“Teach a woman to fish and you feed her for a day, teach her to use the recipe builder and you’ve given her a cheesecake. She’d rather have the cheesecake, trust me.” - The Book of Freestyle 11:11

One of the first rewards I set for myself, was if and when I’d lose my first 20lbs, that I could have my mom’s old chicken divan casserole. Only one problem, I didn’t have the recipe. So, I went onto the food network’s website and found the recipe from a very famous Southern Chef that loves her some butter, ya’ll. I decided that I would use that for my Chicken Divan.

I opened up the App’s Recipe Builder, entered in the recipe exactly as is, and couldn’t believe that 1 single serving was 18 points. NO WAY was I going to eat that. I set about trying to make a healthier version and it completely changed everything. I was able to get that casserole down to 2 points per serving from her 18. It was my “Road to Damascus” moment with Weight Watchers.

I am going to do my absolute best in this section to help walk you through a step by step tutorial of how to do what I do with recipes I want to make WW Friendly. I’m going to talk you through how to enter that same chicken divan recipe that I found online, so that we can modify it together and you can learn to create, tweak and save your own recipes.

Although I’m going to be making this recipe in the Blue program, I will ALSO be showing how I’d tweak the same exact recipe in both the Green and Purple programs, as well as what the points would be in all 3 programs.

Recipe Builder 101

Alright folks, like I said, I’m going to do my best to help you get the fullest benefit out of the Recipe Builder. So, class is in session. For the benefit of the newer folks to the program, I’m going to type this out as if you have NEVER opened up the Recipe Builder in the app before.

NOTE: The process for adding recipes is very similar from your desktop computer on the WW website. On your computer, click the “create” button to the right of the search bar on your desktop.

STEP 1: When you open the app on your mobile device, you’ll be on your “my day” screen. Click the “search food” bar at the top.

STEP 2 & 3: On the next screen, swipe to the left, until you see “My Food”. Click that. Next, when you get to the 3rd screen, (3a) click the Recipes tab, then (3b) “Create”.

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STEP 4: Alright, now’s where the fun begins. (4a) This is where you enter in the name of whatever you’d like your recipe to be called. (4b) Is where you input the number of servings. The more servings you can get out of a dish, the further you stretch it’s points and the fewer points per serving it becomes in most cases. If a dish has 30 points of ingredients in it and only 1 serving, then it’s 30p per serving. But if that recipe makes 6 servings then it’s 5p per serving. Lastly, (4c) is where the bulk of your time will be spent, adding ingredients. Pressing “add ingredient” takes you to...

STEP 5: Type in the name of an ingredient, in this case we’ll search for Paprika. The spice paprika may not be the first thing that pops up and sometimes you need to scroll down to find the item for which you are looking. A prime example is Pepper. If you search to add Pepper you have to scroll down to find it between items like “black pepper chicken”, “pepper jelly” and 30 other things. You’ll often need to hunt for the ingredient you really want, but you’ll eventually find it, or one like it that you can use. Here we’ll select Paprika.

STEP 6: Now that you’ve selected Paprika as your ingredient to add, the program is going to have you enter how much of it you’re going to use in the recipe. For a lot of spices, it doesn’t matter. They stay “0” regardless of whether you use 1 tsp or 1/2 cup of it, there’s no change. However, there are a lot of spices and ingredients that scale up in points, depending on how much you use. This is where you get to really go to town with hacking recipes. But that’s later. For now, we’re just going to add in an entire recipe as is, with all of it’s suggested ingredients, measurements and servings.

Recipe Exercise #1: (Full Fat Chicken Divan)
Create a new recipe and name it “AA - TEST RECIPE” so that it’s easy to find and delete later. List it as having 8 servings and input the following ingredients and measurements. Do not choose “light sour cream” “reduced fat mayo” etc, use the full fat regular versions of everything. This exercise is to prove a point.

- 20oz Broccoli, cooked
- 6 cups shredded chicken, cooked
- 2 cans of condensed cream of mushroom soup
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 3/4 cup grated Parmesan
- 1/2 cup plain breadcrumbs
- 3 tablespoons butter
Let the Swapping Begin

For purposes of this tutorial, to make it as simple as possible, I am not going to be using things like the fat free cheese hack. We are going to use regular reduced fat cheese and other items that you can easily purchase from the store. So... let's dig in.

