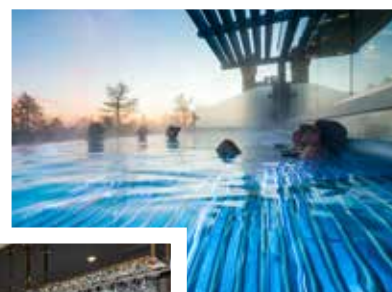
- 1 Put the mangoes and raspberries in a freezerproof container. Seal and freeze overnight until solid.
- 2 When you're ready to make the sorbet, put the lime juice, vodka and sugar in a food processor and leave to stand until the sugar's dissolved. Put the ice cubes in a freezer bag or wrap in a clean tea towel and bash with a rolling pin. Add to the food processor with the fruit. Blitz until you have a smooth sorbet.
- 3 Spoon into a freezerproof container, seal and freeze for 2-3 hours. Blitz again until really creamy, then freeze for at least 2 hours, or overnight, before serving.

RECIPES: LIZZIE KAMENETZKY, FOOD STYLING: EMILY JONZEN
PROP STYLING: DAVINA PERKINS

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BEFORE
I was deeply insecure about how I looked

Meet Tom

Tom Walker-Drake, 31, lives in Bristol with his husband, Danny

Height: 5ft 9ins

Starting weight: 20st 10½lbs

Weight now: 12st 5½lbs

WEIGHT LOST:
8st 5lbs

Tom is a target member of Erica Hammond's Slimming World group in Hanham, Bristol

Tom's got his happy back

With his health and self-esteem hitting a real low, Tom Walker-Drake was determined to lose weight. Now he's 8st 5lbs lighter, every bit of his life is better and he's found his joy again

Using what little strength I had, I stumbled out of bed and towards the door. I felt my husband, Danny, place a supportive hand on my arm as I desperately tried to catch my breath, the room swimming around me. The next bit was a blur, but I vaguely remember hearing Danny say: 'I need to call for help.' It was the early days of the pandemic in 2020, and as Danny dialled 111, my feverish thoughts turned to the terrifying Covid statistics racking up on a daily basis - and whether I was about to become one of them. After listening to my symptoms, the call handler told Danny to ring for emergency help, and soon an ambulance crew were kneeling at my bedside, getting me to take gulps of oxygen through a mask.

'We've taken a look at your stats and your oxygen levels are just above the point where you need to be admitted to hospital,' said the paramedic. Then he added: 'We're finding that some people who are carrying extra weight are the ones becoming seriously

ill.' Despite my relief that I wasn't headed for a ventilator, I was still shaken by the realisation that my weight had put me at more risk. My recovery from Covid wasn't plain sailing, and Danny was worried enough to call the emergency services a second time. When I eventually got better, I was determined to lose weight...

Losing confidence

Aside from my health, I hadn't been feeling great in my own skin for a while. A few months earlier, in November 2019, Danny and I had got married after three years together. I'd talked earnestly about slimming down for the photos and it had been my genuine intention... but with planning the wedding and settling into our new life together, I actually put weight on. It was a great joy to marry the man I loved in such a beautiful ceremony - the only thing tainting the day was my deep insecurity about the way I looked. I hated posing for the wedding photos, knowing that with >



BEFORE
I'd wear scarves to try to cover myself up



Ann Summers chain, I was always in meetings, often addressing large rooms full of people. As my confidence hit the floor, I felt my ability to do that ebbing away and I started finding ways to avoid big meetings. I knew that to feel genuinely good on the inside, my lifestyle would have to change.

With all that in the background, I couldn't be offended when my mum and sister offered to help me lose weight. And, anyway, our family dynamic had long been established where weight was concerned. Being a triplet, I'd always been slightly the odd one out in pictures with my two sisters, Sophie and Amy. They were both slim, while Mum and I had struggles with our weight. Now, though, after having a baby, Sophie said she was joining Slimming World, and my mum, Jo, said she'd go with her. 'I think you should come, too, because it might be what you need,' Mum told me, as diplomatically as

possible. I knew she was right and, in January 2022, we picked a group between my home in Bristol and their homes in Bath, and decided we'd go along together.

I started discovering local walking trails, and what surprised me most was how much I was enjoying it

each click I'd be looking at this version of myself for years to come. I'd also lost any love of clothes I'd had because I didn't feel like I looked good in anything. At my heaviest, I was wearing maternity joggers as they fitted more comfortably over my tummy. Even on the hottest days, I'd often wear a scarf to cover myself up, which was pretty uncomfortable!

My self-confidence had reached such a low point that I started switching off the light well before I got into bed, so that Danny wouldn't see me naked. One night, he said softly: 'Why do you always have to get into bed in the dark?' I lay there feeling embarrassed and muttered something about it 'being quicker if I did it that way'. We'd only just become husbands, and I couldn't bear for Danny to see me - I just hoped his quiet acceptance of my answer meant he understood. The following morning, he told me: 'I love you however you are, I just want you to feel comfortable and happy.'

Danny's support helped me feel a little better about myself, but it was about more than being self-conscious. I got breathless easily, my back hurt, and after my scare with Covid, I was worried about my mortality. In my job as a training manager for the

Doing things differently

Years earlier, before I met Danny, I'd had some success with Slimming World. I followed the plan, went each week to be weighed, but then left, not realising I was missing out on the main support I was paying for! When I stopped going to group altogether and met my future husband, all thoughts of Food Optimising had gone out of my head. We mostly ate takeaways and ready meals, and it wasn't long before my weight had crept back up. In fact, the change in me was so dramatic, it led to me joking to Danny that he'd been tricked, as I looked so different to the man he'd met.

This time, when I joined Erica's group with Mum and Sophie, I stayed each week, and finally found out what I'd been missing. It wasn't just the advice in IMAGE Therapy, where Erica helped everyone make plans for the week ahead - or even all the tasty recipe ideas - it was the moral support that really spurred me on. And just finding new ways of thinking about my weight loss was motivating. For example, although I'd been successfully chipping away at my starting weight of 20st 10½lbs, I didn't think I looked any different. 'Try taking a picture at every milestone weight loss and comparing it to the last,' Erica said when I shared this in group, 'that way you'll be able to see for yourself how well you're doing!' She was right - although I wasn't seeing a difference in the mirror every day, because my shape was changing gradually, when I compared two photos a stone apart, there were really obvious changes. Now I could see my progress right there in front of me, I felt even more motivated.

Danny and I had previously shared the task of making dinner, back when we were mainly eating >



My day on a plate

THEN

Breakfast Bacon, sausage and hash brown sandwich on buttered white bread, and two caramel lattes

Lunch Drive-through takeaway, or a triple-sandwich meal deal from the local shop with a big bag of crisps

Dinner Pie and chips, Italian takeaway or a ready meal with oven chips

Snacks and drinks Bar of chocolate or bag of crisps (or sometimes both). Two more caramel lattes before bed

NOW

Breakfast Bacon with the fat removed, scrambled eggs and baked beans, and a black coffee with Syn Free flavouring

Lunch Chicken omelette with a beetroot, gherkin and sweetcorn salad dressed with fat-free natural Greek-style yogurt

Dinner Homemade Food Optimising pizza using a wholemeal wrap topped with Healthy Extra cheese, chicken and sliced Speed Free Food veg, with baked spicy sweet potato fries

Snacks and drinks Fresh fruit or skinless chicken drumsticks



BEFORE
My self-esteem reached a low point



takeaways and ready meals. Now, inspired by Erica talking about the generosity and flexibility of Food Optimising, I decided to take the reins in the kitchen. Danny and I both loved comfort food – the type of thing that put a smile on your face. His favourite was burger and chips, so my first mission was to make a slimming-friendly version... and I rustled up a real winner! I used lean mince and lots of seasoning, layered the burger together with rindless bacon, mushrooms and jalapeños, and served it up to Danny in a wholemeal roll with a pile of spicy fries that I'd baked in low-calorie cooking spray. As he bit into it, I watched with a smile as his face changed – a look of pure amazement that something so delicious could help me lose weight! From that moment, he looked forward to seeing what I'd come up with next.

I'd come to love my Saturday morning groups, and to rely on Erica's support and inspiration each week. Sophie reached her target weight, and as Mum and I carried on towards our goals, I started feeling ready to give the Body Magic physical activity support programme a go. I began by walking with my Jack

Losing weight has given me a **NEW** confidence, and it's truly liberating

Russell, Teddy. I'd never loved being outdoors, but with Teddy by my side, I started discovering the trails and parks of Bristol – and what surprised me the most was how much I was enjoying it. Whether it was trips to the beach or into the hills, I had a new-found desire to explore and walk as far as possible, and it was getting easier and easier.

Ramping it up

I often needed to travel to London for work, and as Teddy couldn't come with me, I thought about how else I could motivate myself to keep up my steps.

