

★ The UK's No1 slimming magazine

# Slimming World

magazine

JULY 2021

Meet mum-of-three Tansy  
**'How I lost  
over 7st'**

**plus** 15 more  
real slimmers,  
87 stones  
lighter

Let's get  
out there!

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# Slimming World

taste  
the  
*freedom*

♥ *the freedom* to enjoy the food you love and still lose weight beautifully – without counting a single calorie (with Food Optimising the counting's done for you!).

♥ *the freedom* to make your own choices, to eat out or to eat in, and to take control.

♥ *the freedom* to get more active in a way that suits you and your lifestyle.

♥ And best of all, *freedom* from the habits and pitfalls that used to hold you back – so you can live the life you've longed for.

Enjoy **the freedom of losing weight your way**, backed by the support and sense of community you'll *only* find in a Slimming World group.

make this *your time*  
to *lose weight for life!*

#SWtastethefreedom





A photograph of three people (two women and one man) sitting at a wooden table in a restaurant with a brick wall background. They are all smiling and eating. The woman on the left is feeding the man in the middle with a small piece of food. The woman on the right is also smiling. There are several plates of food on the table, including a burger, fries, and salads. A large red circle is overlaid on the top right of the image, containing white text.

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Standard membership fee is £10/€18 and weekly group fee is £5.95/€10.



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Your slimmer summer starts here!  
Stay on track with tried-and-trusted recipes, expert advice and inspiring weight loss stories

● on the cover

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“

*Learning to be kind to myself set me on the path to my happy weight*

”

Tansy, p22



**THEN** I knew I needed to work on my mindset as much as my eating habits

**Cover and contents credits** Photographs: Paul Buller. Styling: Rachel Fanconi. Hair & make-up: Liz Kitchiner. Tansy wears: Cover – dress, Chi Chi London. Earrings, Big Metal London. Ring, Yaa Yaa London. Left – dress, Raishma. Shoes, New Look. Earrings and ring, both Big Metal London. See p106 for stockists





Find  
the Syn  
values of all  
advertised  
products  
on page 71



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From lightened-up favourites to exciting new flavours, our generous, road-tested recipes are designed with you in mind

Look out for these symbols on our recipes:

Free Free when Food Optimising

SP Extra Easy SP recipes packed with Speed Foods and P Foods; perfect when you want to lose a little more in a little less time

V Suitable for vegetarians

Vegan Suitable for vegans

\* Suitable for freezing for up to 1 month

\*Deduct 6 Syns if using the wholemeal roll/reduced-fat Cheddar/mozzarella as a Healthy Extra

\*\*Deduct 7 Syns if using the wholemeal muffin/wholemeal pitta bread as a Healthy Extra

Food Optimising, Free, Healthy Extra, Healthy Extras, Extra Easy SP, SP, Speed Foods, P Foods, Syn and Syns are registered trademarks of Miles-Bramwell Executive Services Ltd trading as Slimming World.

• See page 71 for a full list of Syn values of advertised products.





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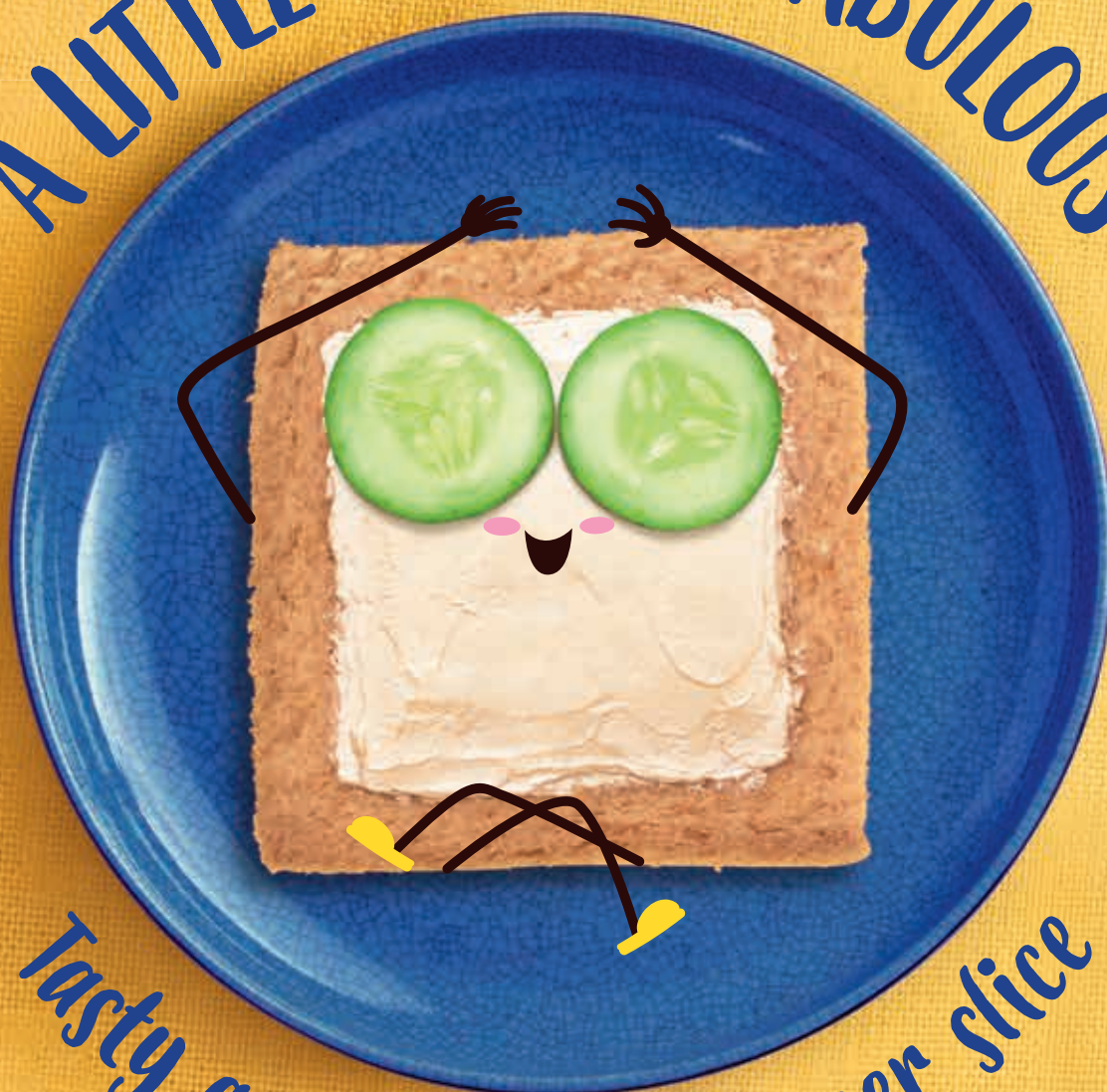
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WE'RE ON THE SIDE OF FOOD





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# hello



**W**hat could be sweeter than the thought of time with family and friends, and getting back to the life that's been on pause for so long? Yet after months of restrictions, the prospect of returning to 'normal' can feel a little scary. If you're nervous about navigating restaurant menus again, well-meaning loved ones knocking you off track, or even getting back on the scales after some time away, we've got your back. Our feature on

page 34 will help get those worries into perspective, and out of the way of your weight loss dreams.

If it's a youth boost you're looking for (and frankly, who isn't?), activity is a brilliant way to feel stronger and more energetic. And on page 92, six real slimmers of all ages share how they fell in love with fitness in a way that worked for them.

One of the fabulous things about the Slimming World way of eating is that pudding is still on the menu, and on page 79 Slimming World members share their all-time favourite dessert recipes. I'll definitely be making Lisa's chocolate and vanilla cheesecake!

In this issue of *Slimming World Magazine*, we're on a mission to give you the confidence to get out there and enjoy every moment of the summer to come. Here's to freedom!

Sara Ward, editor

## MEET SOME OF THIS ISSUE'S SLIMMERS



Mum-of-two Laura Hall shares how she's made weight loss work with family life.

**Laura lost**  
5st 11lbs – p38



Reverend Mike Meachin is looking forward to semi-retirement feeling the fittest he's ever been!

**Mike lost**  
4st 7½lbs – p84



Now at her 9st target, Shobha Ashok Ingle has got her sparkle back at family gatherings.

**Shobha lost**  
2st 4lbs – p112



Sandie Francis is brimming with confidence since losing over 8½st, and is loving life in her 50s!

**Sandie lost**  
8st 8½lbs – p10

**You can trust**  
***Slimming World***  
**Magazine to**  
**bring you the**  
**best support**  
**for your weight**  
**loss, so you can**  
**make healthy**  
**changes for life**

### EXPERT ADVICE

Based on more than 50 years of Slimming World experience, we bring you information and inspiration we know will help you lose weight

### 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. Email us at [editorial@slimmingworld.co.uk](mailto:editorial@slimmingworld.co.uk), write to us at *Slimming World Magazine*, Clover Nook Road, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 4SW, or call 01773 546 071



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## *Meet Sandie*

Sandie Francis, 57, is a curtain maker and lives in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, with her husband, Wayne

Height: 5ft 6ins

Starting weight: 18st 4½lbs

Weight now: 9st 10lbs

**WEIGHT LOST:**  
**8st 8½lbs**

*Sandie is a target member of Julie Liddiard's Slimming World group in Leiston, Suffolk*



# “My new confidence is *real!*”

Throwing herself into her job used to distract Sandie Francis from how self-conscious she felt about her weight. Now 8st 8½lbs lighter, she's overhauled her relationship with food, and is feeling her best at work and at play

**T**he view was absolutely breathtaking, but I was puffing and panting too much to enjoy it. My husband Wayne and I had climbed a hill in the Lake District to see the nesting osprey. Trying to catch my breath, I did what I always did when I felt embarrassed – I made fun of myself. ‘I bet I look like Father Christmas,’ I joked. By evening, the day’s exertions had taken their toll, and as I tried to get off the hotel bed I felt a red-hot shooting pain in my ankle. This time, I couldn’t laugh it off, and after a good cry in Wayne’s arms, I realised I’d reached an all-time low.

For as long as I could remember, I’d always been ‘the big girl’. I grew up on various army garrisons, where my parents were constantly entertaining and there was always lots of party food. At 13, when I started at a new school, none of the children’s sizes fitted me, so Mum bought my size-16 ‘uniform’ from the women’s department at BHS. That was when I started to feel different from my classmates and, as I headed into my mid-teens, I’d turn down invitations to socialise, feeling like I never had anything to wear.

Just after I’d finished my O levels, Dad was posted to Berlin and I got a job in the Brigade Travel Office where I met Wayne and fell in love. Soon after our wedding, Wayne, then an RAF telegraphist, was posted to Sardinia. It was like one long holiday as I spent days at the beach, hiding as much of me as I could under a sarong, while developing a new-found love of salami, cheeses, olive-oil dressed pasta and red wine!

Two years later on the flight back to the UK, my heart sank when the seat belt only just fastened. After

living in floaty beachwear for so long, I’d lost track of my size, and I was upset to realise that I only just fitted into a size 20. I distracted myself from how I felt by focusing on work. Convinced that I was seen as less professional than my slimmer colleagues, I wowed my bosses by being super-efficient and gaining extra qualifications in management studies.

Food and weight were such emotional subjects that it was easier not to think about them, and I’d gone from grazing in the sunshine to comfort eating through the English winter. I never fancied more than a coffee for breakfast – then by 10am, hungry and craving sugar, I’d have a chocolate bar, followed by lasagne and chips for lunch with chocolate sponge and custard for pudding. Back home after working late, dinner was something quick like a pizza, then cheesecake for dessert. Around this time, I started experiencing back pain and I was diagnosed with a degenerative skeletal condition causing a curved lower spine, which was worsened by my weight.

In 2004, I started my own curtain making business. Once again, I’d made up for my self-consciousness by studying hard, so when I arrived >



I was desperately unhappy with my weight, but I kept it to myself



at a client's house I could at least talk knowledgeably about materials and interiors. My heart would race as I walked towards their door, puffing under the weight of the heavy fabric books and wearing an unflattering XXL tabard. Even after corrective surgery on my spine in 2005, Wayne would come with me to do the track fitting, and I'd always ask him to go up the ladder instead of me, fearing it wouldn't take my weight.

During that trip to the Lake District, a doctor had told me I'd need physiotherapy after damaging the tendons in my ankle, and now a size 24, I was sure my weight had contributed to my injury. Then, when we got home, I met up with a friend, Elaine. 'You look lovely,' I said, noticing how much weight she'd lost recently. 'It's all down to Slimming World,' she said. 'I can pick you up next Thursday if you like and you can come with me?' Buoyed by her amazing appearance, I said yes. It was only when I got home that I started to panic. The thought of talking to a group of strangers about what I ate was terrifying. It was the one subject that had always been out of bounds, as I'd been so scared people would judge me. Once again, I tried to hide behind my job. 'I'm too busy with work,' I told Wayne. He replied: 'Try it once and if you don't like it, you don't have to go back.'

As Elaine led me into group, I was a bundle of nerves. But after being greeted by a sea of smiling faces, I suddenly felt safe. When the Consultant, Julie, showed me a picture of herself before losing weight, I realised she'd been in my shoes and understood how I felt. Then, one of the members complimented me on my turquoise top. It sounds like such a little thing, but no one except Wayne and my family had ever commented on my clothes. Everyone was so kind and welcoming, I actually had to fight back tears. Later, when I found I weighed 18st 4½lbs,

I wasn't deterred. I felt like I'd been handed the chance of a lifetime.

I went home armed with my Food Optimising book and the October 2018 issue of *Slimming World Magazine*. I planned out my week's meals and tore out a magazine story that really inspired me. The member, Emma Alder, had lost 8st 10lbs

and I thought: if I can look like her one day, I'll be the happiest woman alive.

After years of skipping breakfast, I started my days with overnight oats with lots of fresh berries, which satisfied my sweet cravings. Lunch was a home-made rice salad with beans and tuna, and for dinner I made something really tasty like a Food Optimising spaghetti bolognese with veg. I didn't feel hungry at all and wasn't expecting much, so when I found I'd lost 8½lbs after my very first week it was like a revelation. I actually could lose weight!

Each week before we went food shopping, Wayne and I flicked through the Slimming World cookbooks and magazines, choosing a handful of different recipes we fancied. Then we'd each champion our favourites to go on that week's menu: chicken masala soup, salmon pilau or maybe a spicy curry. Food had always been the enemy before, something that had caused me to feel miserable over the years. Now, I was getting enthusiastic about meal planning. Discovering a new curry or pasta dish, something that literally left my taste buds tingling, was a pleasure I'd been missing out on all this time. And just smelling a bunch of fresh basil or a handful of ripe, juicy tomatoes got me excited about the meal to come.

### Opening up to others

At group, I started joining in the conversations about what everyone had been eating, and it felt like a major turning point in my relationship with food. I was keen to pick up tips on how to enhance a recipe or create a low Syn treat, and one of my new favourite ideas was making Slimming World baked oats with different flavours, like mixed spice or ground ginger with fresh pineapple or papaya and a dollop of fat-free natural Greek-style yogurt.

Wayne had always been my rock, and before Slimming World whenever I'd felt a bit down, he'd cheer me up with chocolate, flowers and a kind word. These days he was bringing me a bunch of grapes or a punnet of strawberries instead. It would have seemed so alien just months before – now it really was the perfect way to bring a smile to my face.

As the numbers on the scales came down, I simply took in the clothes I already had, so I didn't really know what size I was – I just knew I was getting smaller! Then, in April 2019, eight months after joining Slimming World, Wayne took me to Bath for my birthday weekend. We'd walked past a leather shop on the way to our pub lunch, and I'd stopped briefly to admire a jacket in the window. Wayne knew how terrified I'd always been of clothes shops, so I was a bit surprised when he insisted on taking me back. As we went inside, I nervously explained to the sales assistant that I'd always loved the idea of a black leather jacket. 'I think you'd suit the brick red colour,' she said, picking a size 12-14 one off a hanger and handing it to me. 'Just try it on,' Wayne urged, and as the assistant slipped it over my arms, I was praying a seam wouldn't tear. But it went on so easily, it was as though it had been tailor made for me... Who was this stylish, confident woman in the mirror?

A few months later, I plucked up the courage to look for my first pair of skinny jeans. As I wandered around the department store, I didn't have the >

I'd make fun of myself to hide how embarrassed I was about my size







#### Running my business

I've got so much more energy for long days in my workroom, designing, cutting and sewing curtains for my clients



*I'm excited about food again and I love discovering new dishes*



#### Dining in style

Wayne has joined in meal planning and cooking with me right from the start. We enjoy colourful food full of flavour more than ever before

## Living life to the fullest

#### Rocking the trends

When I joined Slimming World, my dream was to slim down from a size 24 to a 14. I never thought for a moment I'd end up shopping for fitted trousers and cool cropped jackets in a size 8-10!



#### Making time for us

I love the way Wayne looks at me now, and the way he can get his arms around me so easily! He's lost 3½st himself, and no longer needs medication for his type 2 diabetes



*I'm gradually building up a new wardrobe of stylish clothes*





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*“I wake up each morning with a big smile on my face, knowing just how far I’ve come”*



I found clothes shopping terrifying because I was so self-conscious

faintest idea where to start, so I asked a nearby sales assistant. She turned out to be a stylist and sent me into the changing room with a pair of size-10 ankle grazers. I assumed they had the wrong label on them when they were too big – but then I slipped into the size 8 and they fitted perfectly. The stylist insisted I add to the look with a pair of biker boots and a high-neck lacy top. Never in my wildest dreams had I imagined I could pull off such a daring outfit! As I walked out to show Wayne, I saw him blink back a tear, while the bloke next to him announced: ‘Gorgeous!’ Here I was, in my mid-50s, taking my husband’s breath away and getting compliments from strangers!

### **Ready for the world**

Gradually, I built up my new, stylish wardrobe and stopped turning down the invitations to socialise. I felt happy to meet friends for coffee or nip to the pub, and when Elaine suggested joining an aqua aerobics class, I agreed to give it a go. At the pool, with my back now fit for exercise and proudly wearing a swimming costume, I realised just how far I’d come.

At work I was like a different woman, running up and down stairs with metres of heavy fabric over my

shoulder. And Wayne was off the hook now that I didn’t think twice about climbing up a ladder to measure up for a pair of curtains.

In January 2020 I reached my target of 9st 10lbs and realised I’d lost almost the same amount of weight as Emma, whose story I’d found so inspiring the morning I’d joined Slimming World. That November, I slipped into a size-8, full-length, glittery dress to attend the online Slimming World Woman of the Year awards where I was a finalist – with Wayne dressed in a new, smaller suit after losing 3½st himself by eating Food Optimising meals at home.

Sadly, my friend Elaine passed away unexpectedly last year. I was utterly heartbroken; she’d been a very special friend to me, and she changed my life. If Elaine hadn’t announced she was taking me to Slimming World with her, I’d still be that desperately unhappy and self-conscious woman, hiding behind her career and her XXL tabard.

Now I quietly thank Elaine every day for showing me this path to health and happiness. I wake up every morning with a big smile on my face, knowing that my confidence is real. I’m living the life I’d always dreamt of! 🌟





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# Use little wins to help you slim

Illustration: Liz Kay



**SUPERCHARGE YOUR MOTIVATION** by celebrating each **MILESTONE**, as well as patting yourself on the back as you notice any changes. Taking the time to **APPRECIATE** every win is a great way to keep inspiring and encouraging yourself



Keep track of your **SHRINKING** waist measurement

Below **34½ ins** for women and **37 ins** for men is associated with lower health risks!



Note down every new **ACHIEVEMENT**, like climbing the stairs without getting out of breath



Take a photo at each **HALF-STONE AWARD** – it's a visual timeline of your success!



Soak up the applause you get each week at your **SLIMMING WORLD** group!



An illustration on a teal background. A large, dark blue keyhole shape is on the left. A woman with brown hair, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt, white pants, and red shoes, is swinging on a wooden swing that is shaped like a large golden key. The swing is suspended by two thin white ropes. To the right of the large keyhole, there are three smaller, lighter teal keyhole shapes of varying sizes, arranged in a descending diagonal line. The overall style is modern and artistic.

# *Unlock your hidden strengths*

Take our revealing quiz to discover the secret personality trait  
that will help you find the key to slimming success

Words: **Sally Brown** Illustrations: **Andrea De Santis**



When you've decided to lose weight, there are lots of people you might look to for emotional support – friends and family, your Slimming World Consultant, the other members at group... And while the help of others is vital to weight loss success, there's another very important source of support even closer to home: you! Whatever your personality, you come complete with unique inner resources that can help you stay on track, including the things you might be tempted to dismiss as negative traits. Take our quiz to find out what your personal strengths are, and how they could supercharge your slimming plans, plus get tips to further transform your mindset. The result? You'll have the tools to maximise your weight loss in a way that only you can!

Read each statement, then tick the option that sounds the most like you:

**1 When you have to make an important decision, you tend to:**

- Wonder how it will affect other people
- ★ Go with your gut instinct
- ♥ Put it out of your mind until the last minute
- ◆ Feel under a lot of pressure to get it right

**2 Deep down, you believe that success comes to those who:**

- ★ Want it the most
- ♥ Have the best luck
- ◆ Work the hardest
- Deserve it the most

**3 If a friend upsets you, you're most likely to:**

- ♥ Turn it into a joke to cheer yourself up
- Tell yourself they didn't mean it
- ◆ Assume it's all your fault
- ★ Assume it's all their fault

**4 Your usual response to someone complimenting you on how you look is to:**

- ★ Say thanks, and tell them how much weight you've lost
- Tell them how great *they're* looking
- ◆ Say thanks, and tell them how much weight you still have left to lose
- ♥ Feel a bit embarrassed and laugh it off

**5 People would be surprised at how much time you spend:**

- ♥ Worrying about how you look
- ◆ Giving yourself a hard time
- Feeling a bit overwhelmed
- ★ Comparing yourself to other people

**6 When your mind wanders, it usually:**

- ★ Thinks about how much weight you've still got to lose to get to target
- ♥ Finds something to chuckle over
- ◆ Runs through what you need to get done that day
- Brings up a worry about someone you care about

**7 When you make a mistake, you are most likely to feel:**

- ♥ A bit embarrassed, so you turn it into a joke
- ◆ Frustrated that you have let yourself down
- OK, as long as you can learn from it
- ★ A bit surprised, as you don't usually mess up

**8 At school you were known for being:**

- Everyone's friend
- ★ Competitive
- ♥ The class clown
- ◆ Hard-working

**9 Deep down, it's most important for you to feel:**

- ◆ Successful
- Useful
- ★ In control
- ♥ Accepted

**10 Finish this sentence: You can't go far wrong if you...**

- ◆ ...always try your best
- ...treat others with kindness
- ♥ ...keep your sense of humour
- ★ ...stay focused on what matters



Now add up the totals for each symbol you've ticked, turn over the page and read the section that applies to the one you ticked most (if it's a tie, read both sections!) >>



If you ticked mainly ♦, your hidden strength is:

## conscientiousness

You believe that if a job's worth doing, it's worth doing well, which means you're a real whizz at Food Optimising and never leave anything to chance. You're reliable, and approach everything with care and attention, so you're great at planning and organising – key skills that will help you stay on track week after week. There is a fine line between conscientiousness and perfectionism, though, and you could hit issues if you start judging yourself by standards you'd never apply to anyone else. Focusing on what you 'should' be doing can begin to nag away at you, undermining your self-confidence. Instead, enjoy the journey – as long as you're going in the right direction most of the time, you'll get there.

### UNLOCK THE NEW YOU

- ♦ Write down compassionate alternatives to your most common self-criticisms. For example: 'Mistakes don't make me less worthwhile as a person, they're a learning process', and 'I don't judge others based on what they achieve, so I refuse to judge myself based on what I achieve'.
- ♦ Taking on too much and feeling overloaded could sabotage your weight loss. Think about what non-essential tasks you can let go or delegate, to free up more time for the things that really matter.
- ♦ Instead of thinking, 'I should exercise three times a week', try, 'I'd like to start going out for a refreshing walk at lunchtime'. Replacing 'should' with 'I'd like to' turns a pressure into a pleasure.

If you ticked mainly ●, your hidden strength is:

## compassion

You are naturally caring and supportive, and always ready with an encouraging word or a pat on the back. People find it easy to open up to you because you see the best in them – you know they're only human, and they know you're never judging them. Sometimes, though, because you're a giver, you may feel drained of energy by other people, and that can leave little time and energy for focusing on yourself. If you turn the compassion you offer to others inwards, and are supportive rather than hard on yourself, you can learn from every slimming setback and avoid the pitfalls that could otherwise cause you to lose motivation. What a gift!

### UNLOCK THE NEW YOU

- Move yourself up your to-do list. It's not selfish to ring-fence the time you need to cook ahead, or fit exercise into your busy week. In fact, quite the opposite – it's likely to have a positive knock-on effect on those you love.
- As you're spreading the kindness, make sure to include yourself! Ask, what's the kindest I can be to myself right now?
- When you're the rock that everyone turns to for support and advice, it can be hard to admit that it's you that sometimes needs help. Look around and you'll see plenty of people who'd be happy to pitch in if you asked.

If you ticked mainly ★, your hidden strength is:

## focus

When you're in the zone, there is nothing stopping you! You often feel the most motivated when you have a significant event to slim for, such as a wedding, party or reunion. You have a laser-like focus on your target weight, turbocharged by a competitive streak. At group, the weekly weigh-in is a big motivator for you and you love being Slimmer of the Week. Beware the comparison trap – competitive people can become disheartened when someone else seems to be doing better. And, sometimes, you may be so focused on what you're doing that it's hard to be open to advice, or to let go of old beliefs about what it takes to lose weight. Add a bit of flexibility to your focus and you will have a truly winning combination.

### UNLOCK THE NEW YOU

- ★ Ban the 'D' word! If you feel like you're dieting – especially if you're skipping meals or feeling hungry – you may not be making the long-term changes that will give you the success you crave.
- ★ Think bigger picture – this will help protect you from feeling discouraged if the scales stick for any reason. Visualise how you'll feel and look in a year's time if you keep up your healthy lifestyle.
- ★ Realise your Syns are there to be used when you need them. Including your favourite treats every day stops you from feeling deprived, so you're more likely to stick at Food Optimising.