The solution? A route from London Bridge and along Westminster to Paddington, on a journey that took around 16,000 steps – with amazing views to keep me going. Then, towards the end of last year, I joined a gym to boost my fitness further. I'd do 15 minutes on the step machine; a combination of walking, running and sprinting on the treadmill for 20 minutes; then 25 minutes of swimming. To begin with I felt shy about getting into the pool, but as time went by and I started becoming more toned, I felt better and better about my body. It was also a real thrill to be able to train like that for an hour, and Danny told me how proud he was of what I'd achieved. Soon, I'd smashed all of my Body Magic awards, and I also found those nagging problems I'd had with my back had completely disappeared.

In April this year, I reached my target weight – in just 15 months I'd lost 8st 5lbs and it really had changed every part of my life. At work, I'd gone from trying to avoid big meetings to being more than happy to stand in front of an entire conference, without feeling the least bit self-conscious. And after trading my XXL T-shirts for smalls, and my 36-inch trousers for 28-inch ones, I'd started enjoying clothes again. Now, I didn't feel any need to cover myself up, and when Danny and I visited Gran Canaria for the Pride event this year, I felt confident enough to take off my T-shirt along with other people in the crowds. It was truly liberating and marked another step away from feeling so insecure on our wedding day.

And that's another benefit: Danny and I have gone from strength to strength in our marriage, and we're both enjoying my new-found confidence. It's a shame that I can't look back at our wedding photos with a little more joy, but when I do it reminds me of the great strides I've taken in such a short space of time. And let's just say, the bedroom light doesn't get switched off so often these days! ●

TOM WEARS

p90: Shirt, New Look. T-shirt, H&M. Chinos, Next. Trainers, Bershka. Watch, ASOS. Sunglasses, River Island

p92: Shirt and shorts, both Marks & Spencer. T-shirt, H&M. Trainers, New Look. Watch, Casio. Sunglasses, Next

p93: Shirt and trainers, both ASOS. T-shirt, H&M. Shorts, Matalan

Above: Shirt, ASOS. T-shirt, Marks & Spencer. Shorts, Matalan. Trainers and sunglasses, both H&M. Socks, Primark

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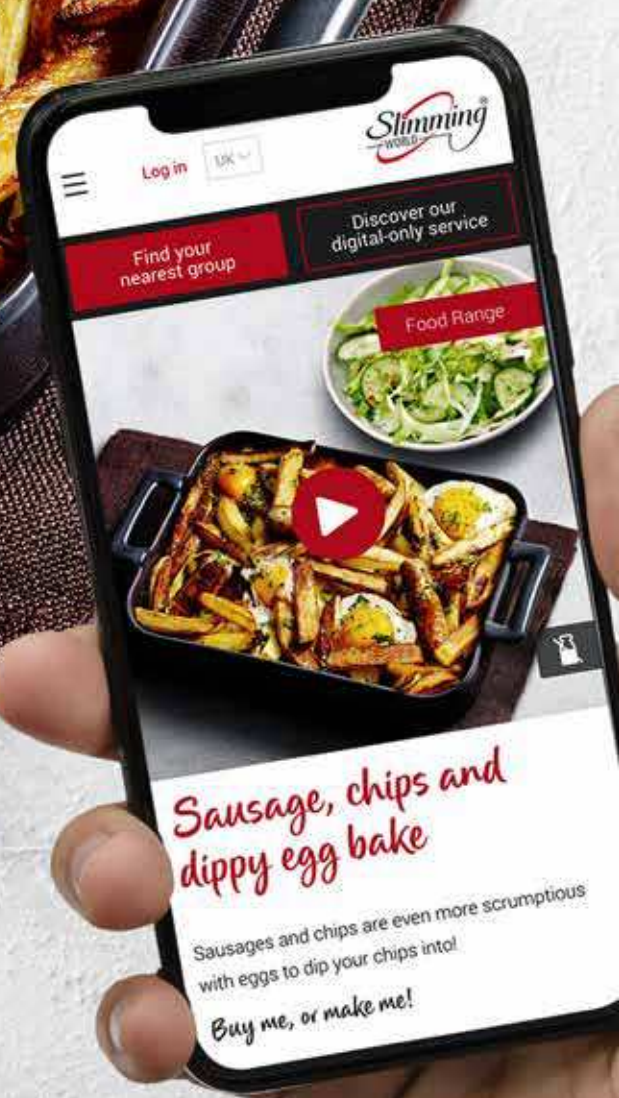
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*Margaret Miles-Bramwell OBE,
Slimming World’s founder and chair*

Turn the page for a whole host of ways to enjoy your happier, healthier summer.

Reveal your INNER SLIMMER

Uncovering your personal slimming habits, motivators and stoppers is a powerful exercise. Here we share the key questions to ask yourself and how to use your answers to hatch a winning weight loss plan

WORDS: CHRISTABEL SMITH

You're always with yourself, so you might as well enjoy the company,' said fashion designer Diane von Furstenberg. And when it comes to losing weight, getting to know the inner you is a really practical way of getting the weight loss results you want.

'Self-knowledge is the clincher when it comes to making changes,' says Deborah Sanderson, director of training and development at Slimming World. 'Even if we know Food Optimising inside out, to change our eating habits long term, we also need to know ourselves as a slimmer and be alert to any tripwires. And while at first it might be daunting, discovering more about yourself can be a fascinating adventure.'

Understanding what makes you tick is a slimming superpower, as you can use that knowledge to make plans that are 100 per cent tailored to you. 'We're with ourselves 24/7, so really, there's no one better to work out what's going on!' says Deborah. 'If you turn to the biscuit tin when you're bored, tired or upset, don't judge yourself – just notice that it's what you do sometimes. When you've tuned into yourself, you can ask your fellow members and Consultant for tailored support at group. And with them helping you through your personal blockers, too, you'll find you're capable of things you'd never dreamt could happen.'

So get to know your inner slimmer by asking yourself these three searching questions, and find your own, personal route to long-term slimming success!

Q1 'Am I ready to commit to change?'

This is a big one to focus on, says Deborah Sanderson. 'You want to reach your target weight...yet do you want it enough to learn and keep new habits? Joining Slimming World is a fantastic first step, though it's the invisible commitment you make to yourself that really counts. As a group or online member, you'll have access to all the tools you need to reach your dream weight, including delicious recipes, a ton of activity ideas, and round-the-clock online support – and you're the key to making them work.'

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

'You wouldn't have joined Slimming World (or even picked up this magazine) if something hadn't come knocking, telling you your old habits weren't serving you,' says Deborah. 'Ask yourself this question, and if you decide the rewards are worth your time and energy, that's what will motivate you to make healthier choices.'

DO IT FOR YOU

When Scott Ufton from Nottinghamshire joined Slimming World, initially he was spurred on by his doubting relatives, who didn't believe he could lose 4st. 'Before long, I'd smashed my 4st target, but I wasn't ready to stop there!' says Scott. Realising his new

lifestyle was making him happier, Scott decided to add in activity using the Body Magic physical activity support programme, and went on to lose a further 2st. 'Everything became easier when I wasn't carrying 6st around, and my family came to appreciate my weight loss as much as I did. I'm so glad I made that commitment to myself.'

Let the people around you know how important losing weight is to you, and they'll be better placed to give you support. And no matter what, you can always count on your Consultant and group to be on your side and share their own experiences – from emotional insights and self-discovery to the barbecue dishes they sizzled up last night!

UNDERSTANDING TICK IS A SLIMMING

Q3 'How is self-criticism affecting my weight loss?'

'We can be far meaner to ourselves than we'd dream of being to anyone else,' says Deborah. 'If we berate ourselves for being "lazy", or "not trying hard enough", there's a risk of self-fulfilling prophesy. In other words, if we're feeling upset with ourselves, we're more likely to make self-defeating decisions over food and activity, then think: "See? I proved I never try hard enough!"'

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

'Self-criticism drags you down and wears you out,' says Deborah. 'On the flipside, when you feel good about yourself, you're more likely to make choices that are good for your weight loss.' Asking this question helps us look at our own habits without judgment, and develop a kinder way of thinking about ourselves. 'When you get to know yourself better, and stop battling with self-criticism, you'll be less likely to compare yourself to others in an unhelpful way, too – which means you'll be more likely to gain inspiration from other members.'

DO IT FOR YOU

Before losing 8st 4lbs, Abby Swartz from Lincolnshire judged herself so much for emotional eating – and sometimes just for eating – that she was apprehensive to go to lunch with her new friends from group. 'Of course, nobody judged me for my food choices – why would they? I was just ordering lunch! After that, I realised that when I'd worried about being judged, I'd often been judging myself. The acceptance I found at group gave me a way to get past the self-doubt, and raised my self-esteem more than I ever could have imagined!'

If you're struggling to release self-critical thoughts, imagine them as heavy stones in a backpack. You can decide to stop lugging these around by developing a kinder dialogue with yourself, just as Abby did. Say you keep telling yourself 'I can't lose weight' – could it be you're frightened of failure because countless diets haven't worked in the past? Take that fear out of the backpack and examine it rationally. You might realise that it's the past diets that have failed you – and things will be different this time because Food Optimising isn't a 'diet', it's a healthy way you're choosing to eat that you can sustain long term. Now picture yourself discarding that stone and leaving it behind. Doesn't the load feel lighter? >

Q2 'What ingrained beliefs do I have about food and fitness?'