If you ticked mainly ♥, your hidden strength is:

## humour

You're the joker of the crowd. Seeing the funny side helps you to dust yourself off and carry on when the going gets tough – an enviable skill for weight loss. Your outgoing personality may have also worked well as a protective armour against feeling judged for your size. You are far more sensitive than most people realise, though you may find it hard to admit that losing weight is actually seriously important to you. Because you love to make people smile, you'd also rather agree to a piece of cake or a pint after work (whether you want one or not) than hurt their feelings. Just as weight loss is a work in progress, though, so is your self-image. Make a small mental shift and you can still be the upbeat, sociable person everyone loves, while also prioritising your health goals.

### UNLOCK THE NEW YOU

- ♥ Being the 'life and soul' can feel like a pressure at times. It's OK to let others see when you're struggling – letting the mask drop could help you move forward if you're feeling stuck.
- ♥ Meeting up with friends for a few drinks? Have a plan in place before you go, such as alternating alcoholic drinks with diet soft ones, or making your wine a spritzer with soda water and ice.
- ♥ Come out as a proud slimmer! Tell people how important it is to you – you might be surprised how many friends and family want to join you in living a healthier lifestyle. ●

*Kellogg's*<sup>®</sup>

# IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE



LESS THAN 100KCAL PER BAR\*

**TAGGING TIME!**

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT **#SQUARESTHINS** USING THE HASHTAG

\*4 bars per multipack | TM, ©, © 2021 KELLOGG Company.



# Tansy's time



Trying fad diets hadn't worked and only made me feel worse



For Tansy Arnett, the secret to making weight loss stick was to silence her harshest critic – herself. Now, after losing over 7st, she won't let anyone dim her sparkle, and she's our Miss Slinky 2021 winner!

**Checking my new slinky black dress in the mirror, I felt two arms slide around my waist and give me a cuddle.**

It was my boyfriend Jay. 'This is nice,' he said. 'You look fantastic.' I swung round and gave him a kiss. 'Thanks,' I beamed. It suddenly occurred to me that just a year ago I'd have flinched when he hugged me, and my smile wouldn't have been quite so genuine. Back then, when I'd weighed 7st more, I'd have been too busy worrying about him touching my tummy to genuinely enjoy a romantic moment. If we'd gone on a night out, I'd have spent the evening readjusting my outfit or checking my control pants weren't riding up or rolling down!

**Ever since childhood, food had been a comfort if I was feeling tired or sad.** And I'd turned to that comfort even more to cope with the pressures of adult life, whether it was becoming a mum to twin boys at 17 or, later, comparing myself to perfect bodies on social media. I was always

thinking about food, and I couldn't go into a shop without getting a snack, too – even right before lunch or dinner. High-sugar foods gave me the energy buzz I wanted, but then left me feeling worse. When I had my youngest son Harry at 27, I'd reached 18st. I started to believe I'd never lose the weight, and again turned to biscuits, crisps and chocolate to cope with how I felt. The twins, Charlie and Keegan, were 10 by now and I'd sit and watch as they had kickabouts in the field behind our garden. In my job as a teaching assistant at a primary school, I also stayed on the sidelines for PE lessons – the thought of embarrassing myself kept me from joining in and having fun with the children.

**Surprisingly, the thing that set me on the path to my happy weight was learning to be nice to myself.** For years, a little voice in my head would pipe up and put me down every time I got a glimpse of myself

## Meet Tansy

**Tansy Arnett, 29, is a teaching assistant and Slimming World's Miss Slinky 2021. She lives in Colchester, Essex, with her partner, Jay, her twins Charlie and Keegan, 12, and their son, Harry, two**

**Height: 5ft 7½ins**

**Starting weight: 18st**

**Weight now: 10st 13lbs**

**WEIGHT LOST:  
7st 1lb**

*Tansy is a member of Vicky Galvin's Slimming World group in Colchester*

# to shine

in the mirror or a photograph – sometimes I'd even say the words out loud. When I started going out with Jay in 2016, he wasn't having any of it, always jumping in with: 'Tansy, you're beautiful.' At first, his words didn't really sink in. I'd been telling myself these awful things for so long. Over time, though, I accepted that he loved me whatever size I was. It also made me realise it was time to start being kinder to myself and stop using those harsh words altogether. After all, I'd never have spoken to a friend in that way. Instead, I started saying more positive things in my head, such as 'I can change' and 'I can lose this weight'. Now it was a question of finding a way to do that – and one I could stick to.

**I started to realise why the diets I'd tried hadn't worked – they'd actually been making me feel worse.**

Most of them had involved practically starving myself, or downing shakes or aloe vera shots instead of eating proper meals. Adverts would pop up on my social media feeds, promising I would 'lose a stone in nine days' or something else that I knew was ridiculous, but found difficult to resist. Yes, they often led to me losing some weight quite quickly, but they were never sustainable – and usually very expensive. Having started being kinder to myself, it struck me that I'd never recommend any of these faddy diets to friends, so why was I doing them? I decided to give my social media platforms an overhaul to help me build a healthier mindset: any page or person that made me feel bad about my weight or tried to sell me a quick-fix scheme simply got deleted. It was a slow-burn effect, during which time I fell pregnant with Harry, and eventually I knew what I had to do – it was just a case of finding the right time to do it. I'd tried Slimming World many years ago online, and at the time I hadn't really thrown myself into it. Now, having streamlined my social media, I began seeing stories about how attending Slimming World groups regularly not only helped people reach their target weight, but also helped them stay there.

**After Harry was born I'd told myself I'd wait a while to join because I was breastfeeding.** Then, at a mother and baby group, I noticed one of the mums had lost weight. 'You look fabulous,' I told her, and she said that she'd joined Slimming World, which surprised me as she was breastfeeding twins. When I found out that Slimming World worked with the Royal College of Midwives to help new mums safely manage their weight, that was a real 'ding' moment, and I joined my local group. At the first session there was a lot >

**TANSY WEARS**

Dress, Gatsby Lady  
London. Shoes,  
Shoeholics.  
Earrings, Big Metal  
London. Ring,  
Yaa Yaa London

Everything  
changed  
when  
I started  
being  
kinder to  
myself





I've become the healthier person I wanted to be to stay this way for life. The old me wasn't truly



to take in, but Vicky, my Consultant, made it all sound really achievable.

**One big bonus for me was that even though Jay and I had already done our shopping for that week, I could still cook something on plan.**

It was so different from the fad diets I'd tried because it was

all real food. I stuck to the basics, swapping shop-bought sauce in our spaghetti bolognese for simple, everyday ingredients like canned tomatoes, onions and garlic. I also loved that I could still have pasta! With a little midweek top-up shop for some extra Speed Food, I had everything I needed for my first week, and when I weighed in at group 5½lbs lighter, I felt amazing! Next, I made a meal plan for the week ahead, stocking up on Speed Food veg like spinach and broccoli, and fresh fruit to snack on so I was less likely to reach for biscuits. I made Slimming World takes on our favourites, including roast dinners, and I tried new ideas, such as making a Food Optimising cottage pie that had a carrot and swede mash topping. I promised myself I'd make something new every week, knowing there'd always be someone in group who'd suggest a recipe I'd not tried. I also enjoyed an additional Healthy Extra 'a' choice to help towards the extra nutrients I needed as a breastfeeding mum. Within six weeks, I'd lost a stone. I hadn't told anyone at work that I'd joined Slimming World in case I didn't lose any weight. Now, with my colleagues already noticing I was getting slimmer, I felt braver. And the first time I won Slimmer of the Week in group, I told everyone who would listen!

**The thing that made all the difference to me was having the support of my group every step of the way.**

As we took turns to celebrate our wins or share our light-bulb moments, I knew the other members would become an important part of my weight loss journey. I loved listening to all the great ideas and recipes, and sharing what I'd learnt that week. One time, I was speaking about how making a point of eating my meals with no distractions, rather than while I was watching TV, seemed to make the food taste better. 'And I feel like it's making me healthier in mind as well as body,' I said, almost wondering where that had come from. It was the sort of thing I never imagined myself saying in front of people – being so open about how food made me feel. On the



**TANSY WEARS**  
Dress, Lavish Alice.  
Earrings, Toolally.  
Necklace, Big  
Metal London

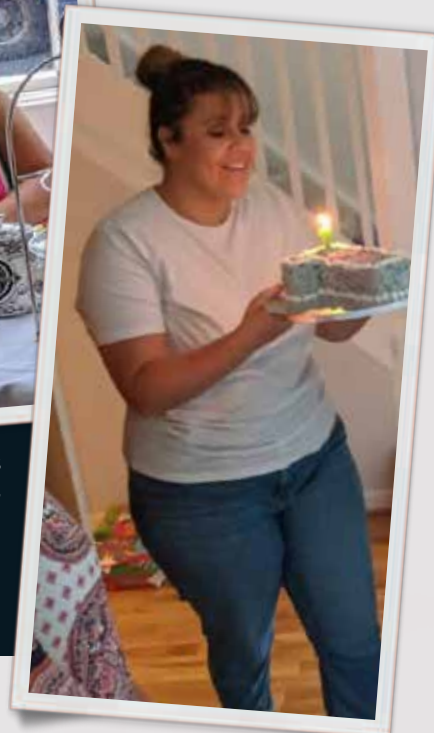
and I know I've got the tools now happy – the new me definitely is!

flip side, if I'd had a disappointing week, Vicky and the other members would offer words of encouragement saying, 'You're doing so well' and suggesting recipes they loved. Even then, I'd come away from group so happy, inspired to get home and cook something healthy. After just over three months, I'd lost 3st. It felt like a big milestone, as now I could really see the difference in the mirror, and that spurred me to keep going.

**I'd been reluctant to start including activity in my week as I didn't have the confidence.** Then the first lockdown started. Trying to find some good in the sudden change of routine, and having lost some of the weight and feeling my confidence building, I decided I'd take advantage of being allowed out to exercise by starting a couch to 5K programme. On the first day, as I got to the end of the session on the app, I had to blink back the tears. My body ached, but I'd done it. It felt like a huge achievement, and a really positive step towards becoming healthier. With each session, my confidence grew and my nerves about exercising in public eased, along with the aching muscles. I did three runs a week for six weeks, losing weight steadily, and what really struck me was how much it benefited me mentally – being active made me even more motivated to stick with the plan! By the time schools reopened, I was able to run around with the class for the whole PE lesson. Best of all, I started enjoying playing footie with Charlie and



By Harry's first birthday, the changes I could see in my shape were really motivating



Keegan. It was the perfect way to help them burn off their energy – and mine! And I knew that when Harry got older, I'd be able to keep up with him, too. Being fitter and healthier felt like a real gift, especially when I contracted coronavirus. For two weeks I felt awful, but what got me through was thinking about how much losing weight with Slimming World might have protected my health.

**Winning Slimming World's Miss Slinky 2021 has been such a privilege – it feels amazing to be able to inspire others.** I also love sharing my journey on Instagram, where I regularly post before-and-after photos, recipes and motivational messages to help spur on my followers and encourage myself to keep going towards my target – after just over a year, I've only got a few pounds to go! I look back at myself when I was at my biggest, and I still remember to be kind to myself. When I talk about myself before weight loss, I don't use the harsh, belittling language I used at the time. I know I deserved just as much love and compassion then as I do now – I was just waiting to find my way to Slimming World and discover the tools that would help me to become the healthier, more energetic person I wanted to be. Since I started respecting myself more, everything has changed. Not only is Jay able to give me a cuddle without feeling me flinch, but now I've no qualms about undressing in front of him, either – a far cry from when I would have hidden myself away and dimmed the lights. Recently he told me: 'Your confidence is so gorgeous. I can see that you're smiling more.' He's right. The old me wasn't truly happy. The new me definitely is. My greatest hope is that I can help encourage other people to believe in themselves, and to make their own incredible transformations. ●

## Tansy's day on a plate

### THEN

- **Breakfast** Nothing, or sugary cereal
- **Lunch** Meal deal with a shop-bought sandwich, crisps or chocolate bar and fizzy drink
- **Dinner** Large portion of frozen breaded chicken, chips, onion rings, veg and lots of mayo, or a big Chinese takeaway
- **Snacks** Cake, biscuits, chocolate, crisps, sugary coffee

### NOW

- **Breakfast** An omelette packed with onion, peppers and mushrooms, and topped with some balsamic vinegar, or a full cooked breakfast
- **Lunch** Large salad with feta cheese, orange and beetroot
- **Dinner** Cottage pie topped with carrot and swede mash served with roasted veg
- **Snacks** Fresh fruit, crab sticks, frozen pineapple with fat-free natural yogurt, a Hi-fi bar for 3 Syns



# Hello slimmer summer!

Get weight loss results in just a week with our delicious pounds-down plan

'I lost 3½lbs in one week!'



## Taste tester

James Martin, 39, is a Slimming World Consultant. He's lost 4st 7½lbs at Katy Donald's group in Cumbernauld, North Lanarkshire, and runs his own groups in Cumbernauld

### ✓ Fill up on Free Food®

All our meals are based on Slimming World Free Food – nutritious, everyday foods that fill you up for fewer calories, meaning they're great for weight loss! Free Food includes lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, pasta, rice, potatoes, pulses, fruit, veg and more. And you can eat these foods freely, making them perfect for satisfying the biggest of appetites. Some Free Foods have the extra bonus of being Speed Food – fruit and veg that are super-low in calories and keep you slimming beautifully. For the best results, always reach for Speed Food first in between

meals and include at least a third of a plate of Speed Food at every meal, where it makes sense.

### ✓ Add in Healthy Extras®

To help provide a good balance of nutrients, 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, which can be eaten as part of a meal or snack. Also add in one portion of wholemeal bread or breakfast cereal each

day, your Healthy Extra 'b' choice. To keep things simple, we've built your Healthy Extra 'b' choice 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 between 5 and 15 Syns into your day (see the bottom of the next page for some ideas).

### ✓ Make simple swaps

To help protect your weight loss, choose the leanest meat

and trim off any visible fat – cut the white bits off bacon and remove skin from poultry. Dry-fry meat, sauté veg in water, and use low-calorie cooking spray rather than fat or oil. Switch sugar for sweetener, and swap cream and crème fraîche for fat-free natural yogurt or plain quark.

**So that's Food Optimising® in a nutshell.** You'll find all you need to know about Free Food, Healthy Extras and Syns in your Food Optimising book, available to Slimming World group members, and to Slimming World Online members (as part of the Gold package or through the eshop).

# Your seven-day guide at a glance

From easy midweek meals to something special at the weekend – we've done the planning, so you don't have to...

	BREAKFASTS	LUNCHES	DINNERS
Monday	<p>☒ <b>Summer porridge:</b> make porridge using 40g dried porridge oats (a Healthy Extra 'b') and milk from your Healthy Extra 'a' allowance or water. Swirl over fat-free natural yogurt, and top with fresh strawberries and raspberries</p>	<p>☒ <b>Get-ahead fried rice:</b> the night before, boil dried rice, then drain, cool as quickly as possible and chill in the fridge. When ready to eat, fry broccoli florets, and sliced onion and garlic in low-calorie cooking spray. Add the rice and cooked peeled prawns, and fry until both are piping hot. Top with soy sauce and lime juice</p>	<p>☒ <b>Pizza frittata with chips,</b> recipe p28 <b>6 Syns</b> <i>Deduct 6 Syns if using the mozzarella as a Healthy Extra</i> [V]</p>
Tuesday	<p>☒ <b>Banana berry splits:</b> slice 2 bananas lengthways, but not all the way through. Top with fat-free natural Greek yogurt mixed with a little vanilla extract, and lots of fresh blueberries. Drizzle over 1 level tsp honey (1 Syn), if you like</p>	<p>☒ <b>Chicken couscous:</b> make up plain dried couscous according to the pack instructions (without butter or oil). Add sliced sugar snap peas and spring onions, spinach and shredded cooked skinless chicken breast. Dress with red wine vinegar and top with 45g crumbled feta (a Healthy Extra 'a'), if you like</p>	<p>☒ <b>Pork kebabs with pittas &amp; tzatziki,</b> recipe p28 <b>7 Syns</b> <i>Deduct 7 Syns if using the wholemeal pitta bread as a Healthy Extra</i></p>
Wednesday	<p>☒ <b>One-pan hash:</b> fry sliced red onion, pepper and mushrooms, and canned drained potatoes in low-calorie cooking spray until golden, breaking up the potatoes with a wooden spoon so they crisp up. Scatter with chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley</p>	<p>☒ <b>Eggs &amp; tomatoes on toast:</b> medium-boil 2 room-temperature eggs for 7-8 minutes, then peel and roughly chop. Toast 2 slices wholemeal bread from a small 400g loaf (a Healthy Extra 'b'), then top with sliced tomato and the eggs. Scatter over sliced spring onion</p>	<p>☒ <b>Chicken pie with celeriac &amp; butter bean mash,</b> recipe p29 <b>1 Syn</b> [SP]</p>
Thursday	<p>☒ <b>Summer porridge:</b> make porridge using 40g dried porridge oats (a Healthy Extra 'b') and milk from your Healthy Extra 'a' allowance or water. Swirl over fat-free natural yogurt, and top with fresh strawberries and raspberries</p>	<p>☒ <b>Asian noodle salad:</b> cook dried medium egg noodles according to the pack instructions. Drain and rinse under cold water to cool. Toss with sliced sugar snap peas and red pepper, carrot matchsticks and shredded cooked skinless chicken breast. Top with lime juice and chopped fresh coriander</p>	<p>☒ <b>Jacket potatoes with loaded beans,</b> recipe p29 [Free] [V]</p>
Friday	<p>☒ <b>Filled omelette:</b> fry mushrooms in low-calorie cooking spray, then add spinach and leave to wilt. Transfer to a plate. Spray the pan with low-calorie cooking spray. Pour in 2 beaten eggs and cook until set. Pile the mushroom mixture on top, then fold over</p>	<p>☒ <b>Deli platter:</b> fill a plate with carrot and cucumber sticks, wafer-thin roast turkey slices, and houmous made by whizzing a can of drained chickpeas with a small garlic clove and a dollop of fat-free natural yogurt until smooth. Serve with a toasted 60g wholemeal pitta bread (a Healthy Extra 'b')</p>	<p>☒ <b>Fish &amp; chickpea curry,</b> recipe p30 [Free]</p>
Saturday	<p>☒ <b>Grill-up:</b> grill back bacon rashers (visible fat removed) until cooked through with large flat mushrooms and a halved tomato. Serve with piping-hot baked beans and an egg fried in low-calorie cooking spray</p>	<p>☒ <b>Smoked salmon &amp; watercress sandwich:</b> fill 2 slices wholemeal bread from a small 400g loaf (a Healthy Extra 'b') with smoked salmon trimmings, sliced cucumber and watercress</p>	<p>☒ <b>Bolognese pasta bake,</b> recipe p31 <b>1 Syn</b></p>
Sunday	<p>☒ <b>Veggie sausage bap:</b> cook frozen Linda McCartney's Vegetarian Red Onion &amp; Rosemary Sausages according to the pack instructions. Split a 60g wholemeal roll (a Healthy Extra 'b') and fill with the sausages and sliced tomato</p>	<p>☒ <b>Pasta bowl:</b> cook dried wholemeal pasta according to the pack instructions. Meanwhile, fry sliced red onion, and halved cherry tomatoes and green beans in low-calorie cooking spray until softened. Drain the pasta, then toss through the veg with chopped fresh basil and a drizzle of balsamic vinegar. Top with 40g torn mozzarella (a Healthy Extra 'a'), if you like</p>	<p>☒ <b>Roast chicken with summer veg &amp; rocket pesto,</b> recipe p31 [Free]</p>

**SNACKS & TREATS** ☒ Corn on the cob, FREE ☒ Fresh cherries, FREE ☒ Fresh pineapple, FREE ☒ Pickled onions, FREE ☒ Quorn Cocktail Sausages, ½ Syn each ☒ Squirty cream, ½ Syn per 2 level tbsp ☒ Tomato ketchup, 1 Syn per 1 level tbsp ☒ Guacamole, 1½ Syns per 1 level tbsp ☒ Cheese straws, 2 Syns each ☒ Fruit-flavour ice lolly, 3 Syns per 75ml lolly ☒ Reduced-fat chocolate mousse, 3½ Syns per 60g pot ☒ Chocolate digestive biscuits, 4 Syns each ☒ Prosecco (11-12% ABV), 5 Syns per 125ml glass ☒ Unsalted pistachio nuts, 5½ Syns for 30





**DREAMY  
PIZZERIA  
FLAVOURS**

## Monday

### Pizza frittata with chips

**EVERYDAY EASY**

**Serves 4**

**Syns per serving 6**

*Deduct 6 Syns if using the mozzarella as a Healthy Extra*

**V**

**Ready in 50 minutes**

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

**Low-calorie cooking spray**

**1 onion, finely chopped**

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

**1 garlic clove, crushed**

**1½ tsp dried oregano**

**400g can chopped tomatoes**

**10 large eggs, beaten**

**160g mozzarella, grated**

**1 tomato, sliced**

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

**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. Spray with low-calorie cooking spray, season and bake for 40 minutes, turning halfway.

**2** Meanwhile, spray a large, non-stick, ovenproof frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium-high heat. Add the onion and peppers, and cook for 5-6 minutes. Add the garlic and 1 tsp oregano with a splash of water, and cook for 1-2 minutes. Add the chopped tomatoes, season and bring to a brisk simmer. Cook for 10-15 minutes, stirring frequently, until thick. Spread the mixture out on a plate and leave to cool for 2-3 minutes.

**3** Mix the eggs with two-thirds of the mozzarella. Wipe out the pan and spray with low-calorie cooking spray. Add the tomato mixture in blobs, then add the eggs and stir lightly. Top with the sliced tomato and evenly scatter over the remaining mozzarella. Bake above the chips for 20-25 minutes, or until cooked through.

**4** Boil the broccoli for 3-4 minutes, then drain. Scatter the remaining oregano over the frittata. Slice into 8 wedges and serve 2 per person with the chips and broccoli.



**HOLIDAY  
ON A  
PLATE**

## Tuesday

### Pork kebabs with pittas & tzatziki

**EVERYDAY EASY**

**Serves 4**

**Syns per serving 7**

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

**Ready in 45 minutes, plus marinating**

**800g lean pork loin steaks, visible fat removed, chopped into bite-size pieces**

**1½ tsp ground cumin**

**2 tsp dried oregano**

**Low-calorie cooking spray**

**1 large cucumber**

**250g fat-free natural Greek yogurt**

**10g fresh mint leaves, finely chopped**

**1 small garlic clove, crushed**

**250g sugar snap peas**

**2 peppers (red or orange), deseeded and roughly chopped**

**100g watercress**

**Red wine vinegar, to serve**

**4 x 60g wholemeal pitta breads, toasted and halved**

**1 lemon, sliced into wedges, to serve**

**1** Put the pork, cumin and oregano in a mixing bowl. Spray with low-calorie cooking spray, season with a pinch of salt and stir to coat. Cover and chill for at least 1 hour, or overnight.

**2** For the tzatziki, halve the cucumber lengthways, then use a teaspoon to remove the seeds. Grate the cucumber and place in a sieve. Season with salt and leave to drain for 20 minutes. Squeeze out the excess liquid, then mix the cucumber with the yogurt, mint and garlic. Set aside.

**3** Thread the pork onto 8 small metal skewers, then place a large, non-stick griddle or frying pan over a high heat. Once the pan is smoking hot, add 4 kebabs and cook the pork for 1-2 minutes on each side, or until slightly charred and cooked through. Transfer to a plate (using an oven mitt to handle the hot skewers), cover with foil and repeat.

**4** Toss together the sugar snap peas, peppers and watercress, and drizzle with a little red wine vinegar. Divide the kebabs between 4 plates and dollop over the tzatziki. Serve with 1 pitta bread per person and the lemon wedges for squeezing over the kebabs.



TOPPING  
WITH  
A TWIST

## Wednesday

### Chicken pie with celeriac & butter bean mash

#### EVERYDAY EASY

Serves 4

Syns per serving 1



Ready in 1 hour

1 celeriac (about 1kg),  
peeled and chopped into  
2cm cubes

Low-calorie cooking spray  
400g leeks, rinsed  
and sliced

1 garlic clove, crushed

1 dried or fresh bay leaf

500g skinless and boneless  
chicken thighs, visible fat  
removed, chopped into  
bite-size pieces

400ml chicken stock

3 level tbsp cornflour

10g fresh flat-leaf parsley,  
leaves finely chopped

400g can butter beans,  
drained and rinsed

2 tbsp fat-free natural  
Greek yogurt

4 spring onions,  
finely sliced

400g boiled sliced runner  
beans, to serve

**1** Preheat your oven to 220°C/  
fan 180°C/gas 8. Boil the celeriac  
for 20-25 minutes until tender.

**2** Meanwhile, spray a large, non-stick  
frying pan with low-calorie cooking  
spray and place over a medium-high  
heat. Fry the leeks for 5-6 minutes,  
stirring, until softened. Add the  
garlic and cook for 1-2 minutes until  
fragrant. Add the bay leaf, chicken  
and stock. Season, bring to a simmer,  
then simmer gently for 10 minutes.

**3** Once the stock has reduced a little,  
add a small amount of the cornflour  
to make a smooth paste. Add to the  
pan and simmer for 2-3 minutes until  
the liquid has thickened. Stir in the  
parsley, then transfer to a baking dish.

**4** Drain the celeriac, then return  
to the pan. Leave to steam-dry for  
1 minute, then add the butter beans  
and yogurt. Season and mash. Stir  
in the spring onions, then spoon  
over the pie filling, smoothing it  
down to cover the filling completely.

**5** Place the baking dish on a baking  
tray, and cook in the oven for 20-25  
minutes, or until the chicken is cooked  
through and the mash is golden.  
Serve a quarter of the pie per person,  
discarding the bay leaf, with the beans.



SPUDS  
THAT  
SATISFY!

## Thursday

### Jacket potatoes with loaded beans

#### SUPER SIMPLE

Serves 4

Free



Ready in 45 minutes  
(when microwaving  
the potatoes)

4 large baking potatoes,  
pricked with a fork

Low-calorie cooking spray

350g chestnut  
mushrooms, sliced

6 frozen Linda McCartney's  
Vegetarian Red Onion  
& Rosemary Sausages,  
defrosted and each  
cut into 4

300g cherry  
tomatoes, halved

2 x 415g cans baked beans

200g spinach

10g fresh flat-leaf parsley,  
leaves roughly chopped

**1** Preheat your oven to 200°C/  
fan 180°C/gas 6. Microwave the  
potatoes for 15-20 minutes, then  
finish in the oven for 20 minutes  
until the flesh is soft and the  
skin is crisp. Alternatively, bake  
in the oven for 1 hour.