How we think and feel about eating and activity can have a dramatic impact on the way we, personally, approach losing weight. 'For example, you might have spent a lifetime thinking that pasta and potatoes are "bad" for weight loss, and be struggling with the idea of eating carbs as part of balanced Food Optimising meals,' Deborah says. 'Or you might tell yourself that you "hate swimming", or that you can't exercise because "gyms are too expensive"'

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

'Part of raising our self-awareness is to recognise when we put up barriers like these, and challenge them,' says Deborah. When you're Food Optimising, pasta and potatoes are Free Foods – those that fill you up for fewer calories – so you can eat as much as you fancy, and still lose weight. Do you really hate the idea of being in the water, or is there something else stopping you, like memories of the communal changing rooms at school? Private gym memberships can be pricey for sure, but there are other ways to get active that don't cost a penny, like walking. Knowing that, what's really holding you back from getting started with activity? Asking this question helps you reframe those ingrained beliefs and open up all sorts of new routes to a healthier, happier you.

DO IT FOR YOU

Slimming World member Monique Munro from Bedfordshire was convinced she couldn't lose weight – a long-held belief after trying to lose weight by restricting

what she ate. Then she discovered Food Optimising. 'I realised that it wasn't about eating less or denying myself. I knew it would take a big mindset shift for me to embrace Food Optimising, and I felt excited about it. The proof would come on the scales, though, and after two weeks I'd lost 9lbs. My myth had been busted: that I wasn't any good at losing weight...and I went on to lose 8st 4lbs!'

One ingrained belief many of us will recognise is thinking like we have 'no willpower'. 'For some of us, perhaps this comes from seeing chocolate or booze as treats we can't do without. I'd ask you to question that, too,' says Deborah. 'Instead of thinking about willpower, think about choice power.' We can choose to include those foods as Syns and still lose weight – or we might choose to swap away from things we've identified as our personal trigger foods or drinks (the ones that make us feel out of control) to different treats and snacks. The point is, it's not really about willpower or denying ourselves, but making positive, empowering choices for our weight loss.

WHAT MAKES YOU SUPERPOWER

YOUR PERSONALISED PLAN

Every slimmer is unique, and that's why you can personalise Food Optimising and the Body Magic programme to fit you like a tailor-made suit. 'No one else can tell you what you should be eating and how you should be getting active,' says Deborah. 'When you create your own bespoke plan, you own it, which leads to you naturally feeling more motivated.'

'Food Optimising caters for everyone's individual needs and tastes,' Deborah says. 'It's also balanced and based on eating filling Free Food to satisfy your appetite, so you never need to feel empty or restricted while you're losing weight.'

The same applies to the Body Magic activity support programme – it's all about finding something that suits you. 'Moving more is the key, so focus on what you enjoy, and take it at your own pace. When you move little and often, it soon hardwires as a habit,' says Deborah. Think about what makes you feel good. A good catch-up over a coffee? Could you walk to the cafe, or see if your friend is up for a walk and talk instead? Some activities can even help you get closer to self-awareness, such as gentle yoga, which can help you reflect on the inner you. Whatever you choose, the beauty of regular activity is the more you do, the more you want to do!

GRAB-A-PEN EXERCISE

STOCKTAKE YOUR SUCCESS

To build confidence and trust in yourself that you can achieve your goals, take a quiet moment to think about just how amazing your brain and body are by jotting down all the things you did today, without even thinking. Have you calmed down an angry toddler or driven a car, for example, or cooked a Food Optimising meal for four? It might feel silly, but go with it – we often focus on the things we can't do, so it's just about pausing to think about all the things we can.

TODAY I HAVE:

Handwriting practice area with horizontal dashed lines for notes.

GRAB-A-PEN EXERCISE

BE YOUR OWN CHEERLEADER

Are there things you genuinely believe you 'can't do' for weight loss? Getting out of these old grooves will boost your self-esteem, because most of us can do far more than we give ourselves credit for! We call these 'I can't's' self-limiting beliefs, and your Consultant will help you spot and challenge them. And you can help yourself by noticing when they pop up, noting them down and practising being your own cheerleader.

In this table, write down any phrases that pop into your head and start with 'I can't', 'I'm rubbish at', and so on. Now think about how you can flip them, such as by changing 'I'm rubbish at exercise' to 'Walking the kids to school is activity I can do every day'. In time, the old grooves will change to a much groovier kind of self-love!

OLD GROOVE TALK:

NEW GROOVE TALK:

Table with two columns for 'OLD GROOVE TALK' and 'NEW GROOVE TALK', each with horizontal dashed lines for writing.

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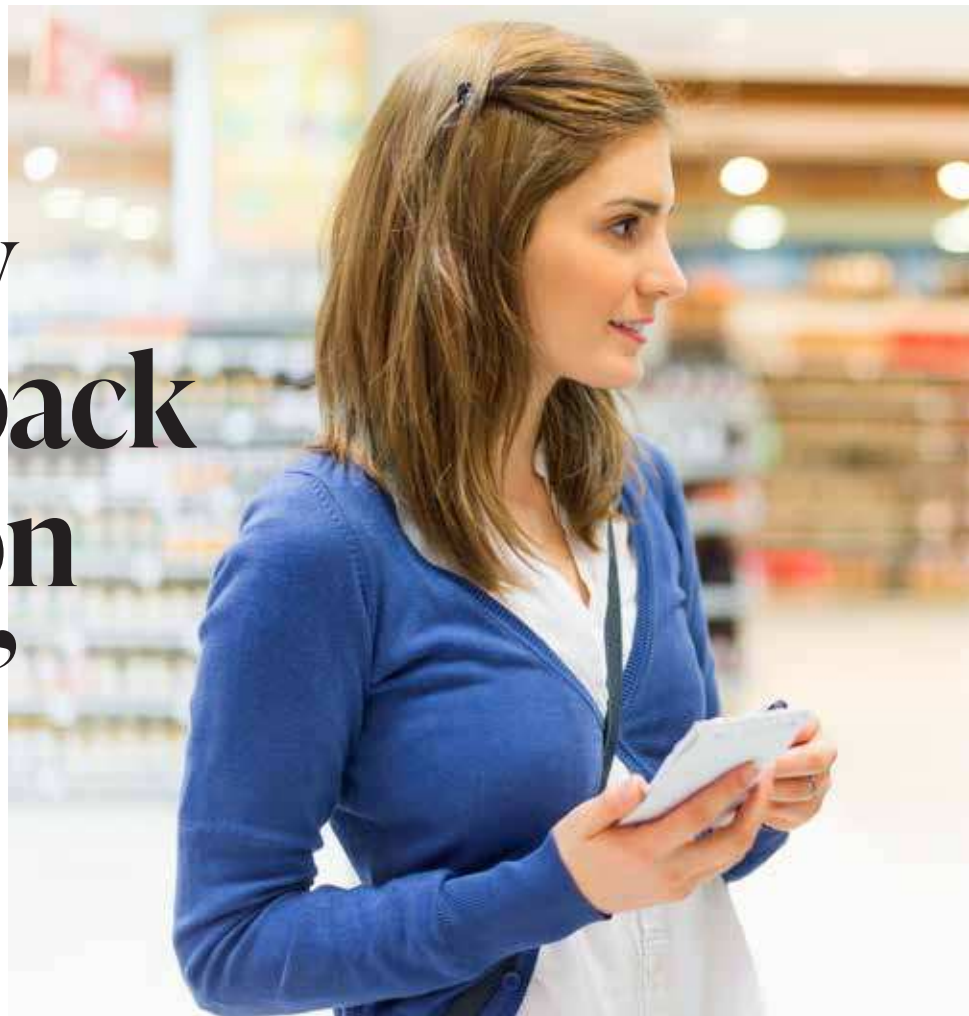
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OUR EXPERTS



KIMBERLEY ROBINSON has lost 3st 8lbs and is a target member of Tracey Carey's Slimming World group in Witham, Essex



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



KATHLEEN FITZPATRICK is a Slimming World Consultant with groups in Castlemilk, Cathcart and Queens Park in Glasgow, Lanarkshire, and Newton Mearns in East Renfrewshire

This issue, our experts offer practical advice to a busy mum who'd love some help with food ideas that will keep her weight loss firing without breaking the bank



'I'm a single mum and I have to work very long hours to make ends meet, especially with food prices being so high. I lost 3st and hit target during lockdown – but I had time to plan and cook meals then and could go for long walks. Sticking with healthier eating has felt harder these last few years and I've regained a stone.



'My son is vegetarian, while I love meat. I tend to grab a sandwich at lunchtime, which I eat in the car or at my desk, then have something quick like beans or cheese on toast late at night. I don't have the time or money for recipes with long lists of ingredients, and when I've tried batch cooking it's got dull having the same meal every night. Going to group is my one "night off" and I've made some great friends there and picked up lots of ideas. How can I get myself back on track?'