**2** Meanwhile, spray a large, non-stick  
frying pan with low-calorie cooking  
spray and place over a medium-high  
heat. When hot, add the mushrooms  
and fry for 2-3 minutes without  
stirring. Stir and repeat until the  
mushrooms are coloured and tender.  
Transfer to a plate.

**3** Add the sausages to the pan.  
Again, fry without stirring for 1-2  
minutes, then stir and repeat until  
the sausages are golden and crisp all  
over. Add the mushrooms, tomatoes  
and beans, and bring everything to  
a simmer. Cook for 5-6 minutes, then  
season to taste.

**4** Wilt the spinach in a frying pan set  
over a medium-high heat. Split open  
the potatoes on plates and top with  
the bean mixture. Scatter over the  
parsley and serve with the spinach.





SPICED-UP  
FISH  
FRIDAY

## Friday

### Fish & chickpea curry

#### SUPER SIMPLE

Serves 4

Free

Ready in 45 minutes

Low-calorie cooking spray

1 onion, finely sliced

2 garlic cloves, crushed

2 tsp dried garam masala  
(see Cook's note on p43)

400g can chopped  
tomatoes

2 x 400g cans chickpeas,  
drained and rinsed

4 skinless and boneless  
white fish fillets (around  
150g each), patted dry

250g dried basmati rice

200g spinach

20g fresh coriander, leaves  
roughly chopped

4 tbsp fat-free natural  
Greek yogurt, to serve

1 lemon, sliced into  
wedges, to serve

**1** Spray a large, deep, non-stick frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium heat. Add the onion and fry for 5-6 minutes until softened, stirring frequently. Add the garlic and garam masala with a splash of water, and cook for 1-2 minutes until fragrant.

**2** Add the tomatoes, chickpeas and 300ml water. Bring to a simmer, then cook for 10-15 minutes until the liquid has reduced a little.

**3** Nestle the fish fillets into the sauce, then cover with a lid or baking tray and reduce the heat to low. Cook for 10-12 minutes, or until the fish is cooked through (it should be completely white). Meanwhile, cook the rice according to the pack instructions, then drain. While the rice is cooking, wilt the spinach in a frying pan set over a medium-high heat.

**4** Divide the fish curry, rice and spinach between 4 bowls. Scatter over the coriander, and serve with the yogurt for dolloping over and the lemon wedges.

## Weekend specials...



FULL-ON  
COMFORT  
FOOD!



NO SYN  
PESTO

## Saturday

### Bolognese pasta bake

#### EVERYDAY EASY

Serves 4

Syns per serving 1

✳️ (bolognese sauce only)

Ready in 1 hour

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

Low-calorie cooking spray

1 onion, finely chopped

2 carrots, finely diced

2 celery sticks, finely diced

2 garlic cloves, crushed

2 x 400g cans  
chopped tomatoes

1 beef stock cube

300g short dried pasta  
shapes (we used cavatappi)

20g fresh Parmesan,  
finely grated

10g fresh basil leaves,  
to serve

Large bag of mixed salad  
leaves, dressed with balsamic  
vinegar, to serve

**1** Preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Dry-fry the mince in a large, non-stick frying pan over a medium-high heat, breaking it up with a wooden spoon, until browned all over. Tip into a sieve to drain, then wipe out the pan with kitchen paper.

**2** Reduce the heat to medium and spray the pan with low-calorie cooking spray. Add the mince, onion, carrots and celery, and cook for 5 minutes until the veg are softened, stirring. Add the garlic and cook for 1-2 minutes until fragrant. Add the tomatoes, then fill an empty tomato can with water and pour it in. Crumble in the stock cube, bring everything to a simmer and cook for 20 minutes until the sauce has reduced and thickened.

**3** Meanwhile, cook the pasta for 3 minutes less than the pack instructions (it will finish cooking in the oven), then drain. Tip the pasta into a large baking dish and top with the sauce. Stir to combine, then evenly scatter over the Parmesan and bake in the oven for 20 minutes until the top has browned. Scatter over the basil, then divide between 4 plates with the salad.

*'This was so easy to make,  
and filled me right up!'*

JAMES

## Sunday

### Roast chicken with summer veg & rocket pesto

#### EVERYDAY EASY

Serves 4

Free

Ready in 1 hour  
40 minutes

2 lemons (1 unwaxed)

1.5-1.8kg whole chicken

500g baby new potatoes,  
halved if large

500g courgettes,  
halved lengthways  
and thickly sliced

Low-calorie cooking spray

500g cherry tomatoes

10g rocket

1 small garlic  
clove, crushed

20g fresh basil, reserving  
some leaves to serve

4 tbsp fat-free natural  
Greek yogurt

**1** Preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Halve the waxed lemon and put inside the chicken cavity. Place the chicken on a non-stick baking tray and roast for 1 hour, or until cooked through and the juices run clear when you insert a skewer into the thickest part of the chicken.

**2** When the chicken's been cooking for 30 minutes, spread the potatoes and courgettes on a large, non-stick baking tray in a single layer. Spray with low-calorie cooking spray and roast on the shelf above the chicken for its final 30 minutes. Set the chicken aside. Toss the roasted veg, add the tomatoes to the tray and return to the oven for a further 30 minutes until caramelised. Cover the chicken with foil and leave to rest somewhere warm for 30 minutes.

**3** Meanwhile, zest the unwaxed lemon. Juice half of it and slice the remaining half into 4 slim wedges. Put the zest and juice in a food processor with the rocket, garlic, basil and yogurt. Season, blitz into a fine paste, then add just enough water to make it a thick drizzling consistency – around a few tablespoons. Set aside. (It will taste slightly bitter, but will be balanced out by the sweet, caramelised veg.)

**4** Carve the chicken, discarding the skin and any visible fat. Divide the chicken and veg between 4 plates, and drizzle over the rocket pesto. Scatter over the reserved basil leaves and serve with the lemon wedges.

## Shopping list\*

### Fruit & vegetables

- ✳️ Baby new potatoes, 500g
- ✳️ Baking potatoes, 4
- ✳️ Basil, 30g fresh
- ✳️ Broccoli, 1 head
- ✳️ Carrots, 2
- ✳️ Celeriac, 1
- ✳️ Celery, 2 sticks
- ✳️ Cherry tomatoes, 800g
- ✳️ Chestnut mushrooms, 350g
- ✳️ Coriander, 20g fresh
- ✳️ Courgettes, 500g
- ✳️ Cucumber, 1 large
- ✳️ Flat-leaf parsley, 20g fresh
- ✳️ Floury potatoes, 1kg Maris Piper or King Edward
- ✳️ Garlic, 1 bulb
- ✳️ Leeks, 400g
- ✳️ Lemons, 4 (1 unwaxed)
- ✳️ Mint, 10g fresh
- ✳️ Mixed salad leaves, 1 large bag
- ✳️ Onions, 3
- ✳️ Peppers, 4 (2 red, orange or yellow, 2 red or orange)
- ✳️ Rocket, 100g
- ✳️ Runner beans, 400g
- ✳️ Spinach, 400g
- ✳️ Spring onions, 4
- ✳️ Sugar snap peas, 250g
- ✳️ Tomato, 1
- ✳️ Watercress, 100g

### Meat, poultry & fish

- ✳️ Beef mince (5% fat or less), 500g
- ✳️ Chicken, 1.5-1.8kg whole
- ✳️ Chicken thighs, 500g skinless and boneless
- ✳️ Pork loin steaks, 800g lean
- ✳️ White fish fillets, 4 x 150g skinless and boneless

### Dairy

- ✳️ Fat-free natural Greek yogurt, 450g
- ✳️ Mozzarella, 160g
- ✳️ Parmesan, 20g fresh

### Frozen

- ✳️ Linda McCartney's Vegetarian Red Onion & Rosemary Sausages, 6

### Store cupboard

- ✳️ Baked beans, 2 x 415g cans
- ✳️ Basmati rice, 250g dried
- ✳️ Butter beans, 400g can
- ✳️ Chickpeas, 2 x 400g cans
- ✳️ Chopped tomatoes, 4 x 400g cans
- ✳️ Eggs, 10 large
- ✳️ Short pasta shapes, 300g dried
- ✳️ Wholemeal pitta breads, 4 x 60g

### Check you've got

- ✳️ Balsamic vinegar
- ✳️ Bay leaf, 1 dried or fresh
- ✳️ Beef stock cube
- ✳️ Chicken stock
- ✳️ Cornflour
- ✳️ Dried garam masala
- ✳️ Dried oregano
- ✳️ Ground cumin
- ✳️ Low-calorie cooking spray
- ✳️ Red wine vinegar

\*This shopping list is for the dinner recipes only

PHOTOGRAPHS: TOBY SCOTT; RECIPES: REBECCA WOOLLARD; FOOD STYLING: LOTTIE COVELL; PROP STYLING: VICTORIA ELDRIDGE



# DELICIOUSLY SQUIDGY SNACKS

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Banana



Malt

Strawberry

Apple

Source  
of  
fibre

**50%**  
less sugar  
than the average  
cake bar\*

Low in  
saturated  
fat

**Less than 100 calories each**

\*To compare our nutritional values visit [www.soreen.com/nutritionals](http://www.soreen.com/nutritionals)

# “The moment I... felt like a new woman”

When Lou Bolton took on the Worthing 10K a second time brimming with energy after losing weight, nothing could stop her – and it was her dad's memory that spurred her on

Lou, 41, is an insurance underwriter. She lives in Worthing, West Sussex, with her son, Ethan, 12. Lou is 5ft 7ins tall and weighs 11st, having lost 5st ½lb at Roni Kilford's Slimming World group in Worthing



**R**acing along the seafront, on what would have been my dad's 70th birthday, I was propelled forward by an invisible force. The official 2020 Worthing 10K might have been cancelled due to coronavirus, but nothing could stop me from crossing that finishing line in Dad's memory. I ran the same route, wearing the same – now very baggy – blue vest as I had the year before, feeling like a completely different woman.

The 2019 race had been painful. At over 16st, I'd struggled; running a bit, walking a bit. And my heart ached, too. Three months earlier, I'd lost my beloved father, Alan, to lung cancer. Only Dad and the £1,200 I'd raised for St Barnabas Hospice got me round the course.

After losing Dad, I'd turned to food for comfort. In the evenings, at the end of a frantic day, I'd bury my grief

in sharing-size bags of tortilla chips. And my weekly run with the Foxy Ladies Running Club, which I'd joined in September 2018 to do a 'learn to run' course, wasn't slowing my weight gain.

At my cousin Ronnie's wedding, six months after Dad passed, it really hit home. While Mum and my sister Faye danced and mingled, I hid in the corner underneath a floaty, size-18 dress.

The next day, as Faye drove me home, I looked up Slimming World groups on my phone. My local group was on that evening, so when Faye pulled up at my house, I got out of her car and straight into mine.

I embraced Food Optimising from the get-go, my plate bursting with delicious Free Foods – and I was thrilled I could still have crisps using my Syns. The best part was the support I got from group each week. It was one precious

**THEN** When I did the Worthing 10K in 2019, my weight and grief made it a real struggle

**NOW** I know Dad would be proud of the new me – the one who ran the 2020 route feeling unstoppable!

hour when my world stopped spinning and I could focus on me.

As I lost weight my energy soared, and I upped my runs with the Foxy Ladies to three times a week. Then the pandemic hit. The idea of running alone had always terrified me...now, though, I felt ready to give it a go. Running on my own gave me a chance to finally process my grief – and the virtual support of group kept my weight loss on track.

In February, on the day I hit target, I was certain I could hear Dad in my ear saying, 'Nice one, honey!' I know he'd be as proud of me as I am of myself. I can't wait to run the Worthing 10K again this year – but I already feel like a winner! ●

**#SWtastethefreedom** Share a photo of a special moment since hitting target on social media, or email it to us at [editorial@slimmingworld.co.uk](mailto:editorial@slimmingworld.co.uk)



# Take on your slimming fears

Some worries about weight loss can build up in our minds until they feel like monsters lurking, to frighten us away from our dreams.

Here's how to identify those common slimming gremlins, so they don't seem quite so scary anymore!

Words: **Christabel Smith**  
Illustration: **Tim Bradford**



**After the year we've all had, it's no surprise that life sometimes feels a bit more daunting than it used to, whether it's driving long distance for the first time in months or the prospect of being in a busy pub or cinema again.**

And if you're thinking of joining a Slimming World group for the first time, or walking back through the doors of a real-life group, a little trepidation is totally natural...though we guarantee a warm welcome will be waiting for you! The other thing we can promise you is that you are far stronger than those fear gremlins holding you back – whether it's a lack of confidence in your ability to reach your goals, or worry that others will judge you for gaining weight over lockdown.

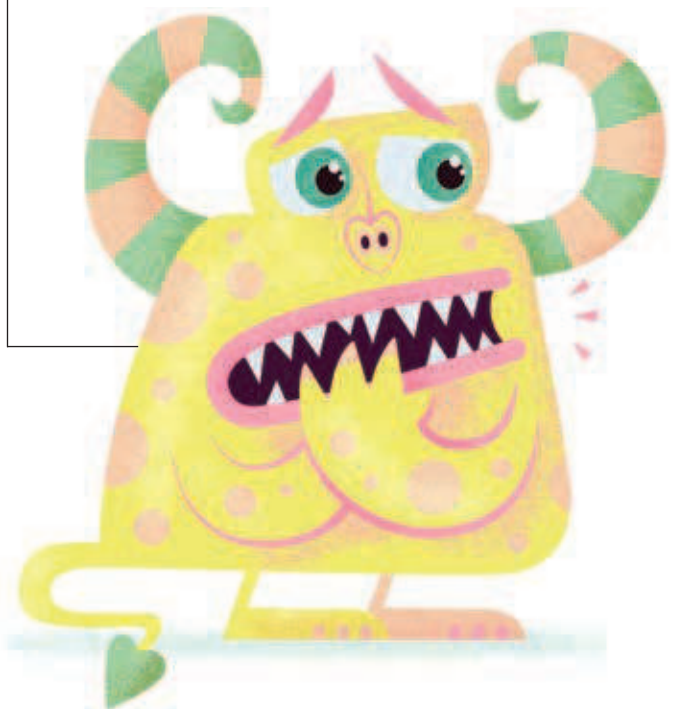
You'll also be among friends. Everyone in your group, including your Consultant, took that first step of the journey, and they'll remember the mix of excitement and nerves as they faced down their own fears. That makes them the very best people to warmly support and cheer you along the way, as you show those monster slimming fears they can't hold you back.

## WHY FACE UP TO FEAR?

Learning to recognise your personal fears, perhaps even giving them names like the monsters on this page, will:

- Make scary thoughts seem less overwhelming, which helps you put them into perspective and move past them.
- Start to clear the way, so you can focus on building healthy new habits that will last a lifetime.
- Keep you on track, safe in the knowledge you have your own army of supporters closely watching your back any time fear rears its head along your weight loss journey.
- Turn 'I can't do it' into 'I can do it – and I'm blooming well going to do it!'

## the fear-of-the-unknown



## the self-doubt monster

### *'It's no use – I can't lose weight'*

Many of us have tried more fad diets than we can count – perhaps we've even had years and years of losing weight only to regain it (and more). No wonder for many of us there's a great big monster fear lurking that we may never succeed as a slimmer. 'If a diet didn't work, that's the diet's failure, not yours,' says Dr Jacquie Lavin, Slimming World's head of research and scientific affairs. 'Research shows a big part of why diets are unsuccessful is that they leave people feeling hungry and deprived. Food Optimising isn't about eliminating food groups, or having to obsessively look up and count every calorie. You can eat as many Free Foods as you like, so you never need to feel hungry, and Syns mean you don't have to rule out any favourites, such as chocolate!'

This particular monster can leap out of the cupboard even when our weight loss is going well. Because if we've decided we're not great at hitting target, or succeeding at our goals generally, then even when we're losing weight we might still find it hard to believe we can get to where we really want to be. Slimming World Consultant Aishah Ghanem says one of her members got off to a fantastic start, then hit a wall. 'When she

opened up about her fears, the group got behind her, reminding her how far she'd come. She left buzzing and it jump-started her weight loss again.'

'Trust the process that got you to where you are, knowing that if you do fall, you'll be caught,' adds Consultant Kurtis Bissett. 'If things go a bit wonky, we'll get you back on the scales and back on the rails!'

#### ● FEAR BUSTER

Every weight loss success you have will help put dreadful diets and false starts back where they should be: in the past. If you celebrate every single pound you lose, whether that's by putting pebbles in a jar or colouring in a chart, you'll have something tangible to look at on days when you question yourself. Remember, you do have what it takes – you've got this!



## monster

### *'I'm nervous about going to group'*

It's quite natural to be nervous the first time you do anything, and joining a Slimming World group might be unlike anything you've done before. Consultant Aishah, who runs groups in Leicestershire, says: 'Give your Consultant a call in advance to talk through your fears. They'll reassure you that group is a safe, supportive environment, where everyone's equal and no one's judged – ever. I've had members aged 92 and 19, male and female, from different religions and cultures, with a target weight loss of half a stone or 10st, who all joined worried they wouldn't fit in. But they always find warm and caring support. Everyone is there for the same reason and they soon form firm friendships.'

Consultant Kurtis, who runs groups in Swansea, adds: 'When you first arrive,

the friendly faces on the door know how you're feeling because they were once new, too. You might walk in feeling scared, but you'll walk out smiling, knowing you've taken that all-important first step.'

Re-entering your group might feel daunting, too, especially if you've had a break over the last year, or you're self-conscious about having gained some weight. 'Lockdown changed all our habits,' says Dr Jacquie Lavin. 'And for some of us it made weight loss feel much more challenging. Whether you found you were sitting, snacking or drinking more than you usually would, or felt stressed out by homeschooling, you're definitely not alone.'

However long you've been away from group, if you're ready to focus on your weight loss again nobody will judge you – in fact,

they'll respect you for it. 'Whatever has happened, and however that makes you feel, your group will always welcome you back with open arms,' says Dr Jacquie Lavin.

#### ● FEAR BUSTER

Try this easy visualisation exercise. Find a moment to relax and breathe steadily. Imagine yourself standing tall, shoulders back, walking through the door to group, head held high. See the smiling faces, and feel the pride at taking that key step to a slimmer you. Practising in advance will give you a surge of confidence on the day. >



## the martian in the mirror

### *'I won't recognise a slim me'*

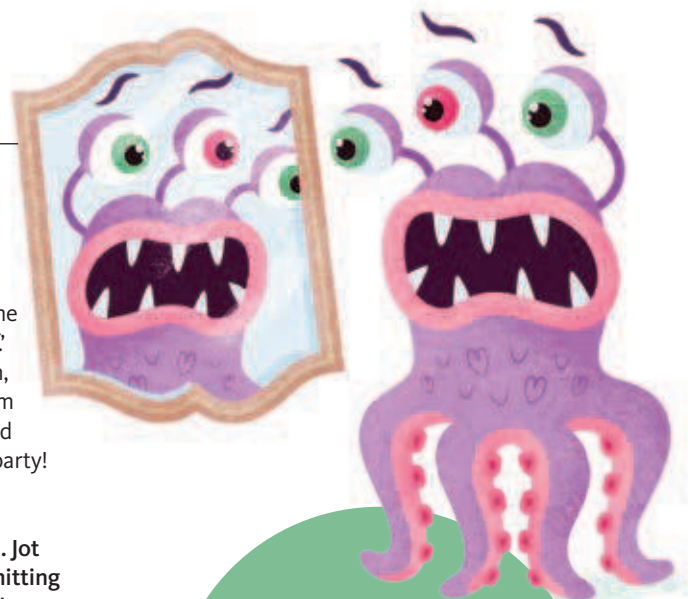
If you've lived with excess weight for a long time, it's possible that, deep down, it has become almost a form of psychological armour. The idea of being without it – and facing an unknown future where you might look different, or act differently – can be genuinely scary. You might have thoughts like: What if some people think I'm less fun? Will I be a killjoy? Will people expect more from me? 'Being compassionate to yourself is the key,' says Dr Jacquie Lavin. 'Accept that while you are making big, lasting changes, having a lower weight will never stop you being the person your friends and family know and love.'

Consultant Kurtis agrees. 'Yes, change can feel so daunting, but the book you'll find in your members' pack from group is called *Be Delighted* for a reason! When the pounds fall away, you feel elated and that tends to take over from a negative mindset as your

confidence grows. You're the same person – just happier in yourself. In fact, rather than being less fun, unburdened from low self-esteem and self-consciousness, you could become the life and soul of the party!

#### ● FEAR BUSTER

Make a list of the pros and cons. Jot down all your reasons for committing to a healthier lifestyle, eg: 'feel better in clothes', 'manage my diabetes', 'go swimming with my kids'. Then add the negatives, being really honest. Are you afraid of giving up your favourite foods? Of affecting friendships that revolve around boozy nights out? Now, review the cons. Cross out statements you know aren't really true, then look at what's left and ask yourself: 'Does that really need to stop me achieving my dream?'



*'Being brave isn't the absence of fear. Being brave is having that fear but finding a way through it'*

Bear Grylls

## the embarrassment monster

### *'What if people laugh at me?'*

Even when we're not aware of it, shame and embarrassment have the power to hijack our best-laid plans. We all want to be accepted, and it can be hard to stick to habits we feel make us stand out. If you're worried your partner, family or friends won't understand the changes you're making, being loud and proud about your weight loss dreams could be the best policy. 'Tell them how important your decision is for you and your health, and that you hope they will support you,' says Dr Jacquie Lavin. 'Maybe deep down, they wish they could lose weight, too? You could support each other.'

As social distancing rules relax, we may worry about socialising on plan. 'If you're dreading eyes on you as you try to make healthy choices, there are lots of effective strategies to be gleaned from group,' says Consultant Aishah. 'Members will have great ideas for navigating menus, as well as tips for drinkers, such as choosing a long drink with plenty of ice.'

And if fear of embarrassment is getting in the way of you taking up activity, it's good to know that you

don't have to run miles or leap around in Lycra (unless you really want to!). Nobody bats an eyelid at someone walking briskly down the street. Plus there are plenty of activities you can do at home, from energetic housework or digging the garden to larking about with the kids or taking part in an online fitness class (you can always turn the camera off!).

#### ● FEAR BUSTER

Vanquish this fear monster by ganging up on it. Having people on board with your weight loss – whether that's your other half or your new friends at group – can make these challenges feel easier to overcome. That could be getting tips in group ahead of a night out so you feel prepared, or meeting up with a friend to go for a walk. With practice, you'll soon feel confident going it alone.

Facing up to our deepest fears is scary – but it can also be very satisfying. Because once you've conquered the monsters that once held you back, as well as being healthier and slimmer, you'll also feel like you can take on the world! ●





**We made  
'em thin  
so you  
can fill  
'em in**

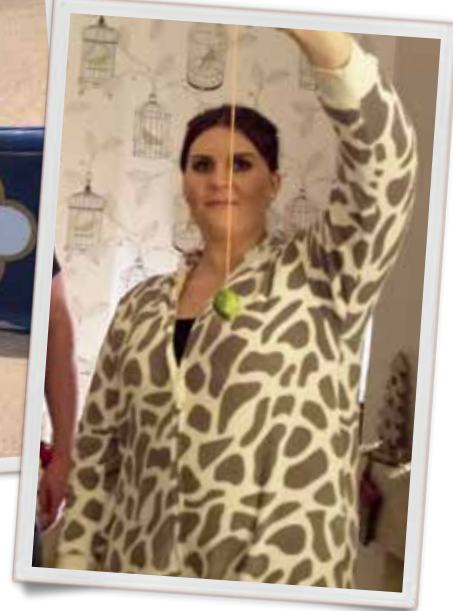
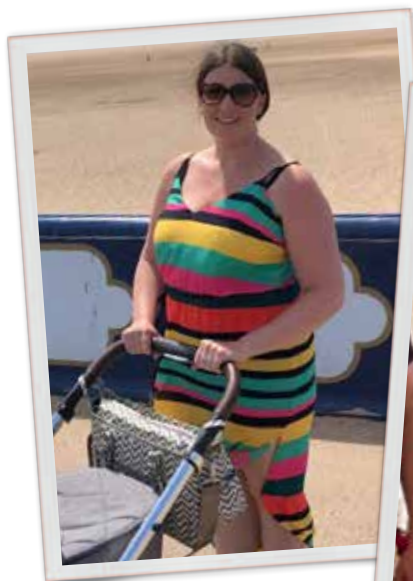


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# *'I know my healthy habits are here to stay'*

As Laura Hall's family grew, she learnt how to adapt her new lifestyle to her changing routine – and now 5st 11lbs lighter and no longer worried about her weight, she's making the most of time with her two little girls

**A**s I got a pan on the hob for dinner, I had a little chef on hand to help. My daughter Evelyn, three, proudly handed me a fistful of pepper pieces that I'd helped her to chop up. Earlier that day she'd picked out the bright red pepper to add to all the other fruit and vegetables I was piling into my trolley at the supermarket. It felt good knowing that this was just a natural routine for her. It would mean so much to me if she and her baby sister Ada grew up loving healthy food and activity as much as I'd learnt to.

Life had certainly had its up and downs over the last few years, and just when I'd thought I'd cracked healthy weight loss, some major changes had knocked me off track. Now, though, I knew I'd found the secret to making weight loss last whatever life threw at me, because my habits were just so ingrained.

I'd first gained weight after becoming a police officer when I was 21. Swinging between adrenaline rushes and exhaustion, I'd get through the day on cake and biscuits. When I found love with my long-time friend, Rich, we'd unwind together on my nights off with wine, chocolate and popcorn. He also made

the most amazing lasagne and creamy pasta dishes – and it meant that when I was ordering my uniform for the following year, I had to tick the next size up. Deciding what to wear for a night out was an ordeal, so I was relieved when my friend decided her New Year's Eve celebrations would be a pyjama party. I had a fantastic night in my giraffe onesie, but later when the photos of Rich and me surfaced I got a shock. Far from hiding my figure, the shapeless onesie made me look bigger than ever. Then when I heard a fitness test was being rolled out at work, I knew I couldn't risk not passing it...

## **Trying something new**

I'd been a member of a couple of weight loss organisations in the past, but I'd find myself feeling hungry at work when I needed energy to spare, and now I wanted a new approach. I'd seen some inspiring Slimming World success stories on social media, so in January 2015, weighing 14st 13lbs, I decided to give it a try. The Consultant, Ann-Marie, was so welcoming, and I went home excited by the idea of losing weight



I'm looking forward to going back to work after my maternity leave feeling my best



I had the energy I needed as I became a mum of two

“

*The difference in my two pregnancies was unreal – I had so much more energy the second time around*

without feeling hungry. Rich was only too happy to adapt his amazing Italian recipes to fit with Food Optimising. He swapped oil for low-calorie cooking spray and cream for plain quark or fat-free natural yogurt, and packed his dishes full of veg.

I'd bring home new recipe ideas from group for Rich to try, and pick up helpful tips like planning the week's meals before going food shopping and

checking menus online ahead of dinners out. I used my Syns to have a little of what I wanted, when I wanted, so I never felt deprived. I also decided to start working my way through the Body Magic awards. My dad, Robert, was a keen runner, so I started running with him and found I really enjoyed it. Then when a friend recommended CrossFit – a high-intensity exercise programme – I figured why not give that a try, too?

When Rich proposed in September 2015, I'd already lost quite a bit of weight, and with our wedding in sight, I had tons of motivation to stay on track. After gaining my Platinum Body Magic award, I'd made activity a really integral part of my life, to the point where I happily exercised every day, building up my

running until I completed a half-marathon. I passed the fitness test at work with flying colours, and by the time our wedding came around, I'd hit my target of 10st 3lbs, down from a size 18 to a size 10. I felt amazing! Those long days at work seemed so much easier, and I loved feeling so strong and confident.

More good news came that Christmas, when I found out I was expecting. Then my excitement and our dreams of starting a family were dashed when I had two miscarriages in a row. In September 2017, I fell pregnant for a third time – and I was terrified. Because of my previous miscarriages, my midwife advised me to stop doing high-intensity exercise, which included my running and going to CrossFit. Wanting the best for my unborn baby, I followed her advice, though I found it a real struggle as they'd both become so important to me. Morning sickness hit me hard this time, and all I could stomach were biscuits, toast and cereal. By the time my appetite >



I'd reached my target weight for our wedding, and I felt amazing!

## Meet Laura

Laura Hall, 34, is a police sergeant and lives in Mirfield, West Yorkshire, with her husband, Rich, and their daughters, Evelyn, three, and Ada, 10 months

Height: 5ft 7ins

Starting weight: 15st 11lbs

Weight now: 10st

**WEIGHT LOST:**  
**5st 11lbs**

Laura first lost weight at Ann-Marie Calland's Slimming World group in Skircoat Green, West Yorkshire, and is now a target member of Mandy Lacy's group in Battysford, West Yorkshire



Getting dressed up for a night out felt like an ordeal



“  
*Feeling happy in my own skin has improved my self-esteem so much*

returned, I'd lost motivation and drifted away from group. Rich cooked up whatever I fancied, and I'd indulge my cravings for lots of garlic bread and chocolate snacks in the evening.

I knew I was putting on weight, but I felt so grateful for every month of my pregnancy that passed that I pushed it out of my mind. Once Evelyn was born, I was overjoyed to have her with us, safe and sound. When I looked at myself in the mirror, though, I felt mortified that I'd put all the weight I'd lost back on, plus more. I even avoided meeting up with my friends and showing off my longed-for baby, as I thought they'd judge me. It was a difficult and lonely time. Even a trip to the seaside with Rich ended in tears as the heat caused my thighs to rub themselves raw as we walked on the seafront.

We'd moved house to be nearer to my parents, and when I told them I was going to find a local Slimming World group, my dad said: 'You know what, love, I'll come with you.'

Mandy's group was just as friendly and welcoming as Ann-Marie's. And while I felt disappointed to see 15st 11lbs flash up on the scales, after losing 6½lbs in my first week I knew I was back on it! Getting into the exercise habit didn't seem quite so simple though, as having Evelyn meant I couldn't exactly get to the gym every day. Then I turned back to my Body Magic book and realised that I didn't need to go to the gym to get moving. Every step counted, including going for a brisk walk. So I started taking Evelyn for walks in her pram. At first, I felt out of puff on the smallest of hills, but after a few weeks,



it gradually became easier. That same mentality really worked for my weight loss, too. Rather than focusing on my final target weight of 10st, I found that setting myself mini targets felt much more achievable.

For more motivation, I asked Rich to take progress pictures. If I was having a tough week, all I had to do was flip through them to see that I'd already come so far. Other times, the wise words of group members would give me a boost. One of them, talking about how she got back on track after an off-plan meal, had said: 'It's just one meal out of 21.' It helped me to draw a line if I'd gone off track and



My camera roll is filled with photos of us having fun together



My dad got me into running, and now I love it as much as he does!



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. INTERVIEW: PUNTEHA VAN TERHEYDEN, WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMES TRACEY FILM AND PHOTOGRAPHY

*“My first few times back running were hard, then I started to feel that wonderful sense of freedom again*



around by then, I'd take her on daily walks during lockdown. My midwife was delighted that I'd gained a healthy amount of weight during my pregnancy, and I was too, knowing I wouldn't have a long road back to target. When I held Ada in my arms for the first time, we took lots of pictures. This time, I was happy to pose and raring to show off Ada to my friends.

As well as having additional Healthy Extras each day to help me get the nutrients I needed for breastfeeding, I found other ways to power myself through life as mum to a toddler and a newborn. I prepped overnight oats in the

evening, so when I was tired after a broken night my on-plan breakfast was ready and waiting for me. And for lunch I'd make something like a crustless quiche, which would last me a few days. I planned all our dinners for the week, too, which meant I never had to panic about what we were going to eat that evening.

A few weeks after Ada was born, I started running with Dad again, who'd now lost over 2½st and achieved his target weight. My first few goes next to him were incredibly hard, but soon my legs no longer ached, my chest didn't burn and I felt that wonderful feeling of freedom. I also added in some home workouts – doing the Joe Wicks PE sessions, with Evelyn leaping around the sitting room with me.

### A world of difference

I'm still on maternity leave at the moment, but I'm looking forward to starting work again feeling back at my best. These days I work in safeguarding, which means I have lots of meetings either face to face or via video call with different agencies. I'm at my target weight of 10st, and now I'm no longer worried about how I look, I'll be able to wear professional dresses and suits that make me feel smart and confident.

Feeling happy in my own skin has improved my self-esteem so much. I don't think twice about taking the girls to the pool now that I don't mind people seeing me in a swimsuit. We take pictures as a family all the time, and my camera roll is filled with happy images marking every special moment together, with none of them leaving me cringing. After the sadness and setbacks we had as we were trying to build our family, being able to enjoy precious time together means the world to me. ●



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
# love food

DISCOVER A WORLD OF FRESH, FILLING MEALS AND DELICIOUS INSPIRATION

With so many tasty recipes, it's easy to find something new to try every week!

Sandie Francis has lost 8st 8½lbs at Julie Liddiard's Slimming World group in Leiston, Suffolk. See her story on page 10

Look out for these symbols on our recipes:

-  Free when Food Optimising
-  Extra Easy SP recipe
-  Suitable for vegetarians
-  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 26

#### WHAT'S COOKING?

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

72  
brilliant  
ideas, recipes  
& tips

Smoky fish pie,  
recipe p49



# Best of the season

Enjoy the abundance of British and Irish produce in the shops right now with these delicious summertime recipes

Photographs: Alex Luck



*Pork steak & sweet potato wedges with roasted veg, recipe p46*





*Giant filo pastry  
vegetable roll,  
recipe p46*



## Pork steak & sweet potato wedges with roasted veg

A colourful, easy-cook dinner that's packed with summer flavours

### EVERYDAY EASY

Serves 4

Free

Ready in 1 hour

800g pork loin steaks, visible fat removed

2 garlic cloves, crushed

Zest and juice of 1 unwaxed lemon, plus wedges to serve

1kg sweet potatoes, cut into wedges

Low-calorie cooking spray

10g fresh flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped, to serve

#### For the roasted veg:

1 red onion, thickly sliced

3 fennel bulbs, trimmed and thickly sliced

½ tsp dried red chilli flakes

250g cherry tomatoes on the vine

4 garlic cloves, halved

1 bunch spring onions, cut into short pieces

**1** Preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Put the pork steaks in a large, shallow dish. Mix together the garlic, lemon zest and juice, then rub all over the pork. Season, cover and set aside.

**2** Spread the sweet potato wedges on a large, non-stick baking tray in a single layer. Spray with low-calorie cooking spray and season.

**3** For the roasted veg, spread the red onion and fennel on another large, non-stick baking tray, and spray with low-calorie cooking spray. Sprinkle over the chilli flakes.

**4** Put both trays in the oven, with the wedges on the top shelf, and cook for 30 minutes. Turn the onion and fennel, then add the tomatoes, halved garlic and spring onions to the tray. Turn the wedges. Cook for 15-20 minutes, or until everything is tender.

**5** Meanwhile, place a non-stick griddle or frying pan over a medium-high heat. Once hot, spray the pork steaks with low-calorie cooking spray and add to the pan. Cook for 2-3 minutes, then turn and cook for a further 4-5 minutes, or until cooked through. Transfer to a large plate, cover loosely with foil and leave to rest for 5 minutes.

**6** Divide the pork steaks, sweet potato wedges and roasted veg

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

## Giant filo pastry vegetable roll

We've lightened up the picnic classic and made it deliciously veggie, too!

### A LITTLE EFFORT

Serves 4

Syns per serving 5

V \*

Ready in 1 hour 30 minutes

1 medium butternut squash, peeled, halved, seeds scooped out and cut into 3cm chunks

3 red onions, cut into 2cm chunks

3 garlic cloves, peeled and left whole

½ tsp dried red chilli flakes

Low-calorie cooking spray

4 sprigs of fresh thyme

300g button mushrooms, halved

200g spinach

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

2 x 39g sheets filo pastry

1 medium egg, beaten

50g mild rindless soft goat's cheese

½ tsp black onion seeds

Cucumber and green leaf salad, dressed with juice of ½ lemon, to serve

**1** Preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Spread the squash, onions and garlic on a large, non-stick baking tray. Sprinkle over the chilli flakes and spray with low-calorie cooking spray. Season and roast for 20 minutes. Turn the veg, then add the thyme and mushrooms. Roast for a further 20 minutes, or until the veg are tender, then leave to cool.

**2** Meanwhile, heat a non-stick frying pan over a medium-high heat. Add the spinach, stirring frequently until wilted. Transfer to a sieve and press out any excess liquid. Set aside.

**3** Spread the chips on a large, non-stick baking tray in a single layer and spray with low-calorie cooking spray. Season and bake for 40 minutes, or until golden, turning halfway.

**4** While the chips are cooking, line a baking tray with baking paper and place a sheet of pastry on top. Brush with some of the egg, then cover with the second pastry sheet. Gently stir together the cooled veg, spinach and goat's cheese. Spoon the mixture lengthways down the centre of the pastry, leaving a 10cm gap at the top and bottom, and enough pastry on either side to enclose the filling. Fold over the top and bottom ends, then brush with some egg and stick the

pastry down. Fold over the sides to seal, then carefully roll over so the smooth side faces up. Brush with the remaining egg and scatter over the onion seeds. Bake on the shelf below the chips for the final 25-30 minutes of their cooking time, or until the pastry is crisp and golden.

**5** Slice the vegetable roll into 8 equal-size pieces. Serve 2 pieces per person with the chips and salad.

## Beef & pearl barley casserole

This Irish-style stew transforms simple ingredients into something special

### EVERYDAY EASY

Serves 6

Free

Ready in 3 hours 30 minutes

Low-calorie cooking spray

250g chestnut mushrooms, halved

2 onions, finely sliced

4 carrots, peeled and sliced diagonally into short pieces

2 large leeks, rinsed and sliced into 2cm rings

3 garlic cloves, crushed

800g lean braising beef, visible fat removed, cut into 2cm chunks

1.2 litres beef stock, made with 2 stock cubes

2½ tbsp Worcestershire sauce

3 or 4 sprigs of fresh thyme

1 sprig of fresh rosemary

200g dried pearl barley

400g green beans, trimmed, to serve

Fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped, to serve

**1** Preheat your oven to 160°C/fan 140°C/gas 3. Spray a large, shallow, flameproof, lidded, non-stick casserole dish with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium heat. Add the mushrooms, onions, carrots and leeks. Season and fry for 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Add a splash of water if the veg start to stick.

**2** Stir in the garlic and beef, then cook for 5-10 minutes until the beef is mostly browned. Add 800ml stock – just enough to cover the veg and beef. Stir in the Worcestershire sauce and herbs. Cover and cook in the oven for 1 hour 30 minutes.

**3** Stir in the remaining stock and the pearl barley. Cover and cook for a further 1 hour 30 minutes, or until the beef is tender. Boil the beans for 3-4 minutes, then drain. Divide the casserole between 6 plates, discarding the sprigs of herbs. Scatter over the parsley and serve with the beans.





*Beef & pearl  
barley casserole,  
recipe opposite*

*Slow cooking budget-  
friendly braising beef makes  
it meltingly tender*





*Lemony poached  
chicken with  
asparagus & lentils,  
recipe opposite*



## Lemony poached chicken with asparagus & lentils

Catch bundles of home-grown asparagus at their glorious best

### EVERYDAY EASY

Serves 4

Free

SP

Ready in 50 minutes

4 skinless and boneless chicken breasts  
1 lemon, ½ thinly sliced, ½ juiced to serve  
10cm-piece fresh root ginger, peeled and finely sliced  
1 chicken stock cube

#### For the lentils:

Low-calorie cooking spray  
1 onion, finely chopped  
2 garlic cloves, crushed  
2 courgettes, finely diced  
200g dried green lentils  
700ml chicken stock, made with 1 stock cube  
300g asparagus spears, cut into 3cm lengths  
300g sugar snap peas, halved lengthways  
1 bunch spring onions, finely sliced, reserving some to serve  
15g fresh basil, roughly chopped, reserving some to serve  
15g fresh flat-leaf parsley, leaves roughly chopped, reserving some to serve

#### For the yogurt & chive dressing:

200g fat-free natural Greek yogurt  
Zest and juice of ½ unwaxed lemon  
1 small garlic clove, crushed  
10g fresh chives, finely chopped

**1** Put the chicken, sliced lemon and ginger in a deep, wide, flameproof, non-stick, lidded pan, and crumble in the stock cube. Fill with water to just above halfway. Bring to a simmer, then reduce the heat to as low as it will go, cover and cook for 10 minutes. Turn off the heat and leave to stand for 20 minutes – the residual heat will finish cooking the chicken.

**2** Meanwhile, for the lentils, spray a large, non-stick saucepan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium heat. Add the onion and cook for 5-8 minutes, stirring frequently. When the onion starts to soften, add the garlic and courgettes. Fry gently for a further 5 minutes.

**3** Add the lentils and stock. Bring to a gentle simmer. Cook for 25 minutes until the lentils are almost done. Add the asparagus and peas, and simmer for 3-4 minutes. Meanwhile, mix the dressing ingredients, then transfer the chicken to a board, discarding the lemon and ginger, and slice.

**4** Add the lemon juice to the lentil mixture and season. Remove from the heat, and stir in the spring onions and herbs. Divide the lentil mixture between 4 bowls or plates and top each with a quarter of the chicken. Drizzle over the dressing, and scatter over the reserved spring onions and herbs to serve.

## Smoky fish pie

You can practically taste the seaside in every bite...

### A LITTLE EFFORT

Serves 4

Syns per serving 1

✳

Ready in 1 hour 20 minutes

Low-calorie cooking spray  
8 shallots, finely sliced  
2 leeks, rinsed and sliced  
1½ tsp English mustard powder  
4 level tbsp cornflour  
3 garlic cloves, crushed  
800ml fish stock, made with 1 stock cube  
1 small head of broccoli, cut into small florets  
150g spinach  
1kg floury potatoes, such as Maris Piper or King Edward, peeled and diced  
4 large eggs, rinsed  
200g kippers, skinned and sliced into 3cm chunks  
250g skinless and boneless cod fillets, sliced into 3cm chunks  
200g raw peeled king prawns  
10g fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped  
2 tbsp skimmed milk  
2 heads of spring greens, shredded, to serve

**1** Spray a large, deep, non-stick frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium heat. Add the shallots and leeks, and fry for 10 minutes until softened. Stir in the mustard, cornflour and garlic, and fry for 1 minute. Slowly whisk in the fish stock. Bring to a gentle simmer, season, and bubble for 2-3 minutes until the sauce has thickened. Stir in the broccoli and spinach, then turn off the heat.

**2** In a large saucepan, boil the potatoes for 15-20 minutes until soft, adding the eggs for the final 7 minutes. Transfer the eggs to a bowl of cold water. Drain the potatoes and leave to steam-dry for a few minutes. When the eggs are cool, peel and halve – the yolks should be slightly soft.

**3** Preheat your oven to 220°C/fan 200°C/gas 7. Stir the fish and prawns into the sauce along



## Kippers add a subtle smokiness to this hearty British staple

with the parsley, and pour half into a 2-litre baking dish. Place the eggs evenly into the sauce and cover with the remaining filling.

**4** Add the milk to the potatoes and mash until smooth. Season, then evenly spoon the mash over the filling, using a fork to rough up the top. Put the pie on a baking tray and bake for 30 minutes until golden and bubbling. Boil the spring greens for 2-3 minutes, then drain. Divide the pie between 4 plates and serve with the spring greens.

### COOK'S NOTE

Soak the shallots in a bowl of hot water for 10 minutes before peeling them – it will help the skins come off more easily



*A feast of flavours to delight your taste buds – there's fresh mint sauce, too!*



## Roast leg of lamb with cheesy Welsh onion cake

Swap traditional roasties for layers of potato and onion loveliness

### A LITTLE EFFORT

Serves 4

Syns per serving 6

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

Ready in 2 hours 45 minutes

Low-calorie cooking spray

3 onions, finely sliced

2 leeks, rinsed and finely sliced

1.3kg potatoes, cut into 0.5cm slices

1.5kg bone-in leg of lamb, visible fat removed

5 garlic cloves, halved

3 sprigs of fresh rosemary, small sprigs picked

160g reduced-fat Cheddar, grated

20g fresh mint, leaves picked

2 tbsp balsamic vinegar

Pinch of sweetener

300g peas, fresh or frozen

400g thin-stemmed broccoli, halved

400g asparagus spears

**1** Preheat your oven to 230°C/fan 210°C/gas 8. For the onion cake, spray a large, lidded, non-stick frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium-low heat. Add the onions and leeks. Season, then cover and cook for 25 minutes, stirring frequently, until very soft. If the veg start to stick to the pan, add a splash of water. Meanwhile, boil the potatoes for 3-4 minutes until almost tender. Drain, then spread out on kitchen paper to dry.

**2** While the potatoes are drying, place the lamb in a non-stick roasting tin and season. Make small cuts evenly all over, and insert the garlic and small sprigs of rosemary. Roast for 1 hour 15 minutes for pink, or 1 hour 30-40 minutes for well done.

**3** While the lamb is cooking, spray a 23cm-diameter round cake tin with low-calorie cooking spray and line the base with baking paper. Put a third of the potatoes in the tin in an even layer, making sure there are no gaps. Scatter over half the onions and leeks, and top with a third of the cheese. Repeat the layers using a third of the potatoes, the remaining onions and leeks, and a third of the cheese. Finish with a layer of the remaining potatoes and top with the cheese. Add the potato cake to the oven, on the shelf below the lamb, for the final 55 minutes of the lamb's cooking time.

**4** Transfer the lamb to a board, cover loosely with foil and set aside for 20 minutes. Leave the potato cake in the oven until golden. It takes 1 hour 15 minutes to cook in total – cover with foil if the top starts to brown too quickly. Meanwhile, to make the mint sauce, put the mint, vinegar and sweetener in a mini chopper or food processor. Whizz until the mint is finely chopped. Season, add enough water to form a drizzling consistency and set aside.

**5** Boil all the veg for 4-5 minutes until tender, then drain. Carve the lamb, discarding the meat juices and any remaining visible fat. Cut the onion cake into 8 equal-size wedges and serve 2 per person with the lamb, mint sauce and veg.





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# Moreish in Macaroni



Squeeze  
in more  
flavour

With our ingenious tips, tricks and shortcuts, your cooking confidence will be flying high

# Let's cook!



Use it up!

## Coconut and almond drinks

If you've loved making our chicken curry on page 58, or the mushroom pasanda on page 64, here are some tasty ways to use up any leftover plain unsweetened coconut or almond drink. Count 1 Syn per 100ml.

**PEPPED-UP PORRIDGE** Use in place of milk with your Healthy Extra porridge, then top with fresh pineapple and mango for coconut, or cherries and peaches for almond.

**CHICKEN SKEWERS** Blend coriander leaves with a few tablespoons of coconut drink and lime zest. Add chunks of skinless chicken and marinate in the fridge for up to 24 hours. Thread onto skewers, then barbecue or grill until cooked through.

### BAKEWELL TART LOLLIES

Half-fill ice lolly moulds with torn fresh raspberries, then pour over almond drink mixed with a drop of almond extract. Freeze until solid.

## TOP TIP

If you're packing up freshly cut veg for lunch (such as pepper or carrot sticks), wrap them in damp kitchen paper. It will stop them curling at the edges, and keep them moist and crunchy.

## STAR OF THE SEASON:

### nectarines

Sweet, juicy nectarines are one of the absolute joys of summer – and they're a Speed Food! They're well worth waiting for as the winter versions just aren't the same, so make the most of them while they're at their best.

☒ Nectarines that 'give' just a tiny bit when you squeeze them gently will be perfect after a day or two ripening in the fruit bowl.

☒ Eat them whole around the stone, or run a small, sharp knife around their circumference until you hit the stone. Then, gently twist the two halves away from each other with your hands and cut out the stone before slicing.

☒ There's more to them than a Speed Food snack or cereal topping. Nectarines are gorgeous in a salad with chunks of lean ham or skinless chicken, watercress and shredded mint, dressed with red wine vinegar and a pinch of chilli flakes.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Roasting a chicken stuffed with a whole lemon or small onion will subtly flavour the meat and absorb some of the hot air inside the cavity, stopping the breasts from overcooking before the legs are done. Just discard the onion or lemon.

## How to cook dried pasta perfectly



**1** Bring a large saucepan of water to the boil on the hob – there should be plenty of room for the pasta to move around the pan as it cooks and expands – then season with a little salt.



**2** Drop in your dried pasta and bring the water back to the boil as quickly as possible. Cook until tender, but still quite firm in the middle (known as al dente). Reserve half a cup of the pasta water, then drain.



**3** Add the pasta to your sauce with the reserved cooking water. Bring to a simmer and cook for 2-3 minutes until the pasta is just tender all the way through, and the sauce is reduced to the consistency you want.

### COOK'S NOTE

Adding the pasta to the sauce helps the flavours to soak in, and the starch in the cooking water keeps the sauce clinging to the pasta



# UNIQUELY THIN AND CRISPY

## FINNISH CRISPBREAD



HIGH  
FIBRE

100%  
WHOLE  
GRAIN

20 KCAL  
PER SLICE



# 4 WAYS WITH chicken

Give this Free Food favourite a flavour upgrade with these fresh and tasty ideas

Photographs: Maja Smend

*Salty, savoury miso brings a taste of Japan to your table*



## Ginger & miso chicken stir-fry

### SUPER SIMPLE

Serves 4

Syns per serving 1

Ready in 30 minutes

1 tbsp light soy sauce  
3cm-piece fresh root ginger, peeled and grated  
2 level tbsp white miso paste (without sugar or oil)  
2 garlic cloves, crushed  
1 level tbsp cornflour  
Juice of ½ lemon  
Low-calorie cooking spray  
4 skinless and boneless chicken breasts, cut into bite-size pieces  
1 onion, finely sliced

2 x 225g cans water chestnuts, drained

4 spring onions, halved lengthways, then widthways

200g pak choi, quartered

250g dried udon noodles

4 level tsp sesame seeds

**1** In a measuring jug, mix together the soy sauce, ginger, miso paste, garlic, cornflour and lemon juice with a fork. Stir in 400ml just-boiled water and set aside.

**2** Spray a large, non-stick wok or frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium-high heat. When hot, add the chicken and

stir-fry for 3-4 minutes until golden all over. Transfer to a plate.

**3** Add the onion to the pan and stir-fry for 4-5 minutes. Then add the chicken, water chestnuts, spring onions and pak choi. Once sizzling, pour in the miso sauce. Bring to a simmer and cook for 5-6 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through. Meanwhile, cook the noodles according to the pack instructions.

**4** Divide the stir-fry and noodles between 4 bowls, and evenly scatter over the sesame seeds to serve.



## Baked chicken & bacon orzo

### EVERYDAY EASY

Serves 4

Free

Ready in 1 hour

6 back bacon rashers, visible fat removed, roughly chopped

Low-calorie cooking spray

500g skinless and boneless chicken thighs, visible fat removed, chopped into thirds

1 onion, finely sliced

2 garlic cloves, crushed

6 tomatoes, roughly chopped

150g button mushrooms, halved if large

1 litre chicken stock, made with 1 stock cube

350g dried orzo pasta

200g spinach

Juice of ½ lemon

Fresh basil leaves, to serve

**1** Preheat your oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6. Place a large, non-stick frying pan over a medium-high heat. Once hot, dry-fry the bacon for 3-4 minutes, or until coloured and just cooked through. Transfer to a large, lidded, flameproof casserole dish.

**2** Wipe out the frying pan and spray with low-calorie cooking spray. Add the chicken and fry for 5-6 minutes, or until golden brown, stirring frequently. Add to the casserole dish. Add the onion to the frying pan, respraying with low-calorie cooking spray if necessary. Fry for 4-5 minutes, or until softened.

**3** Reduce the heat to medium-low. Add the garlic with a splash of water, fry for 1-2 minutes until fragrant,

then transfer to the casserole dish. Add the tomatoes, mushrooms and stock to the casserole dish, and bring to a simmer on the hob.

**4** Stir in the orzo. Return to a simmer, then cover and bake in the oven for 30 minutes, or until the orzo and chicken are cooked through.

**5** Stir through the spinach in batches until wilted, then add the lemon juice. Season and scatter over the basil leaves to serve. Any leftovers will make a delicious hot or cold lunch the next day – just make sure everything's piping hot if reheating.

*A hearty pasta casserole that's just as good the next day*





Sriracha makes for a lip-smacking glaze!