Jo Merrick, 43, lives in Bedfordshire with her son, Nicholas, 10. She is a full-time health visitor and part-time bartender. Jo has lost 2st and is a member of Leonie Newell's group in Barton-le-Clay, Bedfordshire



the Syn values on the packaging as I'm unpacking my bags.

'What I love about being a Slimming World member is that you're never short of ideas and support to help you stay on track. I always take a notepad to group and write down all the recipes and tips that are shared. Everyone's feeling the pinch at the moment, so we're all passing around the ways we've found to spend less while Food Optimising. I've discovered that making the most of group, keeping notes and writing lists really does save time and money in the long run. Good luck!'

ALEXANDRA SAYS:

'It sounds like you lead a very busy and demanding life, Jo – so well done for keeping all those plates spinning! When you're on a limited budget and pushed for time, it can feel tricky to stay on plan, yet just a few small changes can help put you back in control. Take that lunchtime sandwich, for example.

If you buy one ready-made, it's more expensive – and you don't know what hidden extras, such as butter or dressings, are in it. Instead, pick up a cheap cool bag for when you're on the go. Then you can ring the changes with quick and budget-friendly homemade lunches that are on plan, such as Speed Free Food salads with pasta and canned beans, or wholemeal bread sandwiches with a Healthy Extra serving of cheese and lots of salad.

'It helps to keep a few staples to hand, such as supermarket own-brand canned and frozen veg, as well as some dried herbs and spices to add flavour. Cumin, curry powder, chilli powder, paprika and oregano should cover all the basics. One final time-saving tip: you can buy ready-chopped frozen garlic and ginger. While it's a little more expensive than fresh, it means you only use what you need without anything going to waste.

'One of our new recipe books, *Cook Slim, Save* is full of quick and affordable meals, most of which have short lists of ingredients. You can buy it online or from your Consultant. And we've got lots of

recipes on the website and app as well. If you have a leftover ingredient from another meal, you can use the recipe search facility to find ideas that put it to use, so it doesn't go to waste. You could try getting Nicholas involved in cooking, too. There are plenty of simple recipes, such as fajitas and stir-fries, that can be adapted to suit both vegetarians and meat-eaters, and it's a lovely way to spend time together.'

KATHLEEN SAYS:

'Unsurprisingly, the cost-of-living crisis is a hot topic in my groups right now – and most wish they had more time to plan and prepare meals, so I understand how you feel. The key thing is not to get overwhelmed. If you don't have time to draw up a menu for the week, just making sure you know what your next meal is going to be can really help – as can having an on-plan backup in the

freezer just in case!

'Batch cooking doesn't have to mean making a huge lasagne or curry to eat all week. You can cook a few jacket potatoes at once, for instance, then let them cool, wrap them in foil and store in an airtight container in the freezer to have with different toppings. Or save time by making something like pasta salad for your evening meal,

plus enough extra so you can take it for lunch the following day. Scrambled eggs or omelettes with tomatoes or mushrooms and cheese are a quick and easy alternative to your late-night cheese on toast, and they have Speed Free Food in them for extra slimming power.

'It sounds like you're on your feet a lot already, so can you complement that by finding little ways to build extra activity into your day? Even a quick walk round the block after lunch will give you more energy, boost your motivation and lift your mood, which is just as important as the exercise. Please do find time in your very hectic life to be kind to yourself, too, Jo. You've done so very well losing so much weight already. With your strength and determination, I'm sure it won't be very long at all before you're back at target again.'

“Batch cooking doesn't have to mean making a huge lasagne, it can be cooking a few jacket potatoes at once to keep in the freezer”

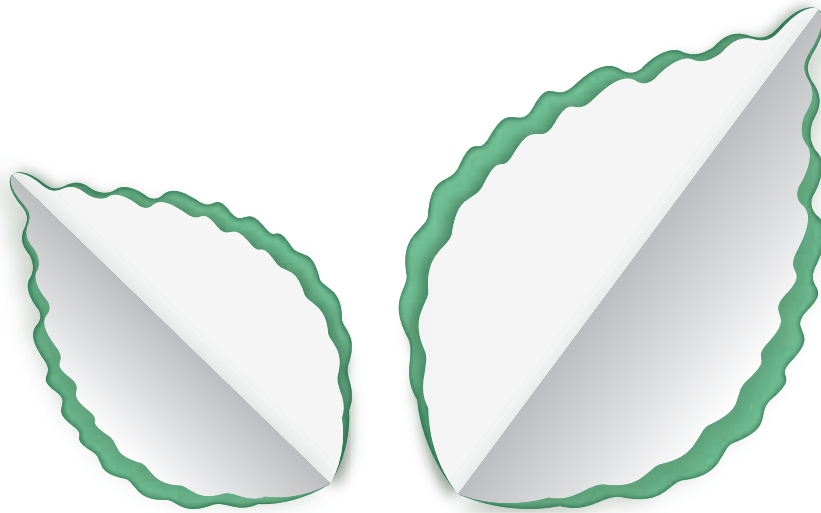
KIMBERLEY SAYS:

'I hear you, Jo! Like you, I work full-time and am bringing up my eight-year-old daughter, Valentina, on a tight budget, so I know how tricky things can be. To keep my week interesting, instead of batch cooking an entire meal, I make a basic tomato sauce. I use the cheapest canned tomatoes and passata, stock, tomato purée and leftover veg, then blitz it up, divide it into portions and freeze. That way, I can just grab what I need and heat it up to go with pasta, or use it to make a low Syn pizza by spreading it over a Healthy Extra wholemeal pitta bread, or as the base for a chilli. I'm vegetarian and my daughter eats meat, so we'll have our own extras. Keeping your freezer near to full is more energy-efficient, so that saves you money as well.

'It can be cheaper to buy in bulk, and my tip is to go to the supermarket in the evenings when they're adding the yellow stickers – that way you're getting even more bargains! Before putting things in my trolley, I always use the Slimming World barcode scanner on the app to help me check where unfamiliar items fit into my Food Optimising day. And there's no point grabbing a bargain and then forgetting all about it, so I keep a list of everything I've got in my freezer and write

Have you got a slimming dilemma?

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



PAPER LOVES TREES

European forests, which provide wood for making paper, paper packaging and many other products, have been growing by 1,500 football pitches every day!

Source: Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), 2005 - 2020
European Forests: EU27 + Norway, Switzerland and the UK



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HAVE A GOOD HAIR DAY

Healthy, vibrant hair can do wonders for your confidence. Here, we share top tips for giving your crowning glory some summer-loving TLC...

Summer sunshine...it's an instant mood lifter that can give us that happy holiday feeling, even when we're just relaxing at home. At the same time, that heat and humidity can play havoc with our hair. While we can change our outfits according to the weather, we wear our hair every day, which means if it's not looking its best it can really affect how we feel about ourselves. So, keeping your hair healthy from the inside out can really pay dividends!

Fight the frizz

There's a wide range of frizz-fighting products, targeted at all hair types. But some can weigh down fine hair or make it feel greasy, so start with just a little. (You can always add more, but once it's on, you can't take it away!) Hairdressers recommend using a heat-protective spray before blow drying, so hair is smooth to begin with. Then add a frizz-busting serum, UV-protection product or anti-humidity hairspray.

Protein power

'Hair is made of a protein called keratin, so getting plenty of protein in our diet can be beneficial,' says Jennifer Kent, a dietitian at Slimming World. 'There are so many high-protein Free Foods: eggs, chicken, fish, lean meat, lentils, chickpeas, and beans. It's beneficial to eat a variety, so look for the P symbol in your Food Optimising book and on the Slimming World app for a world of options!'

WHAT SUPP?

Many health stores sell pricey supplements that claim to nourish hair, but are they worth it? 'Generally, there's no need to take them if you have a balanced diet,' says Jennifer. There are some health conditions, however, that can cause hair loss or affect the look and feel of your hair. 'Occasionally, it can be an underlying symptom of something else, such as hormonal changes or an underactive thyroid,' says Jennifer. 'If you're worried, it's worth a chat with your GP.'

Feed your tresses

Having a healthy, balanced diet is good for your whole body, including your hair. 'Eating a wide range of food supports your intake of the vitamins, minerals and nutrients that the body needs for hair health,' says Jennifer Kent. 'That means including all the food groups – protein; starchy carbs such as potatoes, rice and pasta; fruit and veg; and dairy (or calcium-fortified alternatives) – and this is easy to do when you're Food Optimising.'

Mane event

'A new hairdo is the perfect pick-me-up,' says Jennifer. 'I love the confidence boost I get when mine's just been cut, coloured or re-styled.' You could even use it as a motivator for your weight loss. If you've swapped expensive takeaways for home-cooked Food Optimising meals, put aside the money you've saved and promise yourself that when you reach your next slimming milestone, you'll treat yourself to a pampering trip to the hairdresser. Then you can look forward to booking yourself in, relaxing, and giving yourself the gift of a great hair day! ●





a

AEROPLANES

Jetting off this summer? Take time to walk the aisle. Not only will it count towards keeping active, it will also help lower your risk of developing deep vein thrombosis (DVT) on longer flights. 'Wearing loose clothing, drinking lots of water and avoiding alcohol while you're in the air will also cut your risk,' says Laura Nolan, a registered nutritionist at Slimming World. In fact, losing weight and being more active can reduce your risk of DVT in general – great news for Slimming World members!

B

BODY MAGIC

Sunny days and longer evenings make this a brilliant time to discover Body Magic – Slimming World's physical activity support programme. If you're new to exercise, following the programme will help you develop a positive mindset while building your activity levels at your own pace – until it's a habit you enjoy *and* that fits in with your life. Already active? The Body Magic programme can help you take things up a gear or add in new activities, so those health benefits keep on coming.

Your A-Z of summer health!

Weight loss and wellbeing tips and advice to help you feel your best this sunshine season

ILLUSTRATIONS: AGNESE BICOCCHI

c CHAFING

That soreness you get if your thighs rub together as you move around doesn't have to stop you enjoying your summer. 'Members tell us that rubbing on a balm such as Vaseline can help reduce the friction, as can wearing anti-rub shorts under skirts,' says Laura Nolan. (Old tights, upcycled by cutting off the legs, can also work!) And slimmers who once found chafing an issue, noticed improvements after losing weight.

d

DRINKS

Raise a glass to summer, because you *can* enjoy a tippie and slim. And if you keep within your Syns, it's less likely you'll go over the weekly maximum recommended for health.



e

EXPLORE

Planning some more active days could really enhance your hols.

Whether you discover a local beauty spot or head into town to soak up the atmosphere, everyday activity – just moving around over the course of your day – is one of five key active habits that help health and wellbeing. 'Another active habit – sitting still less – also brings a range of health benefits,' says Laura. So break up sunlounger time with a paddle, or just aim to get up and move every 20 minutes to boost your holiday wellbeing.

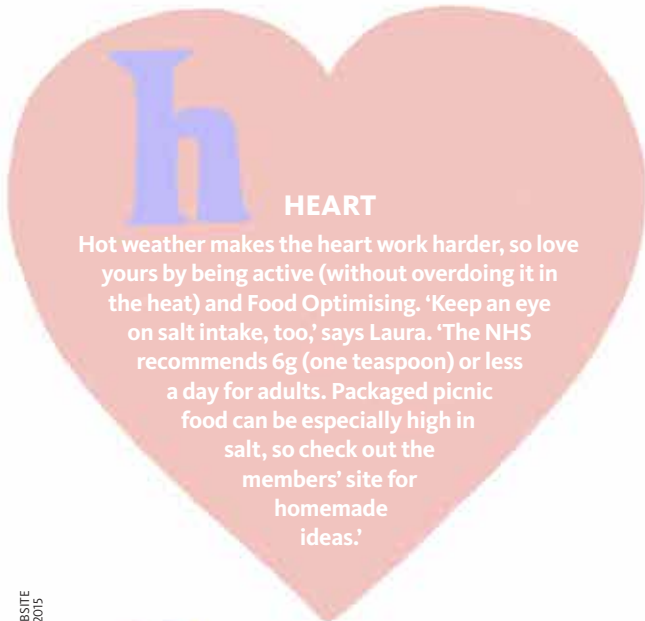
f FEET

As you lose weight the pressure on your joints is reduced, which is good to know if you have foot pain. In the meantime, there are other things you can do to help – see a pharmacist about insoles or pads, buy sandals with supportive foot beds and visit your GP if you're in pain for more than two weeks. Diabetes can damage blood vessels and reduce blood flow to your feet, so if you have it, it's extra important to take care of them. The good news is, eating a healthy, balanced diet and being active will help manage blood sugar levels, reducing your risk of complications in the future.



GOOD TIMES

A sense of belonging is vital for mental wellbeing – so all that summer socialising is positively good for you! What's more, connecting with like-minded slimmers at group can help boost your wellbeing and motivation. Research found that 74 per cent of Slimming World members felt more confident and self-assured, 73 per cent made new friends, 68 per cent felt more connected, and a staggering 93 per cent felt committed to their weight loss*!



HEART
Hot weather makes the heart work harder, so love yours by being active (without overdoing it in the heat) and Food Optimising. 'Keep an eye on salt intake, too,' says Laura. 'The NHS recommends 6g (one teaspoon) or less a day for adults. Packaged picnic food can be especially high in salt, so check out the members' site for homemade ideas.'

I TCHING

The inflammatory skin condition intertrigo is often worse in hot weather, and it can make areas like the armpits, under the bust, the groin and folds of skin get uncomfortably itchy. To ease it, keep the area clean and dry, wear cotton undies and loose, natural fabrics that let in air, or visit a pharmacist for advice on topical creams. Itching still driving you up the wall? Chat to your GP or a dermatologist.



JOIN IN

Find your weight loss crew at a Slimming World group this summer. It's a guaranteed way to supercharge your motivation at what can be a tricky time of year, and if you're on holiday in the UK or the Republic of Ireland, you don't even need to skip a week – members can pop in to any Slimming World group for a warm welcome and that fix of weekly inspiration you won't find anywhere else!

k

KINDNESS

Summer can be challenging, so your Slimming World Consultant will help you plan strategies to enjoy the season and succeed on the scales. And, if you do happen to go off track, be kind to yourself.

As well as self-compassion being better for your mental wellbeing, a survey of members has shown it can also help you get back on track more quickly**.



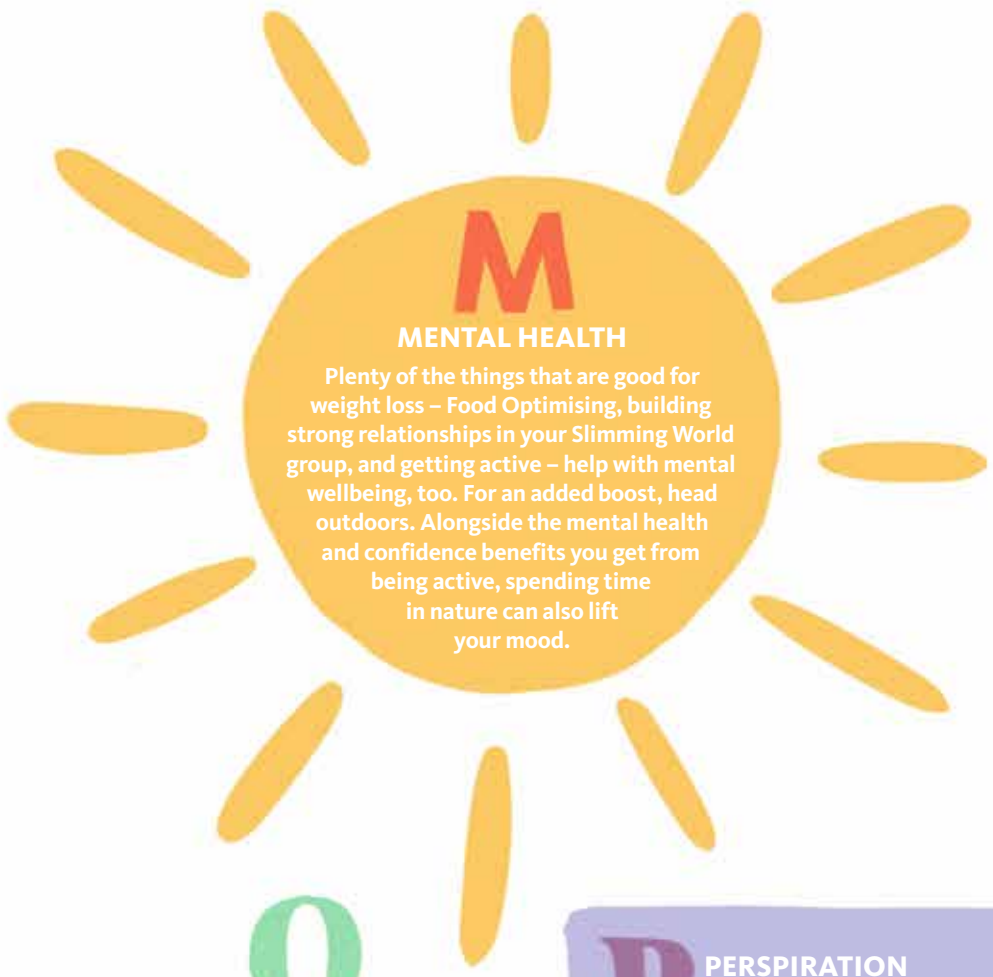
L

LUNGS

People with asthma who also get hay fever can find their symptoms are worse during the summer...and that can get in the way of enjoying outdoor activities. If you're feeling breathless, dial down the intensity – any activity is good for you, even if it's gentle. On high-pollen days, you might find you're more comfortable exercising indoors. Visit metoffice.gov.uk for a five-day pollen forecast. >



*FROM A RANDOM SAMPLE OF 1,133 SLIMMING WORLD MEMBERS POLLED VIA SLIMMING WORLD'S MEMBER WEBSITE
**BASED ON SLIMMING WORLD DATA SHOWING 1,722 NEW MEMBERS JOINING IN JANUARY BETWEEN 2011 AND 2015



M

MENTAL HEALTH

Plenty of the things that are good for weight loss – Food Optimising, building strong relationships in your Slimming World group, and getting active – help with mental wellbeing, too. For an added boost, head outdoors. Alongside the mental health and confidence benefits you get from being active, spending time in nature can also lift your mood.

n

NUTRITION

‘With so many in season, now is a great time to get into the habit of eating a rainbow of nutritious Speed Free Food fruit,’ says Laura Nolan. ‘They’re full of vitamins and minerals, are great for weight loss, and they’re refreshing when it’s hot outside!’ Having a healthy diet will support your wellbeing all summer. Plus, Slimming World members have been shown to eat more fruit, veg and fibre than non-members[†] – so you’re already onto a winner!