## Chicken drumsticks & chips with American-style salad

### EVERYDAY EASY

Serves 4

Syns per serving ½

Ready in 50 minutes, plus marinating

8 chicken drumsticks, skin and visible fat removed, meat scored with a sharp knife

2 tsp smoked paprika

½ tsp ground allspice

2 level tbsp sriracha hot chilli sauce

800g floury potatoes, such as Maris Piper or King Edward, peeled and cut into chips

Low-calorie cooking spray

#### For the salad:

4 celery sticks, chopped

1 cucumber, halved lengthways, deseeded and sliced

2 little gem lettuces, shredded

200g radishes, chopped

200g fat-free natural yogurt

20g fresh chives, chopped, reserving some to serve

Juice of 1 lemon

½ tsp garlic granules

**1** Put the chicken, spices and 1 level tbsp sriracha in a large bowl. Mix together using your hands until the chicken is evenly coated. Cover and chill for at least 1 hour, or overnight.

**2** When ready to cook, 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 low-calorie cooking spray. Spread

the drumsticks on another non-stick baking tray. Place the chips on the shelf below the chicken and cook for 20 minutes, then turn everything and swap over the trays. Cook for a further 20 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through.

**3** Meanwhile, toss together the celery, cucumber, lettuce and radishes. Mix the yogurt with the chives, lemon juice and garlic granules, and season.

**4** Stir the dressing through the salad and scatter over the reserved chives. Brush the remaining sriracha evenly over the chicken. Serve 2 drumsticks per person with the chips and salad.




# Mild coconut chicken curry

## EVERYDAY EASY

Serves 4

Syns per serving 1

(SP)  (curry only)

**Ready in** 45 minutes, plus marinating and bringing the chicken to room temperature

**4** skinless and boneless chicken breasts, cut into bite-size pieces

**100g** fat-free natural Greek yogurt

**½ tsp** ground turmeric

**2 tsp** coriander seeds

**1 tsp** cumin seeds

**10** cardamom pods, bashed open and seeds removed (pods discarded)

Low-calorie cooking spray

**1** onion, finely sliced

**3** garlic cloves, crushed

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

**500g** tomatoes, roughly chopped

**½** jar dried curry leaves, or **10g** fresh curry leaves

**400ml** plain unsweetened coconut drink

**200g** green beans, trimmed

**400g** ready-made plain cauliflower rice, to serve

Fresh coriander, leaves roughly chopped, to serve

Lime wedges, to serve

**1** Mix together the chicken, yogurt and turmeric in a large bowl. Season with salt, then cover and chill for at least 1 hour, or overnight.

**2** When ready to cook, bring the chicken to room temperature. Place a large, deep, lidded, non-stick frying pan over a medium heat, and add the coriander, cumin and cardamom seeds. Toast the spices for 3-4 minutes, shaking the pan frequently, until fragrant. Transfer to a pestle and mortar, and grind into a powder.

**3** Allow the pan to cool, then spray with low-calorie cooking spray and return to the heat. Fry the onion for 4-5 minutes until softened but not coloured, adding a splash of water if it starts to stick. Add the garlic and ginger with a splash of water, and

stir-fry for 2-3 minutes until fragrant. Tip in the ground spices and fry for 1-2 minutes, adding a splash of water if the spices start to stick.

**4** Add the tomatoes and curry leaves, season and cook for 2-3 minutes. Pour in the coconut drink. Bring to a simmer, then stir in the chicken and marinade, and beans.

**5** Half-cover the pan and simmer for a further 15 minutes, stirring frequently, or until the chicken is cooked through and the beans are tender. Meanwhile, heat the cauliflower rice according to the pack instructions. Divide the curry and cauliflower rice between 4 bowls, discarding the curry leaves. Scatter over the coriander and serve with the lime wedges.

## COOK'S NOTE

To keep this dish mild, we've made it without chilli. If you like a bit of heat, fry a finely chopped green chilli with the garlic and ginger

*Gently aromatic spices will get the family seal of approval*





# Rice up your life!

Take five ingredients, add a bottle of Frylight Garlic Oil, and enjoy a delicious, slimming-friendly risotto



## Leek risotto

**SUPER SIMPLE**

Serves 4

Free

Vegan

Ready in 40 minutes

**Frylight Garlic Oil**

**4 leeks, rinsed and finely sliced**

**300g dried risotto rice**

**1½-2 litres hot vegan vegetable stock**

**Zest and juice of 1 unwaxed lemon**

**Fresh basil leaves, to serve**

**1** Spray a large, deep, non-stick frying pan with Frylight Garlic Oil and place over a medium heat. Add the leeks and cook for 8-10 minutes until softened but not coloured, stirring frequently.

**2** Stir in the rice and fry for a further 2-3 minutes until the rice is slightly translucent. Increase the heat to medium-high, then start adding the stock a ladleful at a time, stirring constantly, only adding more once the stock in the pan has almost evaporated. Continue until the rice is cooked and has a slight bite to it (you might not need all the stock).

**3** Turn off the heat and leave to stand for 2 minutes. The rice should have a loose consistency and not hold its shape, so if it's too thick and sticky, add a little more stock. Stir through the lemon juice to taste, then divide between 4 bowls. Top with the basil, lemon zest and freshly ground black pepper to serve.



There's something about a bowl of creamy risotto... It tastes indulgent, looks impressive, but is so simple to make. And if risotto takes your fancy tonight, Frylight Garlic Oil cooking spray is on hand to help.

It does everything you'd expect from your bottle of Frylight – helping you to fry, roast, bake and grill without adding a single Syn. In fact, like all Frylight varieties, it saves you 6 Syns for every tablespoon of oil you replace – so it's a great choice to support your weight loss. And because it's made with natural garlic extract, it

brings an aromatic hint of the real thing to your recipes, too.

All dried cooked rice is a Free Food at Slimming World, so you can eat it freely and still lose weight. And there are lots of tasty ways to switch up your risotto. Add skinless chicken or bacon (visible fat removed), or prawns. Or make veg the star with our leek risotto (left) – just five ingredients, plus Frylight Garlic Oil. It all starts with a spray!

❑ Frylight Garlic Oil is available from Iceland, Morrisons and Ocado, price from £2. For more information, visit [frylight.co.uk](http://frylight.co.uk).

*Slimming World, Free Food, Free, Syns and Syn are registered trademarks of Miles-Bramwell Executive Services Ltd trading as Slimming World.*



# ENJOY THE TASTE OF WHITE BREAD, WITHOUT THE GLUTEN.

HIGH IN FIBRE &  
120 CALORIES OR LESS\*



\*2 slices from a Wholesome White Loaf 120 kcals, 1 x Ciabatta Roll 116 kcals

FIND IN THE FREE FROM  
SECTION OF YOUR  
SUPERMARKET!

MADE WITH THE BEST OF US

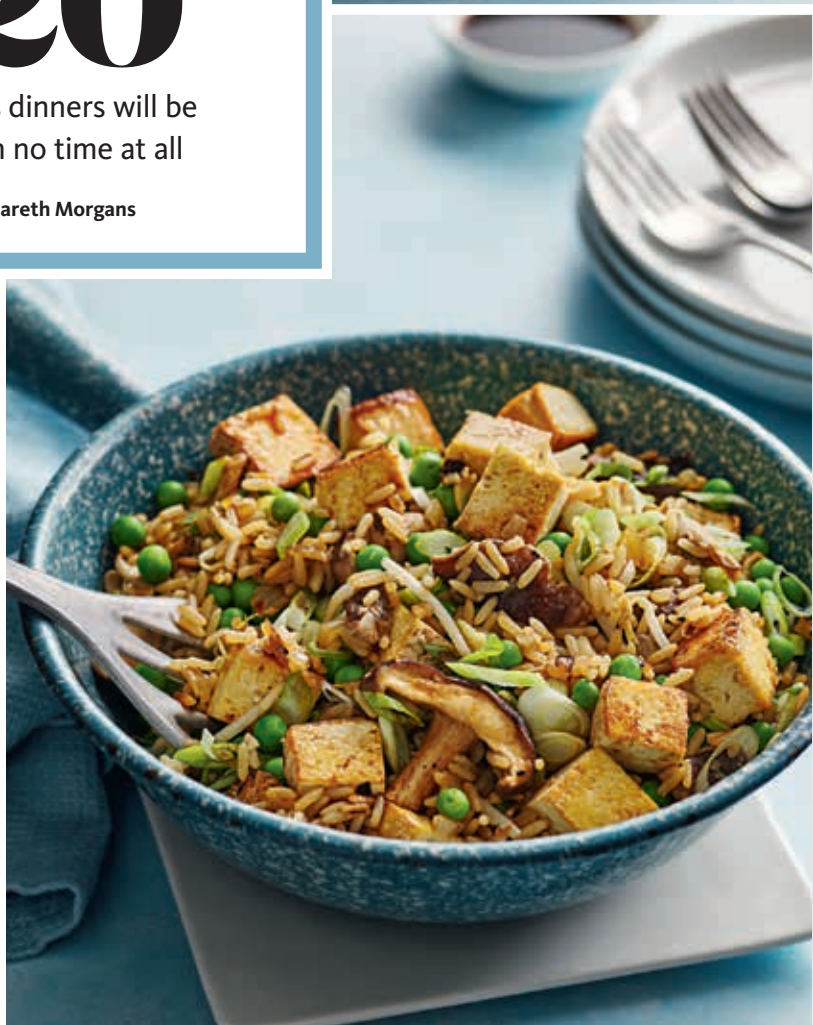




# *Ready in 20*

These delicious dinners will be  
on the table in no time at all

Photographs: Gareth Morgans





## Prawn, tomato & chilli pasta

### SUPERSIMPLE

Serves 4

Free

Ready in 20 minutes

400g dried fusilli pasta

Low-calorie cooking spray

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 unwaxed lemon

Fresh basil, leaves roughly torn, to serve

1 Cook the pasta for 2 minutes less than the pack instructions. Reserve 250ml of the cooking water, then drain.

2 Meanwhile, spray a large, non-stick frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium-high 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. Cook for 1-2 minutes until the prawns are piping hot.

3 Add the pasta and rocket to the tomatoes and prawns, with half the reserved pasta cooking water. Cook for a further 1-2 minutes, stirring frequently, or until the rocket is wilted and the sauce is light and glossy, adding more cooking water if needed. Season to taste with the lemon juice, salt and freshly ground black pepper.

4 Divide the pasta between 4 bowls. Top with the basil and lemon zest to serve.

*'A vibrant, filling bowlful with a touch of heat'*

## Teriyaki salmon with noodles & stir-fried greens

### SUPERSIMPLE

Serves 4

Syns per serving ½

Ready in 20 minutes

250g dried medium egg noodles

4 skinless and boneless salmon fillets

2 level tbsp teriyaki sauce

Low-calorie cooking spray

2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

½ red chilli, thinly sliced (optional)

400g thin-stemmed broccoli, larger stems halved lengthways

400g spring greens, shredded

4cm-piece fresh root ginger, peeled and grated

2 tbsp soy sauce

20g fresh coriander, leaves roughly chopped, reserving some to serve

Lime wedges, to serve

1 Preheat your oven to 180°C/fan 160°C/gas 4. Cook the noodles according to the pack instructions. Drain, rinse under warm water and set aside.

2 While the noodles are cooking, place the salmon on a baking tray lined with baking paper. Brush each salmon fillet all over with ½ level tbsp teriyaki sauce. Bake for 8-10 minutes, or until the sauce is caramelised on top and the salmon is cooked through.

3 Meanwhile, spray a large, non-stick frying pan or wok with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium-high heat. Add the garlic and chilli (if using) with a splash of water, and cook for 1 minute, or until fragrant. Add the broccoli and cook for 3 minutes until beginning to soften. Add the spring greens and cook for a further 1-2 minutes until starting to wilt.

4 Mix together the ginger and soy sauce with a splash of water. Add to the pan along with the noodles and coriander, and stir to coat.

5 Divide the noodle mixture between 4 bowls and top each with a salmon fillet. Scatter over the reserved coriander and serve with lime wedges for squeezing over.

## Tofu & mushroom fried rice

### SUPERSIMPLE

Serves 4

Free

Vegan

Ready in 20 minutes

250g dried long-grain rice

Low-calorie cooking spray

280g naturally smoked extra-firm tofu, cut into 2cm cubes

1 large onion, finely chopped

300g shiitake or chestnut mushrooms, thickly sliced

200g frozen peas

2 garlic cloves, crushed

5cm-piece fresh root ginger, peeled and roughly grated

2 tbsp light soy sauce

1 tbsp white rice vinegar

100g bean sprouts

4 spring onions, finely sliced, reserving some to serve

1 Boil the rice for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, spray a large, non-stick frying pan or wok with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium-high heat. Pat the tofu dry with kitchen paper and fry for 2 minutes on each side until golden. Transfer to a plate and set aside.

2 While the rice is cooking, spray the pan or wok with a little more low-calorie cooking spray and return to a medium-high heat. Stir-fry the onion and mushrooms for 5-6 minutes until tender and golden brown.

3 Drain the rice and spread over a baking tray to steam-dry for 3 minutes.

4 Return the tofu to the pan with the peas, garlic, ginger, and half the soy sauce. Cook for 1 minute, then add the rice, remaining soy sauce and vinegar. Stir-fry for 1-2 minutes until everything is piping hot. Stir through the bean sprouts and spring onions. Divide between 4 bowls and scatter over the reserved spring onions.

### COOK'S NOTE

If you have any uncooked tofu left over from the pack, wrap it in cling film and keep in the fridge for up to 2 days

## Lamb steak burgers with garlic & mint sauce

### SUPERSIMPLE

Serves 4

Syns per serving 6

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

Ready in 20 minutes

4 lean lamb steaks (about 100g each), visible fat removed

Low-calorie cooking spray

4 x 60g wholemeal rolls, halved

2 roasted red peppers in brine from a jar, halved

120g watercress, reserving some to serve

1 large cucumber, cut into batons, to serve

For the garlic & mint sauce:

200g fat-free natural Greek yogurt

Juice of 1 lemon

1 garlic clove, crushed

20g fresh mint, leaves finely chopped

1 Place a non-stick griddle or large frying pan over a high heat. Pat the steaks dry with kitchen paper and spray with low-calorie cooking spray. Season and cook for 3-4 minutes on each side for pink to well done. Transfer to a plate, cover with foil and set aside.

2 Keep the pan over a medium heat. Toast the rolls in the pan, cut-sides down, then set aside. To make the garlic and mint sauce, mix together all the ingredients, season and set aside.

3 Slice the steaks in half. Spread each roll base with some sauce, then add a pepper half, steak and some watercress. Add a little more sauce, and top with the roll lid. Serve with the reserved watercress and the cucumber batons for dipping in the remaining sauce.

### COOK'S NOTE

These burgers go beautifully with Slimming World chips. Turn to the vegetable roll recipe on page 46 for how to make them



# Win a spa break worth over £1,000

## ...at Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & Spa, Lancashire

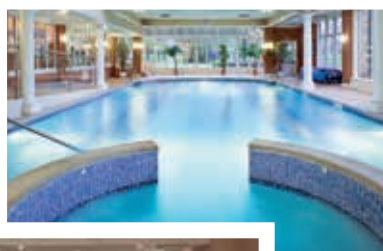
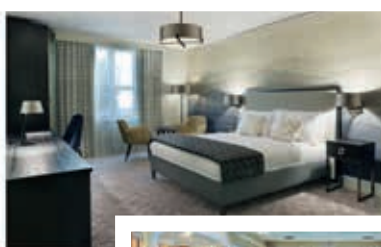
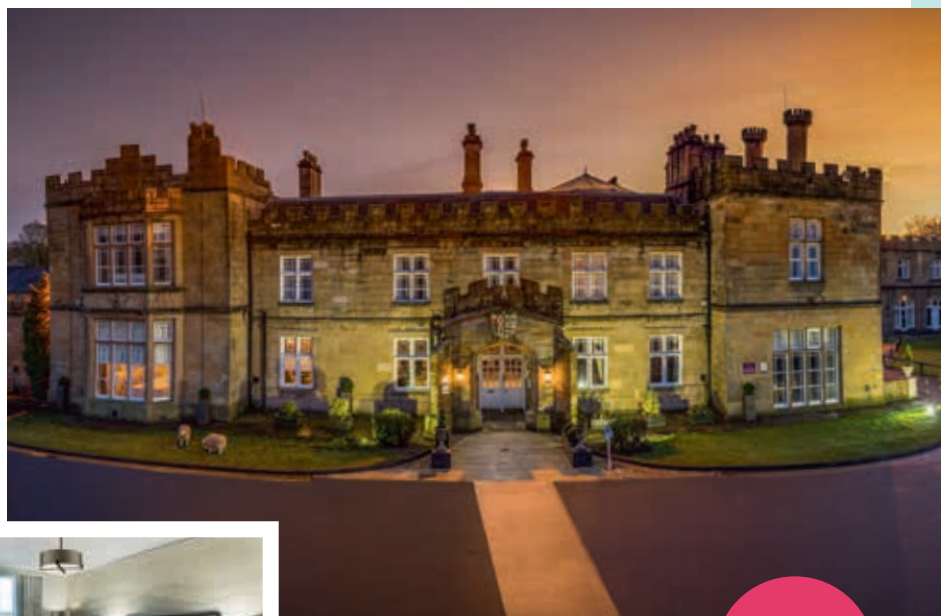
Unwind with a two-night break for four adults in a beautiful manor house set in 17 acres of landscaped gardens and parkland. The newly refurbished Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & Spa retains many of its 17th-century features, blending age-old comfort with modern facilities. You'll be welcomed with a bottle of Prosecco in each room on arrival, enjoy delicious breakfasts and three-course dinners, and have full use of the hotel's spa facilities, where you'll each receive a 50-minute pampering treatment. It's an escape to remember!

### YOUR PRIZE INCLUDES:

- Two nights' accommodation for four adults sharing two Privilege double or twin rooms
- Bottle of Prosecco in each room on arrival
- Continental or full English breakfast on both mornings and three-course dinner on both evenings
- 50-minute spa treatment each
- Full use of the hotel's spa and leisure facilities, including heated indoor pool, rock sauna and fitness centre

For more information about Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & Spa, visit: [all.accor.com/slimmingworld](http://all.accor.com/slimmingworld). The prize must be taken by 9 September 2022, is subject to availability and restrictions apply. The competition is open to UK and Republic of Ireland residents aged 18 or over; guests must be aged 18 or over. Winner and guests must comply with any social distancing guidelines in place at the time of taking the prize.

**No purchase necessary. For full terms and conditions, see p106.**



**READER  
OFFER!**

### Save 15 per cent on a stay at your choice of five spa hotels

Take a one-night break by 31 October 2021 at Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh; Mercure Cardiff Holland House; Mercure Dartford Brands Hatch; Mercure Sheffield St Paul's, or Mercure Warwickshire Walton Hall, and pay from £189 based on two people sharing a double or twin room. Offer includes a bottle of wine in room on arrival, breakfast, three-course dinner, a 50-minute spa treatment each, and full use of the hotel's spa and leisure facilities. Offer is subject to availability and restrictions apply. Guests must be aged 18 or over. To book, visit: [all.accor.com/slimmingworld](http://all.accor.com/slimmingworld), and use the promotion code SLIMWO.

**For full offer terms and conditions, see p106.**

### HOW TO ENTER

**For your chance to win, answer the following question:**

How many acres of gardens and parkland does the hotel stand in?

Name

Address

Postcode

Email

Daytime tel

Send your competition entry form to **Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & Spa Competition, Slimming World Magazine**, Clover Nook Road, Alferton, Derbyshire DE55 4SW, to arrive no later than 15 July 2021, or visit [slimmingworld.co.uk/magcomps](http://slimmingworld.co.uk/magcomps) to enter online by 15 July 2021.

**DATA PROTECTION:** By entering the competition, all entrants consent to the use of their personal data by Slimming World for the purpose of the administration of this competition, the winner's name and county will be published in the Nov/Dec 2021 issue of Slimming World Magazine.



# Mushroom pasanda

Vegetarian Julie Virgoe loves to cook! So when she asked us for a low Syn version of her favourite curry we had just the dish for her

Photographs: Maja Smend



Julie Virgoe, 51, is a holistic therapist. She lives in Dereham, Norfolk, with her wife, Julia, and has two grown-up children and a one-year-old granddaughter. Julie has lost 2st 3½lbs and is a target member of Daniel Fishlock's group in Toftwood, Norfolk

## A LITTLE EFFORT

Serves 4

Syns per serving 1

(curry only)

Ready in 45 minutes

Low-calorie cooking spray

1 onion, finely sliced

4 garlic cloves, crushed

3cm-piece fresh root ginger, peeled and grated

1 green chilli, finely chopped, deseeded if you like

2 tsp cumin seeds

1 tsp coriander seeds

½ tsp ground fenugreek

½ tsp ground turmeric

1 tsp dried garam masala (see Cook's note on p43)

½ tsp mild chilli powder (optional)

450g tomatoes, chopped

400ml plain unsweetened almond drink

1kg chestnut mushrooms, halved if large

Pinch of saffron threads, soaked in 1 tbsp boiling water

1 dried bay leaf

1 cinnamon stick

4 tbsp fat-free natural yogurt, to serve

20g fresh coriander leaves, to serve



**1** Spray a large, deep, non-stick frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium heat. Fry the onion for 5 minutes until softened. Add the garlic, ginger and green chilli with a splash of water, then fry for 3 minutes. Add the spices and a little water and fry for 2 minutes.



**2** Add the tomatoes along with the almond drink to the pan, and bring everything up to a simmer. Bubble gently for 8-10 minutes, or until the tomatoes have collapsed, stirring frequently.



**4** Spray a large, non-stick frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium-high heat. Once hot, add half the mushrooms and fry for 5-6 minutes, stirring occasionally, until they turn to a deep golden brown. Transfer to a plate and repeat with the remaining mushrooms.



**5** Return the sauce to the pan. Add the saffron, bay leaf and cinnamon, and bring to a simmer. Add the mushrooms and simmer for 8-10 minutes, stirring frequently. Season to taste. Divide between 4 bowls, discarding the bay leaf and cinnamon. Top with the yogurt and coriander, and serve with pilau rice (see recipe, left).

## Quick pilau rice

Put 250g dried basmati rice in a lidded, non-stick saucepan with 1 cinnamon stick, 5 bashed green cardamom pods, 4 cloves and a pinch of saffron threads. Pour in enough water to come a fingernail's height above the rice and place over a medium-high heat. Bring to a simmer, bubble for 1 minute and cover. Reduce the heat to as low as it will go and, without removing the lid, cook for 20 minutes, or until all the liquid is absorbed. Fluff up the rice with a fork for perfect results, discarding the cinnamon, cardamom pods and cloves to serve.



“

With this new recipe there are going to be a lot more curry nights at our house

”



**3** Transfer the tomato mixture to a large measuring jug, then whizz into a smooth sauce using a stick blender. Transferring the sauce to a jug rather than keeping it in the pan helps the blender to whizz it more smoothly. (You could also use a jug blender.) Set aside.

### Giving it a twist...

If you're not vegetarian, you could swap the mushrooms for 800g skinless chicken breasts or lean lamb leg steaks (visible fat removed), cut into bite-size pieces. You can fry them in low-calorie cooking spray for 1-2 minutes to brown, or add the chunks straight into the sauce once it's been blended, and cook for 8-10 minutes, as step 5. You could also use 500g raw peeled king prawns: simmer the blended sauce for 5 minutes before adding them (no need to fry them), then simmer for a further 3-4 minutes until pink and cooked through.

step by step



### MAKE IT VEGAN

To make the mushroom pasanda vegan, swap the yogurt for 4 tbsp plain unsweetened dairy-free soya yogurt with added calcium



NEW RECIPE

Same deliciousness  
with 30% less sugar\*  
Wild?



HAVE WHAT  
YOU CRAVE



FIBRE  
**One**  
90  
CALORIE

\*vs previous recipe



# foodnews

We've searched the shelves to bring you three pages of tasty inspiration



## Summer sausage & bean stew

Free



To serve 4, spray a flameproof casserole dish with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a low heat. Add 2 sliced red onions and cook for 8-10 minutes. Add 3 sliced celery sticks, 1 deseeded and diced red pepper and 4 crushed

garlic cloves. Cook gently for 3 minutes. Stir in 2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes, 2 tbsp white wine vinegar, 2 tsp dried oregano and 2 tsp smoked paprika. Rinse each tomato can with half a can of water and add to the dish. Simmer for 20 minutes, adding 250g frozen baby broad beans

and a 400g can of drained, rinsed cannellini beans for the last few minutes. Cook 12 frozen Slimming World Pork Sausages (from Iceland) according to the pack instructions. Halve and stir into the stew. Top with chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, season and serve.

SAUSAGE STEW PHOTOGRAPH: TOBY SCOTT  
ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

## SEASON'S PICKS

As we come into summer, you'll find an abundance of tasty UK-grown produce in the supermarkets now, and that includes lots of Speed Food veg! As well as helping the environment, fewer air miles also keeps many buys more purse-friendly. Take your pick from a rainbow of red, yellow or green peppers, aubergines, broccoli, chard, chillies, courgettes and globe artichokes – or switch up salads with curly or little gem lettuce, baby spinach and peppery rocket, cucumber, radishes and spring onions.

HOME GROWN



## Flavour saviour

Here's a Free and tasty alternative to using butter on your side veg... Braising root vegetables, such as carrots, in stock makes them meltingly soft. Make up stock with just-boiled water and a stock cube – then the trick is to cover and simmer your veg gently, in just enough stock so that it reduces as the veg softens. Stir often to make sure they don't catch, adding water if needed. Delish!



Del Monte Lemon and Lime Slices,  
Free £2 for 325g, Iceland.

## 5 FREE FOOD FINDS

Save your Syns for later – these buys are all Free!

Marmite  
Yeast Extract  
Dynamite  
Chilli, Free

£4 for 250g,  
Sainsbury's.



Aldi The  
Fishmonger Fish  
Pie Mix, Free  
£2.99 for 300g.

Asda Spanish  
Paella Rice, Free  
£1.40 for 500g.



Sainsbury's Italian Prosciutto  
Cotto with Herbs, Free £1.70  
for 4 slices.

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





**Tesco Vegetable Chow Mein Meal Pot**, 2½ Syns per 280g pot; £1.75.

## 5 FAB SYN STRETCHERS

Make your Syns go even further with these top supermarket picks...