O

OVERHEATING

Getting too hot can lead to heat exhaustion, and you’re more at risk in warm weather, during vigorous exercise, or if you have a long-term condition such as diabetes or heart problems. Search ‘heat exhaustion’ on the NHS website (nhs.uk) for advice on how to spot it and cool yourself down quickly, and when it’s wise to seek medical help.

P

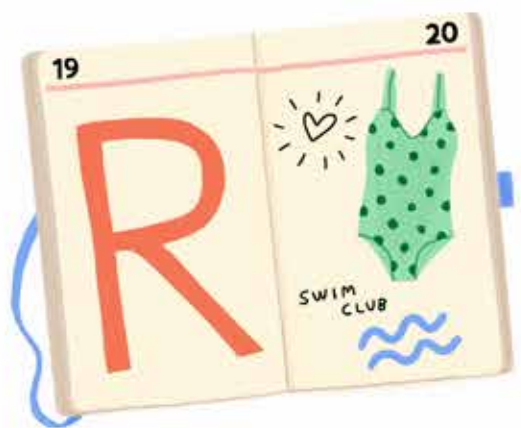
PERSPIRATION

Looking for ways to keep fresh, even on the hottest of days? Deodorant only masks odours, so if you want to reduce sweating, antiperspirant is the way to go. You can get advice from your pharmacist on the best one for you, or your GP can prescribe something stronger if needed. Other top tips include wearing loose-fitting clothes (choose natural rather than synthetic fabrics if you can), heading to the shade or an air-conditioned room if you need to cool down, and keeping a food diary to see if you feel more hot and bothered after alcohol, caffeine or spicy foods.

Q

QUENCH

...your thirst! While it’s a myth that drinking loads of water will help you lose weight, staying hydrated is good for your digestion, skin and mental alertness. So, in summer when your body loses more water due to the heat, it’s worth keeping your glass topped up. ‘All fluids count towards the recommended six to eight glasses a day (except alcohol – sorry!),’ says Laura. ‘Add flavour to water with slices of lemon and lime, or cucumber and fresh mint, and pour over lots of ice for a cooling, refreshing drink.’



RESET

When life is manic, it can be hard to find some headspace, and that means health and wellbeing goals don’t always get the thought they deserve. If you’re taking time out for you this summer, use it as an opportunity for a health reset – thinking about your motivation for losing weight and deciding how you’ll build in the healthy habits that will get you where you want to be. It’s the first step to making plans that could be truly life changing!

S

STRETCH MARKS

These may become more noticeable in summer as they contrast with tanned skin. ‘Some members tell us they prefer to cover them, while others embrace them as part of their journey,’ says Laura. Rest assured, they do become less visible over time, and you’re certainly not alone – lots of us have them!

T

TUMMY TROUBLES

‘Sudden changes to your diet can cause bloating and gut issues, for example if you’re eating more high-fat food on holiday,’ says Laura. Making Food Optimising friendly choices and eating regular meals while you’re away can help, as can staying hydrated to support digestive health.



U

UVA (AND UVB)

Knowing what’s in your sunscreen can help keep you sun safe when you’re out having fun, at home and away. According to the NHS, everyone should use sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 (to protect against UVB) and at least four-star UVA protection. That’s on top of wearing suitable clothing, a hat and sunglasses, and seeking out the shade when the sun’s at its hottest.

V

VIDEOS

Take five and fit a health-boosting burst of activity into even the busiest summer day. Slimming World’s activity videos, exclusively for members on the website and app (go to ‘Activity videos’), are there for you on-demand, with routines ranging from five to 30 minutes. Whether you fancy an upbeat boogie or a relaxing stretch, you’ll find a workout to suit your fitness level and your mood!

W

WEIGHT LOSS WINS

It might be tempting to wait until September, but get cracking now and you could be seeing significant health improvements by the time the kids are back at school. That’s because losing just five to 10 per cent of your body weight can reduce breathlessness, improve mood and self-esteem, and lower your risk of health conditions including some cancers, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

X

X-RAY

Yes, we’re talking about bones! ‘Vitamin D, which you can get from sun exposure at this time of year, supports bones, and so does any strength-building activity, including digging the garden and lifting the kids,’ says Laura. ‘When you’re Food Optimising, you’ll get bone-strengthening calcium from your Healthy Extra ‘a’ choices, or from calcium-rich Free Foods (marked with a C in your member pack).’

Y

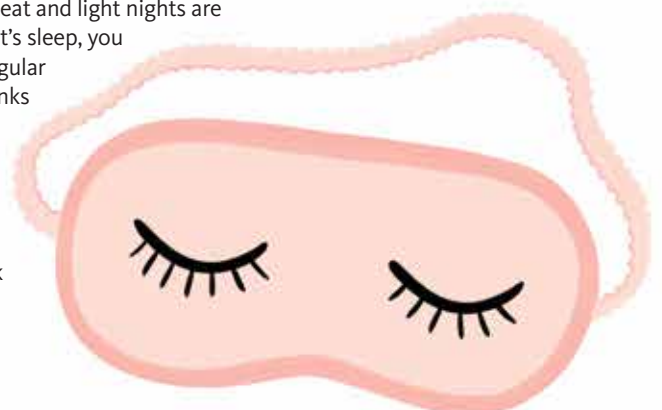
YOUTH BOOST

Members often tell us they feel years younger after losing weight – like Alison Berry (see her story on p23), who’s living her best life in her 60s after losing over 11st. And that makes summer even more exciting, because anything’s possible!

Z

Zzzs

Feeling tired can scupper healthy eating and activity plans, so if heat and light nights are getting in the way of a good night’s sleep, you could try these tips. ‘Stick to a regular bedtime and avoid caffeinated drinks after midafternoon,’ says Laura. You could cool your bedroom by keeping curtains closed in the day, and also take a cool shower before bed. If light is an issue, blackout curtains or a sleep mask can help. And when you wake up energised, you’ll be set to smash your slimming goals! ●



THE HEALTH INFORMATION IN THIS FEATURE IS INTENDED TO PROVIDE GENERAL KNOWLEDGE AND SHOULD NOT BE USED TO REPLACE THE ADVICE GIVEN BY YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM. 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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barely know you've
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Keep your cool

When the heat is on, celebrate your weight loss success with one of our uplifting summer buys!



Chilly's Pompoms Vacuum Insulated Drinks Bottle, £26, John Lewis & Partners

M&S Collection Floral Crochet Bucket Hat, £17.50, Marks & Spencer



Preppy Sunglasses, £16, Accessorize

Grace Travel Fan, £8.50, Oliver Bonas



Watermelon Silicone Ice Cream Mould, £5.50, Lékué



That's Swell! XXL Cooling Lip Plumper, £4.99, Barry M



Wide Fit Leather-Look Beaded Footbed Sandals, £29.99, New Look

Be your number one fan!

Zesty Lime Blossom Face & Body Mist, £16 for 100ml, The Body Shop



Papaya Curve Pink Sweetheart Tie Front Top, sizes 18-26, £17, Matalan



Love Island x Revolution Scrunchies, £6 for three, Boots

Calling *all* rebels



**“Do come and find out
what Slimming World
is all about (rebels always
welcome!)... You’ll wish
you’d done it sooner”**

If you're not a fan of rigid rules, you're in the right place. We're here to help you lose weight *your* way, safe in the knowledge that your support squad will be there when you need them, says Margaret Miles-Bramwell

Hello you rule-breakers! It's a pleasure to meet you here, on these pages. I am most definitely one of you. No question!

If we are getting our message to you, one way or another, I do hope you've felt that delicious freedom – that lack of superfluous rules – at the heart of Slimming World. We do have fantastic guidelines, but only those that really matter to get your weight down and your spirits up.

When I started Slimming World in 1969, I was pretty high on wave after wave of emotions. Like being in a stormy sea, when both fear and excitement ride every peak and trough with you in those wild frothing waters. As I planned to launch the most effective and compassionate help for others overwhelmed with their own emotions, over their seeming inability to control their weight, my mix was one of both anger and excitement.