**Asda Butcher's Selection Mexican Inspired Beef Strips**, 3 Syns per 350g pack; £3.85.

**Iceland Salt & Chilli Chicken Skewers**, ½ Syn per skewer; £3 for 340g.



**Tesco 2 Mediterranean Inspired Sea Bass Fillets**, 1 Syn per fillet; £4.50 for 301g.



**Aldi Plant Menu Moroccan Inspired Power Bowl**, 4 Syns per 380g pack; £2.29.

## Your top toasted creations!

**Slimming World members share the hot ways they enjoy their Healthy Extra 'b'**

● 'Café-style tuna melts are so simple to make! I fry pepper, onion and tomato, load onto toasted Healthy Extra bread with tuna and a Healthy Extra 'a' serving of cheese, and grill until golden.'

**Mary O'Donnell, County Tipperary**

● 'I soak my Healthy Extra bread in egg beaten with a little sweetener and ground cinnamon, then fry in low-calorie cooking spray to create French toast. It's great for breakfast with fat-free natural yogurt and berries, and keeps me full until lunch!'

**Becky Hawley, Staffordshire**

● 'For a twist on classic beans on toast, I mix chopped red onion, spinach and cherry tomatoes into the baked beans, and serve on two slices of Healthy Extra toast.'

**Keighley Birkett, Kent**



*Give Syn free drinks summer chic by pouring into pretty pastel glasses over lots of ice!*

**Pressed Glasses**, set of 4, £10, Wilko

## WHAT'S THE BUZZ...?

### Kippers

This old-school breakfast choice is making a bit of a comeback! As well as being Free, kippers (which are actually whole pickled or salted smoked herrings) are a source of protein, making them both slimming and filling – and they also count as an oily fish, recommended weekly for heart health. Put fresh kippers in a jug and add boiling water, cover, leave for 6 minutes, then pat dry with kitchen paper. Or grill for a stronger flavour, and enjoy with poached or scrambled eggs and spinach for an easy, retro-style breakfast or supper.

## HEALTHY EXTRAS

**Just a few more of the latest 'a' and 'b' options added to our growing list**

**M&S Food Blueberry Wheats**, 45g is a Healthy Extra 'b'; £2 for 500g, Marks & Spencer and Ocado.



**Asda Soft Dried Apricots**, 60g is a Healthy Extra 'b'; £1 for 200g.



**Morrisons Austrian Smoked Cheese**, 40g is a Healthy Extra 'a'; £1.05 for 125g.



TOAST PHOTOGRAPH: STUART OVENDEN



AVAILABLE AT ALL  
MAJOR SUPERMARKETS!



FOR THAT LITTLE

*extra!*

From crisping roasted veggies to grilling delicate fish, Frylight can save you 100 calories compared to poured oil\*.

Adding a subtle touch of flavour, our Extra Virgin Olive Oil cooking spray is an ideal complement to Mediterranean-style dishes too!

**The lighter way to fry, roast, grill and bake.**



\*20 sprays of Frylight = 20 kcals. 1 tablespoon of poured oil by comparison = 120kcals.





# TASTY, MEAT-FREE & READY IN MINUTES

SOURCE OF  
PROTEIN

LOW IN  
SATURATED  
FAT



LESS THAN  
**350**  
CALORIES

DISCOVER THE RANGE IN  
THE FOOD CUPBOARD AISLE



ENJOY Quorn  
**ONE BITE**  
AT A TIME

SEE THE FULL RANGE AT [QUORN.CO.UK](http://QUORN.CO.UK)





## Grown-up thirst quenchers

Who doesn't love sitting in the sunshine sipping something deliciously chilled? As the weather warms up, choosing Free and low Syn options means you can enjoy a refreshing al fresco drink and still stay on track. These sophisticated picks are just some of the increasingly exciting slimming-friendly options appearing on the shelves. Or mix things up with a Syn free mocktail: muddle together fresh mint leaves, 1 level tsp sweetener and some crushed ice, add a splash of no-added-sugar lime cordial, top up with soda water, and voila! A simple, non-alcoholic mojito.

**Sainsbury's Raspberry, Pomegranate & White Tea,**  
Free £1.25 for 750ml.  
Vegan



**Nexba Sugar Free Coconut & Mango Flavoured Sparkling Water,** Free  
£1.25 for 1 litre, Sainsbury's.  
Vegan

**M&S Food Mexican Lime Cordial No Added Sugar,**  
Free 85p for 1 litre. V



**S. Pellegrino Essenza Tangerine & Strawberry,**  
Free £4 for 6 x 330ml cans, Tesco. V



**Shloer Light White Grape,**  
2½ Syns per 250ml; £2.25 for 750ml, Morrisons, Ocado and Tesco. V

## Advert Syn values

Find the Syn values of all advertised products here

- **Bannisters**, 8 Baked Jacket Potatoes, ½ Syn per potato (without butter); 6 Little Jacket Potatoes, ½ Syn per potato (without butter); 4 Baked Jacket Potatoes, 1 Syn per potato (without butter).
- **Fibre One**, Chocolate Fudge Brownies, 4 Syns per bar.
- **Filippo Berio**, Extra Virgin Olive Oil Spray and Mild & Light Olive Oil Spray, both ½ Syn per 7 sprays.
- **Finn Crisp**, Original Sourdough Rye Thins, 6 thins count as a Healthy Extra 'b' or 6 Syns.
- **Frylight**, Olive Oil, low-calorie cooking spray, Free.

- **Hartley's**, 10 Cal Strawberry Flavour Jelly, ½ Syn per 175g pot.
- **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.
- **Hellmann's**, Fat Free Original Vinaigrette, Free; Lighter than Light Mayonnaise, ½ Syn per level tbsp.
- **Hi-fi**, Choc Orange, 2 bars count as a Healthy Extra 'b' or 3 Syns per bar, available to Slimming World members via our online shop or from your Consultant; also available in Iceland stores for a limited period.

- **Kellogg's**, Rice Krispies Squares Birthday Cake Thins, Vanilla, 4 Syns per 19.5g bar.
- **Kingsmill**, No Crusts Wholemeal bread, 3 slices count as a Healthy Extra 'b' or 6 Syns.
- **Müllerlight Skyr**, Salted Caramel, ½ Syn per 150g pot.
- **New York Bakery Co.**, Soft Seeded Bagel Thins, 1 bagel thin counts as a Healthy Extra 'b' or 6 Syns.
- **Pink 'n' Whites**, 2½ Syns per wafer.
- **Primula**, Light Cheese, 75g counts as a Healthy Extra 'a' or 6 Syns.
- **Promise Gluten Free**, Multi Seeded Rolls, 1 roll counts as a Healthy Extra 'b' or 4½ Syns; Soft White Rolls, 1 roll counts as a Healthy Extra 'b' or 4½ Syns.
- **Quorn**, Smoky Fajita Strips and Spicy Tikka Strips, both Free. Classic Chilli, 2 Syns per

- 225g pouch; Spiced Chickpea & Lentil Bowl, 2 Syns per 300g bowl; Chilli Bean Bowl, 2½ Syns per 300g bowl.
- **Schär Gluten Free**, Ciabatta Rolls, 1 roll counts as a Healthy Extra 'b' or 5½ Syns; Wholesome White Loaf, 2 slices count as a Healthy Extra 'b' or 6 Syns.
- **Slimming World**, Hunter's Chicken and Teriyaki Salmon, both Free, from Iceland.
- **Soreen Lunchbox Loaves**, Apple, Original Malt and Strawberry, 4½ Syns; Banana, 5 Syns.
- **Sweet Freedom**, Caramel Syrup, ½ Syn per level tsp.

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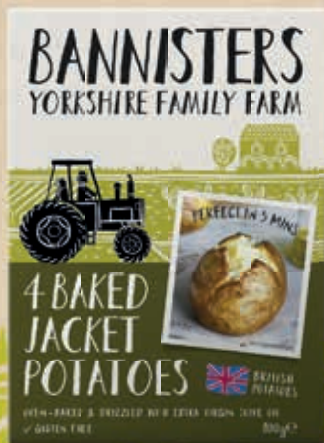
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# Weeknight winners

Every day can feel special with these simple-yet-exciting meals from the new *Slimming World's Fast & Free* cookbook – and there's not a Syn in sight

Photographs: Gareth Morgans and Becci Hutchings



Cauliflower curry,  
recipe p74





## Cauliflower curry

**EVERYDAY EASY**

Serves 4

Free

SP Vegan

Ready in 25 minutes

Low-calorie cooking spray

2 small heads of cauliflower, broken into medium-size florets (you should get about 1kg florets)

1 small onion, roughly chopped

6 garlic cloves, peeled

5cm-piece fresh root ginger, peeled and roughly chopped

1 red chilli, deseeded

2 tsp ground cumin

2 tsp ground coriander

½ tsp ground turmeric

½ tsp cayenne pepper

400g can chopped tomatoes

2 roasted red peppers in brine from a jar, drained and chopped

1 tbsp juice from an unwaxed lemon, plus wedges to serve

Fresh mint leaves, shredded, to serve

**1** Spray a wide, lidded, non-stick saucepan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium-high heat. When hot, add the cauliflower and cook for 3-4 minutes, or until lightly browned, turning frequently. Tip into a bowl and set aside.

**2** Meanwhile, put the onion, garlic, ginger and chilli in a small food processor. Add 4 tbsp water and blend into a smooth paste.

**3** Reduce the heat under the saucepan to medium-low, add the onion paste and stir-fry for 3 minutes. Stir in the cumin, coriander, turmeric, cayenne pepper, tomatoes and a pinch of salt. Bring to a simmer. Return the cauliflower to the pan, add 3 tbsp water and cover. Simmer for 10 minutes, or until the cauliflower is tender, stirring occasionally.

**4** Add the peppers and lemon juice. Scatter over the mint and serve with lemon wedges for squeezing over.

## Half-hour roast chicken dinner

**SUPER SIMPLE**

Serves 2

Free

Ready in 30 minutes

2 large sprigs of fresh thyme

2 skinless and boneless chicken breasts, each scored with a few deep cuts

4 back bacon medallions, visible fat removed

2 frozen Slimming World Pork Sausages (from Iceland), thawed slightly and halved

200g Chantenay or baby carrots, halved or quartered lengthways if large

Low-calorie cooking spray

560g can new potatoes, drained, and halved if large

150g broccoli florets, halved if large

125g frozen peas

1 chicken stock pot

Fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped, to serve

**1** Preheat your oven to 220°C/fan 200°C/gas 7. Put the thyme in a large, non-stick roasting tin. Place the chicken on top. Wrap a bacon medallion around each sausage half and add to the tin along with the carrots. Spray with low-calorie cooking spray and roast for 5 minutes.

**2** Add the potatoes and broccoli, and roast for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, cover the peas with boiling water and leave to stand for 5 minutes. Drain, add the peas to the tin and cook everything for a further 10 minutes, or until cooked through.

**3** Put the stock pot and 200ml boiling water in a jug, and whisk to make a quick gravy. Discard the thyme and pour the gravy over everything. Scatter over the parsley and serve.



A one-pan roast that's deliciously filling and saves on the washing-up, too!





## Chow kow steak

**EVERYDAY EASY**

Serves 4

Free

SP

Ready in 15 minutes

Low-calorie cooking spray

4 large pak choi, stalks sliced off and leaves separated

3 garlic cloves, finely chopped

2.5cm-piece fresh root ginger, peeled and grated

2 tsp vegetable bouillon powder

750g lean sirloin steak, visible fat removed, cut into cubes

1 red chilli, sliced, to serve (optional)

**For the sauce:**

1 roasted red pepper in brine from a jar, drained

1 tsp tomato purée

1 tsp Worcestershire sauce

2 tsp dark soy sauce or tamari

1 tbsp oyster sauce

**1** To make the sauce, put all the sauce ingredients and 5 tbsp cold water in a small food processor. Blitz into a smooth sauce, then set aside.

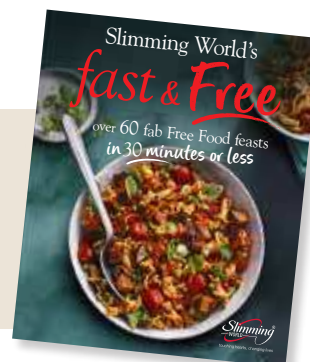
**2** Spray a non-stick wok or large frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium-high heat. Add the pak choi stalks, garlic, ginger and bouillon powder, and stir-fry for 3 minutes. Add the pak choi leaves and cook for 1 minute, or until just tender. Tip into a shallow serving dish and cover to keep warm. Wipe out the pan with kitchen paper.

**3** Spray the pan with a little more low-calorie cooking spray. Add the steak and stir-fry for 4 minutes, or until cooked through, then transfer to a bowl.

**4** Add the sauce to the pan and bring to a rapid simmer. Add the steak and cook until piping hot, tossing to coat well in the sauce. Spoon the steak and sauce onto the pak choi, then scatter over the chilli (if using). If you're not having an SP day, you could serve this dish with cooked dried rice.

### IF YOU LIKE THESE RECIPES...

...you'll love *Slimming World's Fast & Free* cookbook. Every dish from this brand-new collection is Free and on the table in 30 minutes or under – perfect when you want a flavour-packed Food Optimising meal and don't have a lot of time to spare. You'll receive your free copy when you buy a 12-week Countdown course, Countdown extension or 12-week gift voucher from 30 May to 19 June 2021. Or it's on sale in Slimming World groups from 20 June, price £4.95/€7.95.





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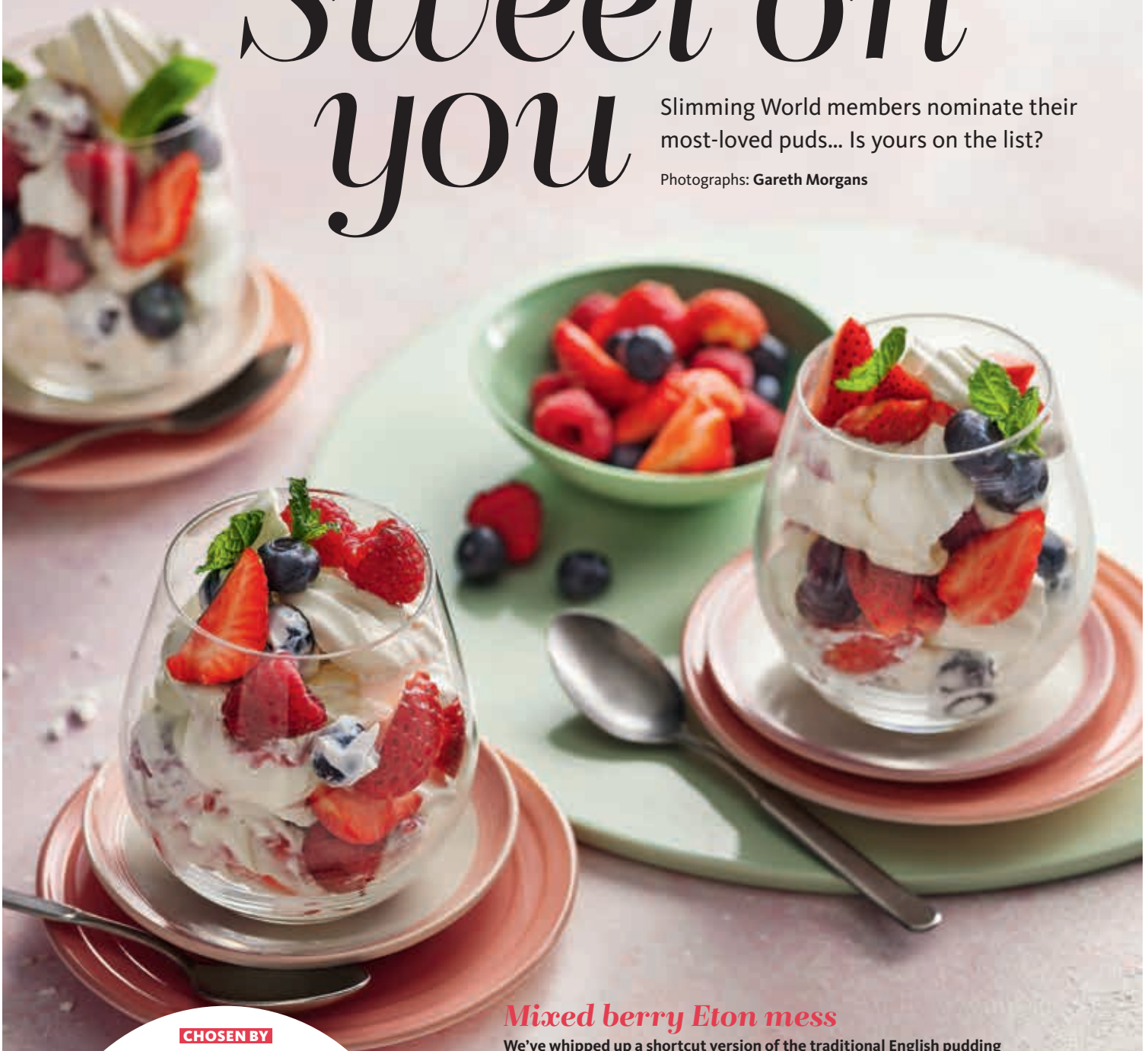
**BRITISH  
ATHLETICS**



# Sweet on you

Slimming World members nominate their most-loved puds... Is yours on the list?

Photographs: Gareth Morgans



## CHOSEN BY

**Laurence Kimber, 35,  
from Hunstanton, Norfolk**



Laurence teaches people to operate tower cranes, and has lost 2st 8lbs at Emma Manning's Slimming World group in Snettisham, Norfolk

**'My little boy  
George and I both love  
these cheeky puds – and  
they're just so easy  
to make!'**

## Mixed berry Eton mess

We've whipped up a shortcut version of the traditional English pudding

### SUPER SIMPLE

Serves 4

Syns per serving 2½



Ready in 10 minutes

4 plain meringue nests  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
1-2 level tbsp sweetener granules  
500g fat-free natural Greek yogurt  
800g mix of fresh blueberries,  
raspberries, and sliced strawberries  
5g fresh mint leaves, to decorate

**1** Crumble the meringue nests into a bowl, keeping some large

chunks. In a separate bowl, mix together the vanilla extract, sweetener and yogurt. 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.

### COOK'S NOTE

This pudding is best eaten straight away so that the meringue keeps its delicious crunch – though it will keep in the fridge for up to 1 day



## Chocolate & vanilla cheesecake

A five-star dessert: crunchy, creamy, chocolatey and lightened up

### A LITTLE EFFORT

**Serves 8**

**Syns per serving 5**

**Ready in 25 minutes, plus chilling**

**8 reduced-fat digestive biscuits, finely crushed in a small bowl with the back of a wooden spoon**

**25g low-fat spread, melted**

**5 sheets leaf gelatine**

**150g extra-light plain soft cheese**

**150g plain quark**

**3 x 160g pots fat-free no-added-sugar vanilla yogurt**

**3 level tbsp sweetener granules**

**5g plain dark chocolate (70% cocoa)**

**1** Line the base of an 18cm-diameter, springform, non-stick tin with baking paper. Stir together the biscuits and spread until well combined. Spoon into the tin and, using the back of the spoon, press down to cover the base evenly. Chill for 30 minutes.

**2** Meanwhile, soak the gelatine in a bowl of cold water for 5 minutes, or until softened. Put the cheese, quark, yogurt and sweetener in a large mixing bowl, and whisk until smooth. Remove the gelatine, squeeze out any excess water and put the gelatine in a small bowl. Pour over 90ml just-boiled water and stir until dissolved.

**3** Working quickly, pour the gelatine into the cheese mixture and whisk until well combined. Pour over the biscuit base and chill for at least 4-6 hours, or overnight. The filling should be set, but with a slight wobble.

**4** When ready to serve, run a warm palette knife around the edge of the

cheesecake. Transfer from the tin to a serving plate, discarding the baking paper. Melt the chocolate in a very small, heatproof bowl over a pan of gently simmering water, stirring occasionally (or microwave on medium for 30 seconds, stir and repeat until melted). Use the handle of a teaspoon to evenly drizzle the chocolate over the cheesecake, then cut into 8 equal slices to serve.

### CHOSEN BY

**Lisa Casey, 45,  
from Maesteg, Bridgend  
County Borough**



Lisa is an SCPHN health visitor, and has lost 1st 12½lbs at Lorraine Teesdale's Slimming World group in Maesteg

**'This low Syn  
cheesecake is so  
good - my twin sister  
always asks me to  
make one for her  
family!'**





## Carrot mug cake

Spoon through sweet zesty yogurt to reach the glorious sponge beneath

### EVERYDAY EASY

Serves 1

Syns per serving 4½



Ready in 10 minutes

25g self-raising flour

¼ tsp ground mixed spice

1 medium egg, separated

25g fat-free natural Greek yogurt

½ level tbsp sweetener granules

50g carrot, coarsely grated

Zest of ¼ orange, plus extra to decorate

¼ tsp vanilla extract

Pinch of ground cinnamon, to decorate

### For the topping:

40g fat-free natural Greek yogurt

1 level tsp sweetener granules

**1** Mix the flour, mixed spice and a pinch of salt in a small bowl. Using a balloon whisk, beat the egg white in a clean, glass bowl until it forms stiff peaks, then set aside.

**2** Put the yogurt, sweetener, carrot, orange zest, vanilla extract and egg yolk in a mixing bowl, and mix until well combined. Stir in the flour mixture, then carefully fold in the egg white using a metal spoon.

**3** Scrape the mixture into a microwave-safe mug (one that's around 250ml is ideal – try to avoid anything wide and shallow) and cook on high in a 900W microwave for 2 minutes (see *Cook's note*). Leave to cool in the mug until just warm – it will sink a little as it cools.

**4** For the topping, mix the yogurt and sweetener. Spoon over the just-warm cake, and top with the extra orange zest and cinnamon to serve.

### CHOSEN BY

**Jenny Ray, 49, from Fareham, Hampshire**



Jenny is an operations director, and has lost 3st ½lb at Colette May-Matthews' Slimming World group in Titchfield, Hampshire

**'Experimenting with different mug cake flavours is so much fun. This one really hits the sweet spot!'**

### COOK'S NOTE

Microwaves and mug sizes vary, so the cake might take a little more time than stated if you have a lower wattage oven. For a 700W microwave, cook for 2 minutes 34 seconds; for 800W, cook for 2 minutes 15 seconds. If you're not sure of your microwave's wattage and it looks underdone, cook for a further 30 seconds and check again – the cake should be risen and springy to the touch



CHOSEN BY

**Donna Turner, 43, from  
Chesterfield, Derbyshire**



Donna recruits residential care providers, and has lost 3st at Franca Yeomans' Slimming World group in Whittington Moor, Chesterfield

**'It's the kind of  
pud you can't wait to dive  
into! You can swap the  
frozen fruit for any  
mix of fresh'**

## Black forest sundaes

Jelly and ice cream in the classic  
gateau flavours? Yes please!

**SUPER SIMPLE**

Serves 4

Syns per serving 4

Ready in 10 minutes,  
plus cooling and setting

2 x 11.5g sachets blackcurrant  
sugar-free jelly crystals

500g frozen black forest  
fruits, defrosted

150g lower-calorie chocolate ice cream

4 level tbsp squirty cream

1 level tsp rainbow sprinkles,  
to decorate

4 fresh cherries, to decorate

**1** Make up the jelly according to the pack instructions. Once set, divide the jelly between 4 dessert glasses, followed by a layer of black forest fruits.

**2** Top each with a quarter of the ice cream and 1 level tbsp squirty cream. Divide over the sprinkles and serve with a cherry on top!



# ENJOY

*a little of what*

# YOU FANCY



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# Mike's sailing into a new future

When Reverend Mike Meachin hung up his Royal Navy clerical shirt for the last time, he'd lost two inches off his collar size and shed 4½st – and he's feeling fitter than ever as he charts a course for even more adventures

Scrolling through pictures on my phone, I suddenly had a moment when it hit me just how different I looked in reality compared to the image in my mind's eye. 'Look at this one,' I said to my wife Clare, turning the screen to her. There I was in the United States, wearing a yellow size-XXL shirt, looking so, so much bigger than I'd imagined. Clare nodded and smiled, saying: 'I think the time's come for both of us to do something about this, hasn't it?'

It wasn't so much the picture itself that troubled me, more the story behind it: we'd been to America to scatter the ashes of my much-loved brother-in-law, who had died aged just 55, and that had made me stop and take stock. I knew my size was beginning to take a toll on my health and back then, in November 2018, with my 60th birthday just a few years off, it felt like now or never. I was tipping the scales at 20st 3lbs, and had been telling myself for years that, because I was fit and strong, my increasing waistline didn't matter all that much.

In 35 years spent at sea as a Royal Navy chaplain, I'd been part of the crew on 30 ships and travelled the world. My job – to bring worship, pastoral care and prayer to crew and their families of all faiths – wasn't as physically rigorous as many of the roles on board, but I was still required to pass the same annual >

## Meet Mike

**Reverend Mike Meachin, 59, lives in Barnham, West Sussex, with his wife, Clare, and they have two grown-up children, Rebekah and Peter**

**Height: 6ft 1in**

**Starting weight: 20st 3lbs**

**Weight now: 15st 9½lbs**

**WEIGHT LOST:  
4st 7½lbs**

*Mike is a member of Kirsty Cheyne's Slimming World group in Yapton, West Sussex*





**THEN** My size was beginning to take a toll on my health

**NOW** The aches and pains have gone and I've a spring in my step





**THEN** I told myself my increasing waistline didn't matter

**NOW** I'll be turning 60 this July in the best shape of my life





fitness test as everyone else – either a one-and-a-half mile run, or a multistage fitness test, doing sets of 25-metre shuttle runs in a specific time, depending on whether you were working on board ship or not.

I passed every year...but it was getting harder, and I put that down to my weight. By now, a niggling knee injury was making running almost impossible. Getting around the ship was beginning to prove difficult as well. My daily journey from my cabin to the bridge of HMS Queen Elizabeth, the fleet flagship of the Royal Navy, involved climbing 130 steep steel steps. Then I had to get to the ship's chapel – and that meant 56 steps up and 30 down. And yes, I counted every one! In that sense it was a relief when I took up my last posting in 2016, an onshore role at HMS Collingwood, Hampshire. I could have coasted into retirement at that point – then that family tragedy made me very aware of my own mortality. It also came at the same time as a severe health scare for a friend who had struggled with his weight, which again felt like a warning sign.

When I looked back I could honestly say there had only been four years in my adult life when I'd been slim, and that was when Clare and I ran a leprosy centre in Nigeria in the early 90s. It wasn't even that we'd decided to lose weight – we just didn't have enough food! So my only weight loss experience had been pretty extreme. Still, when Clare suggested the much less extreme option of joining Slimming World, I had my doubts. 'It's going to be like that comedy sketch, isn't it?' I said. 'It will be all women and a bossy type telling us off every week.' She rolled her eyes in response to this, quite rightly. 'Let's just try it and see, shall we?' she said, diplomatically.

### Learning the ropes

In November 2018, weighing 20st 3lbs, I reluctantly walked into our local Slimming World group. I can handle being the only man, I told myself. All the same, I was relieved to discover there were a few other men there. And our Consultant Kirsty couldn't have been less like the finger-wagging character I'd imagined. From the moment I met her I felt inspired. She made it clear from the start that this was a supportive environment where everyone looked out for each other – not unlike the Navy, I thought.

Something that really impressed me as the weeks went by was that Kirsty made it clear she was a Slimming World member herself. While she was motivating and guiding us into healthier ways of eating, she was also opening up about her own journey and was happy to share her experiences with us if she'd hit a bump in the road. I found that honesty very refreshing, and it made me realise I shouldn't be hard on myself if I didn't get a loss every week.

Food Optimising very quickly became part of everyday life in our household. Clare and I, and our daughter Rebekah, who's a teacher and lives at home with us, would all eat the same dinners. I'd always enjoyed cooking, so planning menus and food

preparation wasn't new to me. In the past, though, I'd made creamy curries with naan breads, or lasagne or spaghetti bolognese using lots of oil and cheese. The first and simplest trick I got from group was how to make a pasta sauce from roasted butternut squash.

It tasted rich and creamy, and was a fantastic twist on a family favourite. I also quickly discovered a new love of roasted veg in all its forms.

Another way my attitude to food started to change was around what it meant to feel full. Over the years in the Navy – especially when I'd been at sea – I ate three large meals every day. There was always a cooked breakfast, followed by a hearty lunch and a three-course dinner, usually rounded off with something like a sponge pudding. In between, I'd have meetings and chats with officers and crew that often involved cups of tea, cake and biscuits. A lot of the

time I felt so full I couldn't physically eat any more.

In group one week, Kirsty explained how truly appreciating food helped you to realise when your hunger had been satisfied, so you didn't end up eating so much you felt uncomfortable. That really struck a chord with me, and I tried to pay attention to when I felt comfortably full. It was a bit of a process – at first, I think perhaps I wasn't eating enough.

I started waking up in the night and feeling peckish, which had me contemplating a midnight feast. Then I found that a glass of warm skimmed milk, from my Health Extras, before bed helped me sleep through the night. And though I soon got the balance right with my meals, eating until I felt properly satisfied, I kept including the glass of milk as my pre-bedtime drink!

The first 2st came off within a few months, then my losses each week started to get smaller. By now it was early 2019 and I already felt different. The knee problem that had dogged me for years had disappeared as I'd lightened the burden on my joints, and there was a literal spring in my step! I started going running again and got out on my bike. I'd cycle for miles, inspired by all I'd heard in group about the benefits of the Body Magic programme in boosting weight loss and also helping to keep the weight off.

Bit by bit my weight continued to go down, and I hit some memorable milestones along the way. The first garment that I noticed getting baggy was my Royal Navy clerical shirt, which for as long as I could remember had been an 18½-inch collar. To order >

*As I learnt how  
to lighten up  
our favourite  
meals, bit by bit  
my weight fell*

### MIKE WEARS

p85: Shirt, Jack & Jones. Shorts and sunglasses, both Next. Deck shoes, Silver Street London. Watch, Mike's own

Opposite: T-shirt, Next. Chinos and deck shoes, both Burton Menswear London. Watch, as before

p88: Jacket, Farah. T-shirt, River Island. Jumper, Marks & Spencer. Chinos, Next. Trainers, French Connection

Between us, Clare and I have lost 7st thanks to all of the support we received from our group and Consultant, Kirsty. Now, as we head into the next chapter of our lives, we'll be doing so feeling our absolute best







## Losing weight has helped me inspire others in a new way



a smaller size and feel good wearing it was a real boost, and brought a broad smile to my face. People started noticing a difference in me at work, and one day I was waiting in the car park for a colleague I hadn't seen in months. As he approached, I opened my mouth to greet him...only for him to walk straight by! 'I think you're looking for me,' I called out. The look of surprise on his face as he realised it really was me will always make me chuckle.

In fact, two other male colleagues were so impressed with my weight loss that they also joined Slimming World and have been doing very well on their own journeys. Part of my job has always been to support and inspire others, so it was nice to be able to do that in a totally new way.

### Taking a different tack

In March last year when the country went into lockdown, I decided to take positive action to make sure I wasn't thrown off course by the sudden change. As well as sticking to Food Optimising, I decided to ramp up my activity by weight training at home in our garage, and I also bought a turbo trainer so that I could do spinning by turning my bike into a stationary one. Just as the first lockdown was easing last summer, I hit my target. As the group smiled and clapped in our virtual meeting, I wished I could've been there in person to give a warm thank you to everyone,



It's easier moving about on a boat now I'm slimmer and fitter



## Mike's day on a plate

### THEN

- **Breakfast** Full English with toast and coffee
- **Lunch** Spaghetti bolognese or lasagne made with lots of oil
- **Dinner** Three-course meal such as pâté with toast, followed by a chicken roast dinner and sponge pudding with custard
- **Snacks and drinks** Biscuits and coffee, cake and tea, beer, wine and gin and tonic at weekends

### NOW

- **Breakfast** Poached eggs with wholemeal toast, or porridge
- **Lunch** Fresh salad with skinless chicken, eggs or leftover lean meat from the weekend – sometimes with cheese, using one of my Healthy Extra choices
- **Dinner** Poached salmon and prawns on couscous mixed with roasted veg, and a dessert of defrosted frozen fruits mixed with fat-free natural yogurt
- **Snacks and drinks** Fruit, Hi-fi bar, black tea and coffee, the occasional gin and diet tonic, and a nightly glass of warm milk before bed

especially Kirsty – the way she kept us positive and motivated through lockdown was phenomenal. Soon after hitting target, I took six bags of clothes down to the charity shop and bought myself the kind of new wardrobe I could never have dreamt of wearing before. I modelled a pair of skinny chinos, which fitted amazingly well, in front of Rebekah, and got a good-natured 'Well look at you, Mr Slim!' back. She may have been teasing me, but I know how relieved she is deep down to see her mum, who has lost 2½st, and I heading into our later years both in better shape.

This April, I hung up my Royal Navy clerical shirt (now size 16½ins!) for the last time. It was a wrench after 35 years, but I'm looking forward to my semi-retirement, feeling the fittest I've ever been in my life. I'll be joining the pastoral team at Queen Alexandra Hospital in Portsmouth part-time, but there will still be loads of opportunity to explore my favourite pastimes, which include yachting and scuba diving. It's much easier moving around on a boat, and in the water, now that I'm slimmer and fitter. Clare and I are planning a sailing holiday in Greece this summer if travel restrictions allow, and we can't wait to enjoy that time together feeling our absolute best. Although my working life at sea may be over, I'm definitely not ready to sail into the sunset just yet. I have a lot of life to live and thanks to Slimming World, retirement feels like the start of a new adventure! ●



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# Breakfast club

When it comes to weight loss, how important is the first meal of the day and what's the best thing to eat? Slimming World's nutrition and health policy manager Carolyn Pallister serves up some answers...

Illustrations: James Gibbs

## Should I eat breakfast?

Everybody's different, and there are no 'shoulds' with Food Optimising. The reason Food Optimising is so flexible is to make sure it's enjoyable and fits around your life, so you can make healthy changes that last. So, if you don't wake up hungry, or you're rushed in the morning, you don't have to have breakfast – you might prefer to take something with you for later, especially if you'll get hungry before lunch. The only thing you 'should' do is whatever works for you!

## Does skipping it cause you to gain weight?

It's a myth that you need breakfast to start your metabolism, or that the time of day you eat determines how much fat your body stores. What's interesting, though, is that research\* shows that the majority of slimmers who have lost weight and kept it off regularly eat breakfast. Enjoying a filling meal at the start of the day can keep hunger at bay, so if you notice yourself drawn to high Syn snacks mid-morning, planning in breakfast might just be a game changer.

# 78%

That's how many people who have successfully maintained their weight loss said they had breakfast every day\*.



## What if I work shifts?

Irregular wake-up times and a busy schedule can make it difficult to sit down to breakfast. Something that transports well, such as a home-made BLT using a Healthy Extra wholemeal roll and bacon with the visible fat removed, means when you're ready to eat there's a tasty meal to hand. Overnight oats are great, too – the night before, layer a Healthy Extra portion of oats with fat-free natural yogurt and fresh fruit, then take to work and stir before eating. Or you'll find recipes for egg muffins on the members' website, LifelineOnline, which you can grab straight from the fridge.



## What makes a great brekkie?

To stay full until lunch and stave off snacking, meals based around Free Foods containing protein or fibre will have the maximum possible filling power. These are marked with a P or F in your Food Optimising book, and your Healthy Extra 'b' choices are a source of fibre, too.

## Fill-you-up ideas

### ☒ Fry-up

A cooked breakfast of bacon rashers (visible fat removed), eggs, mushrooms, tomato and cubed cooked potato all fried in low-calorie cooking spray, with baked beans.

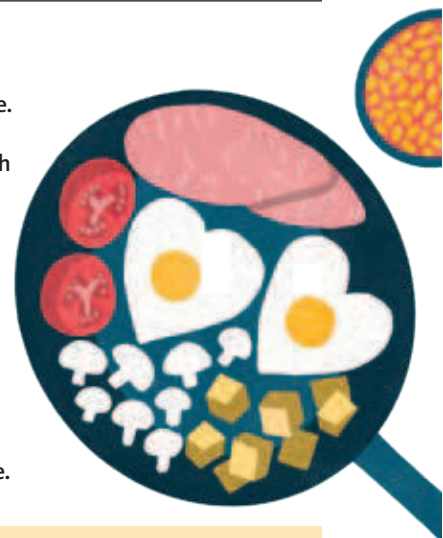
### ☒ Porridge

It's a classic for a reason! Oats (a Healthy Extra 'b') provide slow-release energy, and you can make porridge with water, or milk or a non-dairy alternative from your

Healthy Extra 'a' allowance. Top with fresh berries, or chopped apple and a pinch of ground cinnamon.

### ☒ Eggs on toast

Scrambled eggs with spinach, mushrooms and tomato are a perfect protein partner to your Healthy Extra 'b' wholemeal toast. Or to save your Healthy Extra, try a veg-packed omelette.



» You'll also find more filling breakfast ideas on page 27



# Discover the magic of movement – *at any age!*

Feel-good  
buzz!

Whether you're in your 20s or your 70s, or beyond, you can enjoy the health-boosting, weight loss loving benefits of activity in a way that works for you and your lifestyle, as these six Slimming World members have found

Looking and feeling younger, gaining more energy and confidence, improved posture – the benefits of regular activity are amazing, and that's on top of supporting your weight loss!

Yet for many of us, exercise can feel like something other people do. And if you didn't enjoy sports at school, you might believe you're simply not cut out to be an active person.

The truth is, it's never too late to get moving more, and it doesn't have to be anything like the cross-country runs or freezing cold netball courts of your youth!

'We're all different, and the right activity for you is something you enjoy and that fits easily into your day,' says Dr Jacquie Lavin, Slimming World's head of research and scientific affairs. 'You want being active to become so second nature that it feels odd when you don't do it, and you're restless to get moving!'

Anything more than you're doing right now counts as success. And it's also the first step on Slimming World's Body Magic programme, which helps you build up gradually towards the government recommendation of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity a week. To help inspire you, we've spoken to six Slimming World members of all ages, who never expected to love being active and are now reaping the rewards...

## 20s

### 'Walking has opened up my world'

**Cerys Thomas, 27, is an IT administrator, and lives in Cardiff. She is 5ft 6ins tall and weighs 9st 6½lbs, having lost 7st 10½lbs as a member of Slimming World Online**

Seeing yet another jogger go past my window, I wondered how they did it. I had social anxiety, so the thought of people watching me worried me as much as the exertion. I'd joined Slimming World as an online member in September 2019, and by the first lockdown I'd lost 3½st. Food Optimising was going really well, but I was still too anxious to add in activity.

As the days went by, though, boredom set in, and one morning I decided to walk around the wharf near my house. The only people around were fishermen – who I hoped would be too busy to notice me. Taking it slowly, I walked one complete lap in around 45 minutes. Back home, my muscles ached...but I felt great!

Soon I was doing two, or even three, laps a day, either at lunchtime or in the evening. By now, the fishermen recognised me and I found myself enjoying a chat with them on my way past – feeling confident enough to do

that was a huge step. As my weight continued to drop, I started going further afield. I'd lived in Cardiff Bay for three years, but had never had the energy to explore it properly. I discovered the beautiful coastal path and walked up to 20km some weekends, soaking up the scenery and views.

In October 2020, I did something I'd never dreamt possible: I climbed a mountain! And when my friend Adrian and I reached the top of Fan Fawr in the Brecon Beacons – a climb of almost 2,500ft – it felt incredible.

Getting more active really has changed my life. Instead of staying in at weekends, I'm constantly out and about, and always walk even if it's pouring with rain. My car rarely leaves the driveway! I've been on my first solo holiday to Tenby and Saundersfoot, where I walked for miles exploring





## FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Adding any kind of activity into your life by your 20s and 30s will pay dividends.

'The earlier you start the sooner you get into a habit,' says Dr Jacquie Lavin

- Regularity is key to forming habits – start by focusing on moving more often, rather than trying to go faster or further.
- Little things add up. Could you get off the bus a stop early, or if you have children, walk them to school?
- Join a club or get active with friends. Playing football or joining a walking group will help you meet new people, too.
- If evenings are spent ferrying your kids to various clubs, squeeze in a walk – and you'll benefit from that time, too.



the area. Having lost more than 7½st, I'm physically fitter and my mental health is much better. After years of feeling weighed down by social anxiety, I'm enjoying my life to the full!

# 30s

## 'I love being an active mum'

**Tracey Yale, 37, is a referrals administrator and Slimming World Consultant, and lives in Mickleover, Derbyshire, with her husband, Matt, and son, Joey, five. She is 5ft 7ins tall and weighs 10st 9½lbs, having lost 11st 8lbs at Steve Lodge's Slimming World group in King's Norton, West Midlands, and she runs her own group in Mickleover**



**P**erched at the top of a slide in the soft play, I looked over at my son, Joey. He was roaring with laughter and thrilled that his mum was up there with him. It was such a magical moment.

Wanting to become a mum had been the reason I'd joined Slimming World back in 2014. I'd been diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome and been told I'd struggle to conceive – and weighing 22st 3½lbs, I knew I'd need to lose weight to have fertility treatment. I was 6st lighter when I got the most amazing surprise: I was pregnant, and completely naturally! When Joey arrived in May 2015, I knew I couldn't go back to the person I was before – the one who got out of breath just walking up the stairs. I wanted to make lots of exciting memories with my son.

Before my pregnancy, I'd gained my Bronze, Silver and Gold Body Magic awards with a mix of jogging and walking, that I jokingly christened 'jolking'. Now I carried on walking with Joey in the pushchair, gradually upping the distance. As Joey grew, I'd take him

to the park – he loved his scooter and I'd run alongside, or we'd play footie. Whether it was the inflatable park or outdoor trampolines, I'd give it a go.

We had to adapt during lockdown, and together we did Zumba classes on Zoom and weighted workouts – Joey even has his own set of child-friendly dumbbells! As well as losing another 5st, I've now got my Platinum Body Magic award, and Joey and I have had so much fun along the way. Having my little boy by my side has made my Slimming World journey extra special.

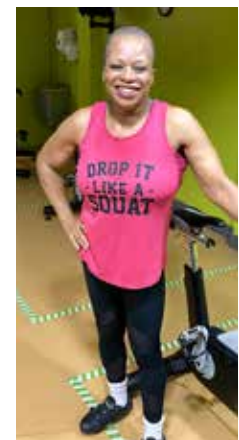




# 40s

## 'It's benefited my body and my mind'

**Helen Patterson, 41, is a Slimming World Consultant. She lives in Exeter, Devon, with her husband, Chris, and children, Alexander, 15, and Rosemary, 13. Helen is 5ft 6ins tall and weighs 9st 8lbs, having lost 3st at Lyndsay Hesp's Slimming World group in Heavitree, Exeter, and runs her own group in Topsham, Devon**



**T**aking a deep breath, I tentatively pushed off and felt the familiar whoosh as I sped along the pavement. It was my first time back on my scooter after surgery for a brain tumour, and I'd really missed it.

I'd bought it two years earlier to keep up with the children on the school run – something I'd never have dreamt of attempting had I not recently lost 3st. The scooter was my first foray into regular activity, and I loved it! Soon I was whizzing around at speeds of up to 20mph. I'd never been in the slightest bit interested in exercise before, but this was so much fun, it didn't feel like a

workout. I raved about it in group and was soon storming my way through the Body Magic awards.

Then everything changed. In 2017, I was diagnosed with a life-threatening brain tumour, and underwent 10 hours of neurosurgery to remove the tumour and replace my eye socket with a titanium plate. As soon as I was well enough I went back to group, where I knew I had the support, care and encouragement I needed to continue on my journey.

In June 2019, I took part in a 12-mile scooter ride from Exeter to Exmouth, and in summer 2020 I scooted 100 miles in 80 days, raising nearly £900 for my Brain Tumour Support group.

Throughout everything, one thing has always been clear to me: the confidence I've gained through losing weight with Slimming World has helped me to cope with the traumatic changes in my life. And achieving my new active lifestyle has been a key part of that, keeping me both physically and mentally fit in even the toughest of times.



### POWER IT UP

**Muscle-strengthening activities are beneficial for everyone, and become more important as we get older. Here's how a little strength makes a big difference:**

- Muscle helps our bodies burn calories. From age 50, we naturally start to lose muscle mass, so maintaining it via exercise can help with weight management.
- As well as using weights, carrying kids and/or heavy bags, body weight exercises such as yoga and even heavy gardening count.
- Government advice is that we should aim to do activities that help develop or maintain strength twice a week – and that doing anything is better than nothing.
- Strengthening activities help to protect muscles, bones and joints. It's never too late to start, and when you start building strength, you'll notice real, everyday benefits.



## 50s

## ‘Strength training gives me a real lift!’

**Reema Reid, 58, is a head teacher and lives in south London. She has two grown-up sons and lives with her two daughters, Rebecca, 28, and Hannah, 16. Reema is 5ft 6ins tall and weighs 12st 4lbs, having lost 3st 6lbs at Veronica Hewitt's Slimming World group in Streatham, south London**

‘Come on, Mum...’ coaxed my oldest daughter, Rebecca, as I pushed open the gym doors. She knew I was feeling very much out of my comfort zone – I’d never stepped foot in a gym before and had little idea what to expect. I was a few months into my Slimming World journey, and had decided that the time had come to start supporting my weekly losses with a little activity.

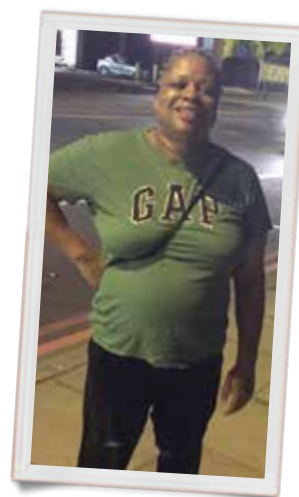
Encouraged by Rebecca, I tried out the treadmill. As I was walking (slowly!), I glanced over to a room next door where a spinning class was taking place. ‘They’re crazy,’ I thought, ‘There’s no way you’d catch me doing anything

like that.’ As the weeks passed, I started using a stationary bike – I even signed up to a personal trainer for 12 weeks, who introduced me to weight training. Much to my surprise, I took to it really well and soon began to feel more toned.

In March 2020, I’d just joined a Pilates class when the country went into lockdown. Desperate to continue enjoying my new-found love of fitness, I invested in a stationary bike at home and signed up to a number of online classes, including Pilates, HIIT (high-intensity interval training) and – yes, you guessed it – spinning! To continue what I’d learnt from the PT, I also bought myself a set

of weights and carried on lifting at home – I’m aware that I’m at an age when you start to lose muscle, and doing strengthening exercises is one of the best ways to prevent that.

As well as staying physically strong, I’m mentally stronger, too, and better able to cope with the demands of my job. My youngest daughter Hannah and I head outdoors at every opportunity, exploring London’s parks, and last summer I was massively proud when I learnt to swim. At 58, my mantra is ‘keep moving’ and I’ve got no intention of stopping any time soon!



## 60s

## ‘I cycle for miles every week’

**Sally Little, 67, is a food innovator. She lives in Hove, East Sussex, with her husband, Philip. Sally is 5ft 5ins tall and weighs 10st 12½lbs, having lost 5st 3¾lbs at Flo Sparham's Slimming World group in Hove, and currently attends Lisa Tomkinson's virtual group**

As I pushed my feet against the pedals, I could barely catch my breath – I loved cycling, but the slightest hill wore me out. It was October 2017 and I’d just joined Slimming World in the hope that losing weight would help me to be more active.

Sure enough, after three months or so, I’d lost my first stone and began to notice a difference – finding I was able to cycle greater distances along the nearby seafront. Feeling more energetic, I joined the local tennis club, where I started having regular lessons, and treated myself to a fitness tracker so I could work >



## Did you know?

Sitting for long periods can raise your risk of health problems – try to move every 20 minutes or so to break up long sessions





my way up to walking 10,000 steps a day. I even learnt to hula hoop!

In January last year, my husband Philip and I invested in a pair of electric bikes. I know what you're thinking... but honestly, they're not as easy as all that! For a start, if you stop pedalling, the power stops. And when the power runs out, you have to continue completely under your own steam.

Our electric bikes have really been a game changer. Where I might have cycled 10 miles before, now I can do 50. We take on huge hills that I never would have had a go at before, never mind got to the top of, and last year we went on a cycling holiday to the Isle of Wight where we covered 200 miles in four days. I love the feeling of freedom being active gives me, and as I near two years at target in June, I know a big part of that is due to pedal power.

## A HAPPY RETIREMENT!

Being active in later life can boost confidence, improve posture and even help prevent falls. 'Importantly, it can contribute to staying independent and mixing socially, too,' says Dr Jacqui Lavin. As well as moving whenever you get the chance, the NHS recommends people aged 65 and over add in activities that help maintain or improve strength, balance and flexibility on at least two days a week. By easing aches and pains and aiding stability, these can make lots of everyday tasks easier, and include activities such as walking, playing golf, bowls, tai chi and dancing.

# 70s

## 'Who knew that gardening would count?'

**Pam Goldsmith, 71, is retired. She lives in Ashford, Middlesex, with her husband, Paul, and has two grown-up daughters and six granddaughters. Pam is 5ft 2ins tall and weighs 10st 13lbs, having lost 6st at Angela Myall's Slimming World group in Weybridge, Middlesex**



Leaning on my garden spade, I took a long cool drink of water and smiled as I surveyed the results of my hard work – while across the garden, my husband Paul carried on constructing his new 'man cave'. We've always been keen gardeners, but like many people, lockdown meant we were spending even more time outside than before.

In the past, gardening had always left me exhausted due to my weight. Undergoing cancer treatment brought my health into focus and I felt losing weight would help. When a friend suggested I join her Slimming World group, I didn't hold out much hope, but the Consultant Angela was so positive, and promised me that if I followed Food Optimising, I would lose weight.

She was right! That first week I lost 7lbs – and was hooked. A few weeks in, after hearing all about the Body Magic awards, I decided to add in some activity, too. I joined an aqua fit class and started walking more. As my balance had been affected by the

cancer treatment, I bought some Nordic walking sticks that helped no end, and I'd head out to Windsor Great Park where I found so much happiness walking quietly beneath the trees.

It was at this point that I started gardening more seriously, too. I found I could dig and rake for longer, not to mention cleaning the patio, painting the garden furniture, and pruning and watering the plants. Thanks to all the extra activity, and the support of my amazing Consultant and group, I've lost 6st. Gardening gives me a proper workout, and I love getting stuck in! ☒

INTERVIEWS: SARAH VENESS



☒ 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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# 10 ways to boost your mental wellbeing

Looking after your mental health has never felt so important, and it can benefit your weight loss, too. So we've teamed up with the experts to put together uplifting everyday strategies to help you give your mind some TLC

Words: **Jane Murphy** Illustration: **Katie Smith**



## How are you feeling right now?

It's a question that we're all asking ourselves more lately, and not just because of the impact of the pandemic, but because in recent years the conversation around mental health has really opened up. And, as we've become more aware of the powerful link between mind and body, more of us are looking at ways to boost our mental wellbeing. It also turns out that lots of the things that support good mental health are the same things that will keep your weight loss on track: eating well, staying active and building strong, supportive relationships. As all of these may well have felt like more of a challenge over recent times, there's never been a better time to ask yourself, 'How am I doing?'

'Routine is critical for good mental health,' says psychologist and author Dr Linda Papadopoulos. 'Yet at the start of the pandemic, it was one of the first things that fell by the wayside. Coronavirus gave many of us permission to become "avoiders" – to stay away from others, to put our lives on hold and not try new things – and this can cause us to feel more anxious. Thinking about what you *could* or *should* be doing can often be harder than actually doing it.' As we return to more normal routines, it's a great time to build in habits that will enhance your mental health in the long term.

'There does appear to be a significant link between weight and mental wellbeing,' says Carolyn Pallister, Slimming World's nutrition and health policy manager. 'Eating well and keeping active are lifestyle changes that can support your wellbeing as well as your weight loss, and weight loss itself can boost mental wellbeing, too. Many Slimming World members find that losing weight improves their self-esteem and confidence, which in turn has mental health benefits.'

Throughout our lives, all sorts of events and experiences can throw us off kilter, and everyone finds things tough at times. If feelings linger, you're concerned about any aspect of your mental health, or you don't feel like yourself any more, it's important to talk to your GP, or reach out to organisations that can help you access professional help should you need it.

When it comes to everyday ways of looking after your mental health, there's lots you can do, from small changes in routine to shifts in your mindset. Read on for 10 – sometimes surprising – ways you can help your mental wellbeing as you slim.