I was a feisty 21 year old, struggling to make ends meet, and I had spent good money joining what was billed at the time as the most amazing support system around. And it was so poor, so lacking in empathy and understanding, so damaging in how it managed to undermine self-confidence and cripple self-esteem, that my energy and fury knew no bounds once I'd seen the awful reality.

My imagination had conjured up something very different, something pretty close to what Slimming World was to become. So what a shock. What a disappointment. What a revelation. And what an opportunity for me to do something about that and to change the face of slimming and weight management forever.

From the beginning, my focus was not on the money – it was on numbers of a different nature. It was all about genuinely effective, sustainable lifestyle changes that meant the absolute minimum of counting anything. It was all about compassion and understanding. It was all about arming each

person with the ability to one day be independent and successful. All of that would result in amazing weight losses that would last a lifetime, without hunger and with an incredible self-esteem boost. As the weight reduced, the self-esteem increased. How life changing would that be? How life changing it is to this day!

So here we are in 2023, some 54 years on (which is very strange, as my brain still believes I'm 35) and the company has grown into this very large, very beautiful family just bursting with kindness. It's full of such talented people all dedicated to that original, mind-blowing concept – compassion, empathy and an enormous toolbox of awesome ideas to self-motivate and sustain you to achieve life-long success.

Please, come to us and find out what Slimming World is all about (rebels always welcome!). Find out how we make the magic happen. You'll wish you'd done it sooner.

Slimming World is the most safe and beautiful place for slimmers everywhere. It's a staggeringly effective, supportive community where teamwork and togetherness are in our DNA. It's where miracles happen. *Together* is how we do it.

Yours, as always, with so much love

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



Meet Adam

Adam Henley, 49, is a finance officer and lives in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire

Height: 6ft 2ins

Starting weight: 38st 1lb

Weight now: 19st 7lbs

**WEIGHT LOST:
18st 8lbs**

Adam lost weight at Sue Shone's Slimming World group in Wellingborough, now run by Teresa Seaton

**Greatest
Loser
2023**

I started to gain weight after I lost my dad, and used food to help ease my grief



COMPETITION WINNER

'Losing 18st 8lbs has turned my life around'

Adam Henley had all but given up on believing he could lose weight, when it hit him that a different approach could help him achieve his dream. Now, he's Slimming World's Greatest Loser 2023 – and happier and healthier than ever!

Shifting uncomfortably on my office chair, I felt as though dozens of pairs of eyes were boring into me. Work had become a daily trial, and it had nothing to do with the busy workload. At just over 38st, I'd long suspected I was being stereotyped as slow and lazy because of my weight. Then, a colleague in the bank I worked for actually put it into words. On his leaving day, he said to me: 'I want to apologise - I originally didn't think you could do this work because I'd judged you on your size.' I thanked him for his honesty and was grateful for the acknowledgement that I was good at my job - but his words stung.

I'd started to gain weight when I was 22, after a heartbreaking event in my life. My dad, Rod, had become as much of a friend as a father to me, and we'd been making plans to travel to the 92 football league grounds together. When he was taken very suddenly by complications following heart failure, still only in his early 50s, I tried to soothe my grief with food. In my 30s, having been to the World Athletics Championships in 2009, I was inspired to take up throwing the shot and hammer. I enjoyed it, but found it a struggle to throw the 16lb weights, and eventually qualified as a field official in regional athletics in 2011. As time went on, I found myself being assigned to 'gentle duties' that didn't require me to walk around carrying heavy pieces of equipment, because it was assumed I wasn't able to cope with a more active role.

I did try to lose weight, but my heart really wasn't in it. At one point, I was going to a weight loss group to be weighed on a Wednesday night, then heading home via my local chip shop and ordering fried chicken, chips and a can of pop. It was meal number two on the set menu, and I became known by the staff as 'Meal Two Guy' - needless to say, I didn't lose any weight. And when I first joined Slimming World in 2016, I was still in that same frame of mind - I resisted my Consultant's advice to keep a food diary in those important first weeks, so I never really got immersed in the plan. I yo-yoed between half-heartedly trying to follow Food Optimising and losing for a few weeks, then eating until I felt ill. I'd then feel so upset with myself that I'd seek comfort the only way I knew...in food.

A light-bulb moment

In July 2020, while I was transferring the contents of my trolley onto the supermarket conveyor belt, I had a realisation: I was putting on Slimming World frozen meals with one hand, while loading up food that was slowing down my weight loss with the other. It suddenly felt as though my whole adult life was passing in front of me on that belt - the food that I knew would support my weight loss, and the giant pancakes, fried chicken, crisps, biscuits, doughnuts and chocolate that were sabotaging my plans. When I got home, I ate all those high Syn foods in a single day. I'd kept my shopping receipt, and later I went through it and noted down the Syns; they added up to 300. And that's when it hit me - no wonder I hadn't been getting anywhere. It seemed so self-destructive: all that time spent trying to slim, undone in just a few moments.

The next week, I went to group with a new attitude, ready to finally see some proper results. And I began to engage more in the conversation during IMAGE Therapy, the time during group where you get personalised support for the week ahead. Now that I was really taking part, I was soaking up lots of valuable

and useful information - and I had another light-bulb moment, this time around my trigger foods. 'I've come to realise that I'm just not the kind of person who can take a biscuit from a packet, eat it and leave the rest alone,' I said. 'I know now that I simply can't have certain things in the house if I want to lose weight.' I could see several other members nod in recognition. Then they shared what worked for them: how they used their Syns for things they felt able to enjoy in measured portions, and then took their time to really savour them.

A new sense of purpose

Something extraordinary started to happen to me. The man who believed he simply couldn't lose weight had become a determined character with a new purpose. Between July 2020 and the end of that year, I lost almost 3st. That sense of achievement spurred me on to start Slimming World's Body Magic physical activity support programme. I enjoyed swimming and was already part of a swimming group. Now, as I worked through the Body Magic awards, I got into a real routine with my 45-minute pool sessions, sometimes doing two a day. In fact, I swam so much I became the ninth most active UK user on my swimming tracking app, SWIMTAG. That motivated me to do more. 'I'd like to increase my walking distances,' I told my Consultant, Sue. 'There's a Slimming World podcast you might enjoy, that you can listen to as you walk,' she replied. As I slowly increased how far I was walking, >



HOW ADAM MADE IT HAPPEN

Group support

Although it took me to finally change my behaviour around food, I knew my group and then Consultant, Sue (left), would be there to support me

Great strides

I loved the advice on the podcasts, and soaked it all up as I walked



In the pool

The SWIMTAG app was a great way to track stats like how far I'd swum and my average pace



A passion for athletics

Since losing weight, my role as a field official is far more active and I can get stuck into whatever is needed



After years of yo-yo dieting, I'm proud to be Slimming World's 2023 Greatest Loser

I loved listening to the advice from the presenters Anna and Clare. One episode that stuck with me included a special appearance from Slimming World's founder, Margaret Miles-Bramwell. Talking about a man who couldn't get started with weight loss because he feared he'd have to give up chips, she said: 'You can either have Slimming World chips, or if you did want chips that have been deep-fried, don't have so many and load up lots of Free Foods on your plate. You choose how to spend your Syns. And if you want to spend them on chips, spend them on chips!' I loved that. It reinforced that I was the one in charge. And as I kept on making great Food Optimising choices, the weight kept coming off. I also ended up achieving all of my Body Magic awards, twice. That's because after reaching Platinum, I decided to start logging my activity in the Slimming World app, and found it so motivating I went through the programme again, from Bronze back to Platinum!

A brighter future

Early in 2020, I'd left my job at the bank and planned to run for local elections in May, but Covid changed all that. I was in a fortunate position to be able to take a break from work, and put all my focus on weight loss. By the time I started my new job as a financial analyst, in November 2021, I'd lost 13st. My new colleagues were so supportive – and so impressed by my transformation they made me my team's health and wellbeing champion! Now that I've lost over 18½st, I've discovered I'm the proud owner of my family's 'Henley chin'. There's an old picture of me with my dad and my grandfather, both displaying that distinctive trait. Well, it turns out I had it all along, too! As I approach my 50th birthday, I'm so proud to be Slimming World's Greatest Loser for 2023, and I feel great – fitter, happier and healthier than I ever have my entire adult life.

My role as a field official is far more active now. In fact, it's going so well I'm in the process of trying to move up to officiating at national rather than regional events. I'm still single and it would be nice to meet someone. Right now, though, what matters is that I'm happy in myself. And with the support of my new Consultant, Teresa, I'm firmly focused on getting my 19st and Club 50 awards next, which is given to members who've lost half their starting weight. To paraphrase the old song: *'The future's so bright, I've gotta wear shades!'* ●

ADAM'S FAVOURITE DISH

I started out with easy five-ingredient recipes, before progressing to things like this biryani from the *Slimming World Comfort Zone* recipe book



One-tray chicken biryani with salsa

EVERYDAY EASY

SERVES 4

Free

READY IN 1 hour

2 medium red onions, halved and thinly sliced
 Low-calorie cooking spray
 5 tsp medium curry powder (see *Cook's notes* on p37)
 8 large skinless chicken thighs
 2 garlic cloves, crushed
 750g frozen mixed vegetables
 300g dried basmati rice
 500ml hot chicken stock

FOR THE SALSA

1 medium red onion, finely chopped
 250g cherry tomatoes, quartered
 1 small red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
 10g fresh coriander, chopped

1 Preheat your oven to 220°C/fan 200°C/gas 7. Put the onions in a large, non-stick roasting tin or deep baking tray and season lightly. Spray with cooking spray, toss well and roast for 20 minutes, or until the onions are nicely browned.

2 While the onions are roasting, sprinkle 1 tsp curry powder over the chicken. Season lightly.

3 Remove the tin from the oven and reduce the heat to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Stir the garlic, frozen vegetables, rice, stock, remaining curry powder and a little salt into the roasted onions. Shake the tin slightly to evenly distribute the rice and push in the chicken. Cover tightly with a large sheet of foil (take care, the tin will be red-hot!) and bake for 30-35 minutes, or until the rice and chicken are cooked and the stock has all been absorbed. Give it all a bit longer if needed.

4 While the biryani is baking, mix all the salsa ingredients in a bowl. Add a pinch of salt to taste.

5 Divide the biryani between 4 plates or bowls. Spoon over the salsa, and serve hot.

SHOP THE ISSUE



Liv Canniffe finally feels happy in her own skin after losing 4st 3lbs – and she’s making the most of every opportunity! See her story on p122

PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL BULLER, STYLING: KATRINA HOWLEY, HAIR & MAKEUP: JO MCKENNA, LIV WEARS: JUMPSUIT, NOBODY'S CHILD SHOES, ASOS, SUNGLASSES, NEW LOOK, NECKLACE AND BRACELET, BOTH H&M. SEE RIGHT FOR STOCKISTS

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TERMS & CONDITIONS

Ragdale Hall Spa Competition (p61)

1. Visit slimmingworld.co.uk/magcomps to enter online on or before the closing date, 31 August 2023. Alternatively, send your entry form by post to Ragdale Hall Spa 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, 31 August 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, Ragdale Hall Spa, 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: one night's accommodation for two sharing a Luxury Plus bedroom (twin occupancy available on request), with robes and flip-flops, and an arrival time of 3pm and a departure time of 6pm the following day; a glass of Prosecco each in the Twilight Bar; a three-course dinner and a buffet-style lunch (on departure day), including soft drinks at both meals, in the on-site dining room; a continental-style breakfast served in your room; a 40-minute Serenity Touch treatment and a 20-minute Aqua Massage Bed treatment each; and full access to the spa, gym and leisure facilities on both days, including classes and fully equipped gym, excluding PT sessions and crystal meditation. All subject to availability. Travel to and from the spa 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. The prize must be taken by 28 September 2024, excluding 24-27 December 2023 and 31 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 28 September 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 19 October 2023, the winner will forfeit the prize and the promoter may draw another winner. The prize is non-transferable 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 Jan/Feb 2024 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 Ragdale Hall Spa'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 Ragdale Hall Spa 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 Ragdale Hall Spa, Ragdale Village, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire LE14 3PB. **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.

Congratulations to our March/April 2023 competition winners!
Mullion Cove Hotel, Spa & Apartments Competition Pam Taylor, Essex
Treat Yourself Competition Lynne Pierce, Gloucestershire



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The things I know now...

Liv Canniffe, 24, is a digital consultant in the construction industry and lives in Chineham, Hampshire. She is a member of Faith Howard's Slimming World group in Chineham. Liv is 5ft 3ins tall and weighs 10st 6½lbs, having lost 4st 3lbs

● **Group is about togetherness**

I joined group the day I moved into my new flat. My Consultant, Faith, and her members were the very first people I met from the area! They were so welcoming, offering me advice on which supermarkets to shop in and where I could find the best low Syn snacks. I loved the sense of community.

● **It's not just the number on the scales**

I was surprised at how much the non-scale wins meant to me, too. A highlight was when I was able to share clothes with friends when we were getting ready for a night out – it was something I hadn't ever been able to do before. It really was the best feeling!

● **Ask for help when you need it**

At first, if I had an unexpected gain, it would really knock my confidence and I'd get upset with myself. Then I had a chat with Faith. She got me to go back to basics and keep a food diary to see if there was something I'd missed, such as remembering to count Syns in sauces. The other members had loads of helpful tips, too. I also listened to the Slimming World podcasts on my work commute into London. And, sure enough, I started seeing those losses again.

● **Slowly build up your exercise**

I've always loved going to the gym, but I tended to try and do too much all at once and then quickly lose motivation. I've gradually built exercise back into my life now and the gym's become a place I go to chat to my friends, as well as get fitter.

● **There's so much still to discover!**

The self-belief I've gained through losing weight has opened so many doors. Once, I used to avoid even going for a walk with friends – now I'm exploring every opportunity to broaden my horizons, from an adventure holiday in Madeira to a recent Mediterranean cruise. I'm comfortable in my own skin at last and there's a big world out there for me! ●



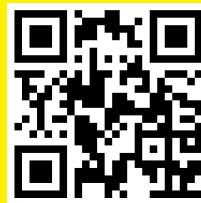
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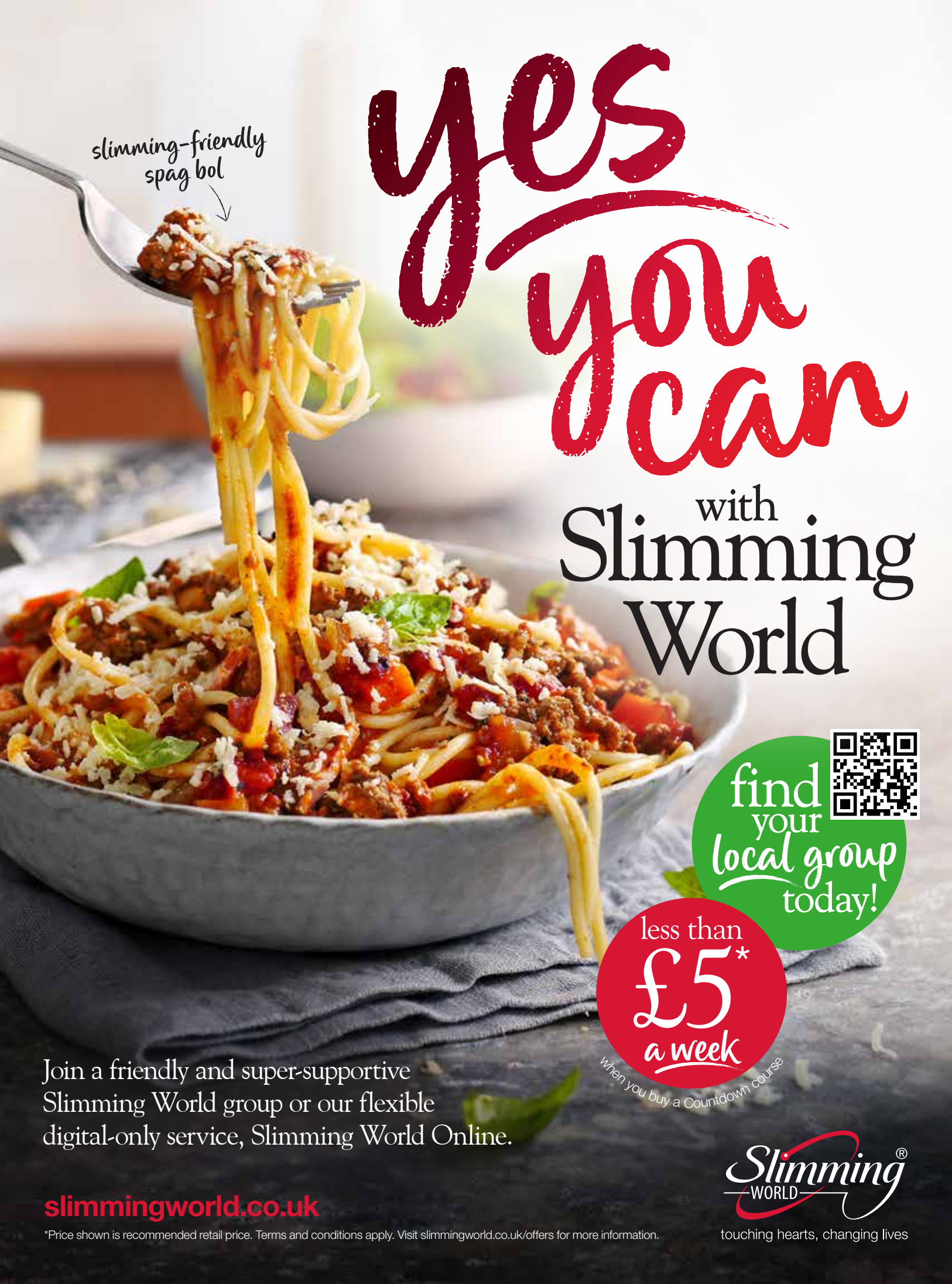
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