### 1 Be kind to yourself

We can all be our own biggest critics and, unfortunately, if you're constantly finding fault with yourself and your body, it can undermine your mental wellbeing *and* hamper your weight loss journey. One very positive change you can make to turn the dial down on that self-critical voice is to consciously treat yourself as you would a friend: being kind, understanding and encouraging when things don't go to plan. 'Remember, everybody's lives have been turned upside down by the pandemic,' says Carolyn Pallister. 'Many of us have lost our motivation and focus because we've been facing different and unexpected challenges. No matter what has happened, though, it can be turned around. Go easy on yourself and trust that, despite the ups and downs, you're moving in the right direction.'

### 2 Step outside every day

Taking the time to get outdoors can be hugely positive for your mind. And that doesn't mean you have to head off for hours on a cross-country hike. Just five minutes spent walking in the park or doing a spot of gardening can be enough to significantly lift your mood and improve self-esteem, according to research\*. Spending time in nature has been found to help with various mental health issues, including anxiety and depression. The reason? It's thought that the benefits can often stem from how our senses connect with the environment around us, according to the Mental Health Foundation – from the shapes we see in nature to the scents of the trees and flowers. It really does pay to stop and smell the roses!

### 3 Get moving

Being active releases mood-lifting brain chemicals called endorphins, which leave you with a post-exercise 'buzz'. Gradually upping your activity levels is also great for boosting self-confidence and body image, as well as supporting your weight loss – and Slimming World's Body Magic programme is designed to help you do just that. 'For many of us, lockdown disrupted our usual activity routines, from fitness classes to active commutes,' says Carolyn. 'The beauty of the Body Magic programme is that any activity that gets your breathing up counts – a brisk daily walk, energetic housework or playing with your kids in the garden.' As restrictions ease, now could be a great time to try out some fun new activities that challenge you that little bit more, and give you an even bigger endorphin boost!

### Eat good-mood food

Nutrition plays a big role in our mental health. If you're Food Optimising, you'll be enjoying a healthy, balanced diet that provides the vitamins and minerals that help to regulate your mood and keep your brain healthy. A healthy gut also supports a healthy mind – some 90 per cent of the feel-good brain chemical serotonin is made in the gut! 'Including different sources of fibre in your diet is associated with having a healthy balance of gut bacteria,' says Carolyn. 'To get even more fibre into meals, choose wholegrain pasta, bread and rice, beans and pulses, high-fibre cereals such as oats, plus plenty of fruit and veg.' >





## 5 Reconnect with friends (and make new ones)

We rely on our friends for empathy, care and support – so we've all felt the loss of social interaction over the past year. Making the effort to catch up with friends and family, either virtually or in real life, is guaranteed to lift your spirits. And now is also the perfect time to connect with other Slimming World members and reap the benefits of mutual support. 'Meeting at group – whether in person or on Zoom – allows you to share your concerns and experiences, which can help you to feel less alone, more empowered and better understood,' says Carolyn. One study found that since attending group, Slimming World members became less critical of themselves when things went wrong and learnt to be more self-reassuring, helping them to deal with setbacks more positively. If getting back out there feels daunting right now, *Take on your slimming fears* on page 34 will ease your worries.

## Find your level

Alcohol has a complicated effect on mental health, and finding out how much is too much for you could be a game changer. A small amount might make you feel relaxed or merry in the short term, while more could negatively impact your mood and health over time, disrupt your sleep and leave you feeling depleted the morning after. 'There are lots of tricks you can try to drink more moderately,' says Carolyn. 'Try alternating soft drinks with alcoholic ones, for instance, or making your glass of wine last longer by turning it into a spritzer using soda water.' Some people choose to have non-drinking days each week, or switch to low-alcohol or alcohol-free beer, which are generally much lower in Syns, too. 'Many Slimming World members will be able to relate to the challenges around drinking, so group can be a great place to discuss your experiences and come up with some real-life strategies for drinking more moderately,' says Carolyn.

## 7 Create your comfort list

If we respond to a dip in our mood by going off track, and our weight is already affecting our self-esteem, it can become a vicious cycle. Nothing is banned when you're Food Optimising, whatever your food preferences or dietary needs, and planning in Free or low Syn versions of favourite comfort foods,

'By preparing for things that might lower your mood, you're likely to feel more upbeat and in control'



or using your Syns for treats, can help raise your motivation to stay on plan. If you're still craving comfort, though, another strategy is to come up with a list of alternative mood-lifters. 'You could phone a friend, watch a feel-good film, read a book or have a long soak in the bath,' says Dr Linda Papadopoulos. 'Experiment with what works for you, and you might find that non-food sources of comfort actually boost your wellbeing for longer. Plus, you'll know they won't slow your weight loss.'

## Mind your language

Sometimes, while we're making positive choices for our health, we can slip into negative language around food. For example, we might label chocolate as 'bad', and experience feelings of guilt or regret if we've eaten 'too much' of it, which can contribute to unhelpful emotions. Food Optimising recognises that all food has its place in our lives – no food is ever 'good' or 'bad', and what you eat certainly doesn't define you as a person. 'It can help to experiment with changing your vocabulary,' says Dr Papadopoulos. 'If you say, "I can't have dessert", you're acting like you have

no option. If you say, "I've decided not to have dessert", that's very empowering. You're acknowledging that the choice is your own.'

## Live in the moment...

Spending time really enjoying what you're eating could also help, as Dr Papadopoulos explains: 'The simple act of thinking about what you're eating and savouring the taste can lift your mood and turn mealtimes into a truly pleasurable experience,' she says. 'It can also help you to notice the difference between whether you're hungry or eating out of habit. If a poor relationship with food is affecting your mental wellbeing, being more mindful could help to manage any anxiety around what you're eating.' It has benefits when it comes to enjoying high Syn foods in moderation, too. By planning in a treat, and giving yourself permission to savour it mindfully, you're dispelling any unhelpful guilt or shame you might have been feeling, helping you genuinely enjoy the foods you love while you lose weight.

## 10 ...and choose your future

Feeling like you're in control of your destiny, even when life gets in the way, can be a powerful mental-wellbeing booster, and this is where planning your week comes in. If you're feeling exhausted, for example, it's much easier to eat a healthy, balanced meal if you've already batch cooked some of your favourites and have them to hand in the freezer. Dr Papadopoulos says to think about it as 'taking care of your future self'. For example, when you're grocery shopping, if you know buying a multipack of biscuits will lead to you feeling low when you don't lose weight, just buy one packet. What you're doing is setting up a virtuous circle in the future – by anticipating and creating strategies for moments that might lower your mood, you're improving your chances of feeling upbeat and in control. And that all comes back to taking time to get to know how you tick, connecting with other slimmers so you know you're not alone, and checking in with how you're feeling day by day. 'Making a plan, big or small, can help you stay focused, motivated and heading in the right direction,' says Dr Papadopoulos. Destination: calmer, brighter times ahead. ✨

✉ If you're concerned about any aspect of your mental health, talk to your GP or visit [slimmingworld.co.uk/mentalhealth](https://slimmingworld.co.uk/mentalhealth) for links to more information and support.





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# It's in your hands...

At Slimming World, we'll never tell you that you ought to lose weight – only *you* can decide that. And if that's what you'd really love, we'll be here for you, says Slimming World's founder and chair, Margaret Miles-Bramwell

**O**ut of love your family and friends may be worried about you if you are seriously overweight and, not meaning to be negative or critical, they nag you because they have heard just how much being overweight is bad for your health and wellbeing. Well, out of love, I'm going to give you a different message because you certainly don't need yet another person telling you that you must, you should, you ought to lose weight. My 'from love' message is this: **you do not have to lose weight.** If you think that you have to, then it's more than likely going to lead to a fail.

From the beginning of Slimming World, one of my strongest beliefs has been, and still is, that you are an adult and need, seriously and desperately need, to be treated as one. That means that Slimming World must only help when you have decided you really, really want to lose weight.

Slimming World exists not to take that superior, judgemental stance – you know the one – 'we know best'. NO. Only YOU can decide what's best for you. No tut-tutting from us, I can assure you. Only you know if you are dealing with the multilevel challenges and disadvantages, on a daily basis, that excess weight can often inflict. Only you know when it has become worth taking the alternative route – the route (dreaded by so many) of making life-changing, life-saving, lifestyle changes.

It's only when people find Slimming World that they find there is nothing to be afraid of.

Slimming World helps you make those lifestyle changes that best suit you, that are sustainable because you never have to give up on anything, not even your favourite treats.

And you never, ever have to go hungry. You never, ever have to be afraid of failing – we all fail sometimes – we just help you get up again. Our job

is to help you find some easy, simple and amazing strategies that fit you and that keep your motivation high, because you soon realise that they actually work.

Now, I have a confession. Sometimes when I see someone whose life is in serious danger because they're living with morbid obesity, out of love, not disapproval, I desperately wish I could let them know about Slimming World.

I've been there, with the scales nudging 20 stones. I know about the embarrassment and shame I felt. I know how I struggled to make sense of my inability to stick to a diet no matter how much I wanted to lose weight. I thought I needed a brain transplant! And I hated shopping for clothes, yet longed to look elegant and attractive.

We at Slimming World have all been there to a greater or lesser degree. And we all feel for everyone who needs us and who dare not take that step, whether that be through a door – one small step but one giant leap – or online portal. Wherever you are, we cannot wait to open that real door and invite you to that amazing, loving, wealth of experience.

So whether your local group is real-life or virtual...


**Enjoy** all the info packed into LifelineOnline, **Enjoy** the guaranteed, accurate and reliable information from nutritionists (no fake news here), **Enjoy** literally thousands of delicious, verified, tested and updated recipes to make sure it's impossible to ever get them wrong or get bored, and **Enjoy** getting together in your group, where loads of amazing tips and tricks flow freely from real people, real members.

**Feel their support** along with a highly trained and caring Consultant, who can help you identify those awful negative messages that repeat in your brain, and show you ways to kick them into touch for good. And when – and only when – you're ready,



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





Our job is to **help you** find some easy, simple and **amazing strategies** that fit you and that keep your **motivation high**

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**Yours, as always, with love,**





# ‘I’m helping others to achieve their dreams’

Losing 6st led Jodie Rigby-Mee, 36, to a new career that fits around being a busy mum of two. Here she explains why nothing beats the feeling of inspiring life-changing results

**M**y baby son, Jenson, was still sleeping peacefully in his car seat as my Slimming World group came to an end and people started to leave. Bending to pick him up, I paused as my Consultant Nikki came over and sat beside me. ‘I wanted to have a quick word before you leave,’ she said. ‘I’ve noticed you have a real passion for Slimming World, and the way you help other people in the group is really inspiring. I wondered if you’d ever thought about becoming a Consultant yourself?’

## Food for thought

I had to admit that the idea had never crossed my mind – but I was certainly open to it. I’d joined Slimming World back in 2002 as an unhappy 18-year-old weighing 16st 7lbs. Three years later, I’d lost 6st and emerged a completely different, happy and confident young woman. I’d been coming to group as a target member for five years since then, and really did love Slimming World and its approach to weight loss. Now, the more I thought about it, the prospect of helping others to discover Slimming World, too, was exciting. My only question was: ‘Will it work around being a mum?’

Up until Jenson was born in June 2013, I was working for a leading recruitment company, putting in long hours and often checking emails late into the night. Since his arrival, though, my priorities had changed. The idea of a new opportunity that would allow me the flexibility to spend more time with my family, and at the same time build my own business from the ground up, was very appealing.

A few weeks later, I arrived home from a presentation for prospective Consultants in

Leicestershire, buzzing with excitement. ‘I’ve always said that you have so much enthusiasm for Slimming World, you could be paid for it,’ my husband Nigel grinned. ‘Go for it – I’m behind you all the way.’

Spurred on by Nigel’s support, I went for an interview, and not long afterwards got a phone call from the District Manager, with the news that I’d been successful. From that moment on, it didn’t feel like I was joining a company – more like joining a family! First, there was a lovely welcome call from Kathryn in the support team at Slimming World’s Derbyshire head office. And, not long after, I was getting to know other new Consultants on my first training weekend. The training sessions were split over three different weekends, which fitted well around Jenson and family life. I loved spending time at head office soaking up the friendly Slimming World culture, as well as the training team’s expertise.

When it came to handing out leaflets promoting my group, Jenson stayed with a babysitter while Nigel, my parents, Jane and Michael, and godparents, Marion and Colin, headed out with me. They also became guinea pigs for my first welcome talk to the new members I hoped would be coming through my doors. At training I’d learnt that there wasn’t any script – instead I’d speak from my own experience and from the heart. Nigel sat patiently while I rehearsed my talk – he must have heard it 50 times!

I also discovered that I didn’t necessarily need childcare to go out promoting my new business – I’d



Before finding Slimming World, I was an unhappy 18-year-old with no real self-confidence





“  
I work with  
such great  
people, it's  
been more  
like joining  
a family than  
a company  
”

head off with Jenson in his buggy and chat to people in shops, leisure centres and community groups, explaining all about Slimming World and inviting them to come along to my venue at Leamington Rugby Football Club in Warwickshire to find out more.

The night before my first group opened in June 2014, I hardly slept a wink – partly through nervous excitement and partly through fear that no one would actually turn up. I needn't have worried. I greeted 17 new members that first morning and my welcome talk went well. 'I'm in this with you all the way, through all the highs and lows,' I told them. 'I've seen it, done it and bought the T-shirt – although it's now a few sizes smaller!'

Picking Jenson up from Mum and Dad's house afterwards, I felt full of confidence, and it wasn't long



Being my own boss fits well around time with Nigel and the boys

before I accepted the challenge of running a second group at Bishop's Itchington, also in Warwickshire. Nigel arranged to leave work a little earlier to look after Jenson while I ran my new afternoon session, and with his support, and

the amazing network of local Slimming World managers I had around me, I knew I could make this work. Gradually, my group sizes grew and that initial 17 members at the rugby club became 160, while my Bishop's Itchington group (now the Harbury group) went from five to 120, spread across six sessions.

In 2017, I was honoured to win Slimming World's Top Target Consultant competition for maintaining my weight loss. And a few months later, Nigel and I were thrilled to discover I was expecting again. I carried on running my groups until I was 36 weeks pregnant with my son, Carter, thanks to my lovely members who'd arrive early to set the room up for me when I was past the point of putting out chairs!

### ***Taking it to the next level***

By the time I returned to group after Carter was born, Jenson had started school and, with the help of Mum, Dad and Nigel, I quickly established a new routine. Once Carter was at nursery, I was even able to extend my role further and effectively work full-time. In December 2019, I became a Team Developer for the Stratford-upon-Avon area, which means that alongside running my own groups, I visit other Consultants to support them to get the best out of theirs. I love being able to share everything I've learnt during my time with Slimming World, and it's tremendously satisfying to be working so closely with such a great team of people.

Slimming World has played such an important part in my life, and always will. It's been with me as a member (these days I go to Angie Baker's group in Warwick), a Consultant and a Team Developer, a single woman, a wife and a mum. It's supported me to maintain my weight loss for 15 years – I've now lost 6st 8lbs – and it's allowed me to start my own business that fits around my two sons. Best of all, I know I'm helping other people to change their lives in the same way as I changed mine, and there's no feeling like it. ☑

☑ If you're inspired by Jodie's journey, are well on your way to your final target weight and would like to know more about becoming a self-employed Slimming World Consultant, call Maggie on 0344 892 0434 (01 656 9600 from Republic of Ireland) or email [maggie@slimmingworld.co.uk](mailto:maggie@slimmingworld.co.uk).

Visit [slimmingworld.co.uk/careers](http://slimmingworld.co.uk/careers) for more information about the exciting opportunities that are available with Slimming World.



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### COMPETITION Ts & Cs

#### Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & Spa Competition (p63)

**1.** Send your entry form by post to Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & 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, 15 July 2021, or visit [slimmingworld.co.uk/magcomps](http://slimmingworld.co.uk/magcomps) and enter online by 15 July 2021. **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, Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & 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 four (winner and guests must be aged 18 or over) comprising: two nights' accommodation for four people sharing two Privilege double or twin rooms; a bottle of Prosecco in each room on arrival; continental or full English breakfast on both mornings (including tea, coffee or fruit juices) and a three-course dinner on both evenings (drinks not included) in the Cameo Restaurant; one 50-minute spa treatment each (either Decléor Aromatherapy Discovery Facial, Decléor Soft Hands or Feet, Mercure Body Brush & Polish, Tranquility Scalp, or Walking On Air); and full use of the hotel's spa and leisure facilities, including heated indoor pool, rock sauna and fitness centre. All subject to availability. Travel to and from the hotel and any other expenses are not included in the prize. The winner and guest are responsible for ensuring they have valid and appropriate travel insurance. Dinner reservations and spa treatments should be made at the time of booking your break. The prize must be taken by 9 September 2022, and excludes bank holidays, 24-26 December 2021 and 31 December 2021. Winner and guests must comply with any social distancing guidelines in place at the time of taking the prize. Services and facilities may change at any time in line with the latest government guidance relating to Covid-19 restrictions in place at the time. Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & Spa reserves the right to offer reasonable alternatives if necessary. If the winner has to change their booking due to changes in Covid-19 restrictions, then Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & Spa asks that as much notice is given as possible. **6.** No correspondence will be entered into and the promoter's decision is final. The winner will be notified in writing by 12 August 2021 using the details provided on the entry form. Visit [slimmingworld.co.uk/privacy-policy](http://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 9 September 2021,

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 Nov/Dec 2021 issue of *Slimming World Magazine*. **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 Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & 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 Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & 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 Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & Spa, Blackburn Road, Clayton-le-Moors, Lancashire BB5 5JP. **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.

#### Mercure Hotel & Spa Reader Offer (p63)

**1.** Offer valid up to and including 31 October 2021, subject to availability and excluding bank holidays. To book, visit: [all.accor.com/slimmingworld](http://all.accor.com/slimmingworld), and use the promotion code SLIMWO to receive your discount of 15 per cent on the full rack rate. **2.** You'll pay from £189 for a one-night stay at Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh, Mercure Cardiff Holland House, Mercure Dartford Brands Hatch, Mercure Sheffield St Paul's, or Mercure Warwickshire Walton Hall, based on two people sharing a double or twin room. Offer includes a bottle of wine in room on arrival, breakfast (including tea, coffee or fruit juices), three-course dinner (drinks not included), one 50-minute spa treatment each (from a selection), and full use of the hotel's spa and leisure facilities. All subject to availability. Services and facilities may change at any time in line with the latest government guidance relating to Covid-19 restrictions in place at the time. **3.** Guests must be aged 18 or over. The offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other promotional offer or discount. Offer applies to new bookings only.

Congratulations to our Jan/Feb 2021  
issue competition winner!

**Budock Vean Hotel competition**

Sally Cragg, Lincolnshire



Don't miss the next issue of

# SlimmingWorld

magazine

On sale 15 July

(earlier to members of Slimming World groups)



# Share your success!

Do you have a favourite photo that shows what losing weight means to you? We'd love to see it! And you could inspire others and celebrate your achievements by appearing in a future issue

## Fundraising fun



After losing 6½st, **Heather Buxton-Hall**, 65, bounced 5K for charity wearing spring-loaded shoes



## Making memories



**Bernie Hodgson** lost 2st 7½lbs and celebrated her 50th birthday with daughter Amy in sparkling style

## New adventures



Losing 4st 8lbs meant **Damian Harriss**, 47, was able to realise his wing-walking dream



## Caring for others



Occupational therapist **Abigail Adabanka**, 28, hits the hospital ward running after losing 4½st

**Get in touch!**

Simply email the photo or photos that capture your special moment to [editorial@slimmingworld.co.uk](mailto:editorial@slimmingworld.co.uk) – along with a before picture that shows your weight loss transformation, too!



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Losing weight online doesn't have to mean you're doing it all by yourself. Join our digital-only service and you'll be surrounded by a thriving community of online slimmers all working towards their weight loss goals.

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- ♥ more than 1,500 delicious Slimming World-approved recipes
- ♥ tailored support and motivation based on your personal progress to help you through challenging times
- ♥ on-the-go support with our app – including a quick-start guide, food tracker and the Slimming World barcode scanner
- ♥ a friendly support team – plus live events with inspirational slimmers to motivate and inspire you on your journey

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- ♥ our handy Food Optimising and Body Magic books to jump-start your weight loss, delivered to your door

**special offer\***  
join now and  
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\*Please note this offer is only available in the UK and Europe from 27th May – 8th July 2021



“Yay! Amazing loss in my first week! I’m chuffed. I’m going to start using the planner this week...”

♥ Like    💬 Comment

♥ Denise and 256 others liked this    💬 24 comments

“That’s a terrific start on your SW journey – this community is worth its weight in gold, very supportive!”

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♥ Carly and 321 others liked this    💬 32 comments

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## What our subscribers are saying...

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Carol, Monmouthshire

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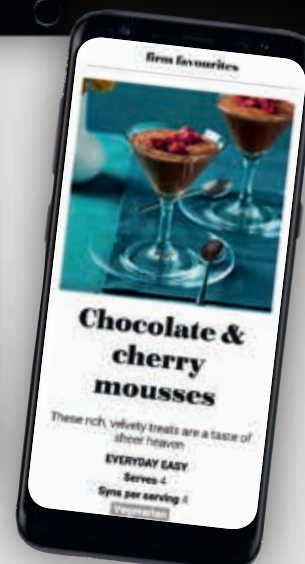
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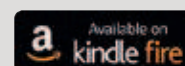
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# ‘We’ve got that Slimming World feeling!’



**During a year of uncertainty, these Slimming World members decided not to let anything dull their shine.** Instead, they created joyful moments in whatever way they could...whether that was feeling their best wearing a special outfit, spending an active afternoon with their family, or dancing the day away!



## ‘Shopping is a joy!’

‘Before joining Slimming World finding clothes for holidays was a nightmare, but since dropping eight dress sizes shopping is no longer a problem! When the lockdown restrictions relaxed last August, I went to Turkey and was so happy to wear this beach dress – I would never have dreamt of wearing something this colourful before losing weight.’

Hannah Fullam, 25, lost 9st 4lbs at Stephanie Ellis’s group in Upton, Cheshire



## ‘I feel so elegant in my colourful saris’

‘As I live alone, it was lovely to see my bubble – my son, daughter-in-law and grandson – for Diwali in November. When they arrived, my daughter-in-law grabbed her camera and said, “Wow, let me take a photo of you!” It was the first time since reaching my 9st target that I’d had a reason to wear a sari – celebrating on a Zoom call with our extended family in my gorgeous pink outfit, I felt a million dollars.’

Shobha Ashok Ingle, 71, lost 2st 4lbs at Tracey Carey’s group in Witham, Essex



**‘Family life is so much fun’**

‘Being an energetic dad is amazing, and it’s a role I’ve embraced since losing weight. At 19st, I struggled to tie my laces, but now I’m enjoying big family walks, taking my kids on days out, and trying (emphasis on trying!) to get my youngest involved in sports with me.’

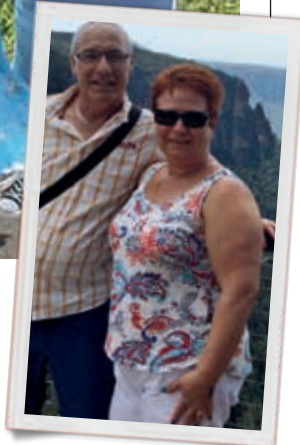
Jamie Westwood, 34, lost 5st 12lbs at Lisa Jones’s group in Rednal, West Midlands



Jamie with his children (from left) Samuel, 11, Harrison, 15, Lena, nine, and Olivia, three



Mandy Mawer, 54, lost 4st 1½lbs at Karen Fereday’s group in Horncastle, Lincolnshire

**‘Let’s dance!’**

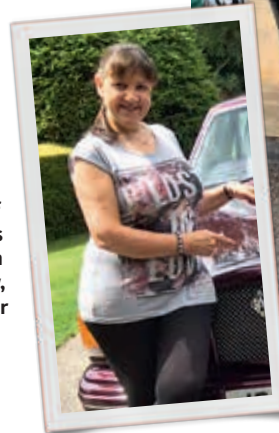
‘Dancing has always been in my life as my parents were rock-and-roll jivers, but when my husband Graeme and I tried swing jiving in 2017, my weight – which had crept up to over 13st – held us back. After losing 4st, I started dancing again and felt so much lighter on my feet. We went to dances with live bands, like this sunny, socially distanced one on our 13th wedding anniversary.’

**‘I’ve got my sparkle back at 60’**

‘When I joined Slimming World, I had one goal in mind: to feel fabulous for my 60th birthday! I had big plans for my special year, like travelling and throwing a party, but lockdown scuppered them. I didn’t let it spoil my big day, though – in August, I threw a party in the park with my nearest and dearest and, over 5st lighter, I felt amazing in this glam, strappy dress.’



Jill Ratcliffe, 60, lost 5st 2lbs at Sarah Fleming’s group in Denton, Manchester, and is now a member of Jane Sigley’s group in Audenshaw, Manchester



**OVER TO YOU** Have you got a weight loss story you’d like to share in the magazine? We’d love to hear all about it! Simply email a few details to us at [editorial@slimmingworld.co.uk](mailto:editorial@slimmingworld.co.uk) – and we’ll take it from there!



# Bacon & egg muffin

Cleverly recreate that takeaway round, soft egg – just bring on a mug and a microwave!

## **SUPER SIMPLE**

**Serves 1**

**Syns per serving 7**

*Deduct 7 Syns if using the wholemeal muffin as a Healthy Extra*

**Ready in 10 minutes**

**Low-calorie cooking spray**

**100g cherry tomatoes, halved**

**65g Asda or Sainsbury's wholemeal muffin, split in half**

**1 large egg**

**1 smoked bacon medallion, visible fat removed**

**1** Spray a small, non-stick frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium-high heat. When hot, add the tomatoes and season. Fry for 4 minutes until broken down, stirring frequently, then remove from the heat.

**2** Toast the muffin. Meanwhile, put 90ml water in a small, microwaveable mug. Carefully crack the egg into the water. Cover with a microwaveable saucer or small plate and put the bacon on top. Put the mug and saucer in the microwave and cook at 600W for 1 minute 30 seconds-2 minutes. Remove the saucer to check the egg – the white should

be just set and the yolk runny. Drain the water, then carefully transfer the egg to kitchen paper.

**3** Put the saucer with the bacon back in the microwave and cook at 600W for a further 30 seconds-1 minute until cooked through. Spread the tomatoes on the base of the muffin. Add the bacon and egg, and some freshly ground black pepper, and top with the lid.

## **COOK'S NOTE**

You can also choose a 65g Morrisons wholemeal muffin – count 7½ Syns, or use as a Healthy Extra

*Fast-food  
brekkie!*

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#SWMagazineMakes



# HEINZ SALAD DRESSING SPRAYS

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