Pictured to the right is the in-app point values for the original full-fat Southern recipe. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to swap out and substitute these high point/fat/calorie ingredients, for lower point items that would work just as well.

STEP 1: First thing first. I decided that for me personally that I wanted the chicken, cheese and broccoli casserole to be extra cheesy. To further that goal and also to drop the points, I replaced the 2 cans of condensed cream of mushroom soup, with 1 can of “healthy request” condensed cheddar cheese soup. Why the can marked “healthy request?” It has 2 less points than the regular Campbell’s soup. That saved 9 points. Next, was the big fat bomb, 1 cup of mayonnaise. I replaced it with 1 cup of greek yogurt. I already knew how I was going to make this work, so I left out the 1 cup of sour cream and instead, added 1/2 cup of water...trust me. I made up for the bulk by adding more broccoli, which adds more bulk for more servings. So, another 21 points gone. But...how are we going to thin it without all the mayo? Cornstarch.....boom.

STEP 2: Let’s get cheesy!!!!
The regular recipe calls for 1 cup of regular shredded cheddar cheese, and 3/4 cups of grated Parmesan cheese. We are going to get rid of that 28 points of combined full fat cheese. I want it cheesier, and meltier, so I replaced the grated parmesan with low fat mozzarella, which saved 4 points. Then swapped the full fat cheddar for reduced fat, saving another 6 points. The creaminess of the mozzarella, vs the original parmesan, will also help offset the lack of regular fatty creaminess from the mayo and sour cream. You can see how all of these subs are quickly making this casserole MUCH healthier, MUCH lower in points and MUCH lower in total fat and calories. But wait, we’re not done yet, mis amigos!

STEP 3: Now we’re coming into the home stretch, we’re at the liquids. So we’ll need water for the condensed soup, that’s the water we mentioned earlier. Next is the lemon juice, which isn’t a problem, then the white wine. Now, we just want the flavor of white wine in the dish. It can be subtle, it doesn’t need to kick us in the face. So do you want a slight flavor?.. Try adding just 1 tablespoon of it in with water, want a little more? Add some white wine vinegar. The recipe asks for a 1/2 cup of white wine... we just cut another 4 points.

STEP 4: Now, because we have all of this liquid, we don’t want our casserole to be runny, but we don’t want to thicken it with a buttload of mayo, so what do we do? Cornstarch..... boom. Dissolve it with a tiny bit of water, then stir it in with the cheese sauce we’ll make in the recipe (found in the Holiday side dishes). We’re also going to be eliminating the butter, that’s only used to mix with a ton of bread crumbs, to sprinkle on top of the casserole. Instead, I’m going to crush up 1 cup of rice krispies and use those as the crumbs, it’s lower points. Then, we’ll put those in a bowl, spray them down with a 0 point amount of butter flavored cooking spray, toss it together, then use that as the topping.... End scene. “applause from the audience”

Note: If you are looking up your recipes through the WW website, the database will often display the incorrect point value for the servings, it happens A LOT. I only check points for my recipes in the App, never on my PC. When you look up one of your recipes in the database, I’d highly suggest scroll down to 0 servings, then back to 1 serving. I have recipes that show up as 4 points for the first serving on green and purple, but 5 on blue. If I scroll to 0 servings then back to 1, It will correct to 4 points. Be advised... the database is a temperamental, lying little hussie, sometimes. I also have recipes that only have 4 ingredient points, but when looked up through the website, will be 1 point per serving, even up to 200 servings, despite only having 4 points.
Plan Tweaks

Adjustments for the Green & Purple plans

In this particular recipe, there isn't a DRASTIC difference in the points per serving between plans. In most recipes that have multiple servings, going from Blue to Green will most likely go up a few points, but it won't be a crazy number. Likewise, in most cases, going from Blue to Purple with a recipe will either have the points per serving stay the same, or be reduced. That's due to the increased number of 0 point foods on Purple vs. Blue. If you are smart with your ingredient swaps and think outside of the box with substitutions, you really can have amazing and tighter version of the same dish, between all 3 different plans.

Green Changes:

As you can see, the points for certain ingredients change drastically from Blue to Green. The Greek yogurt and chicken get a lot of points, but for the most part, everything else in the recipe stayed the same, between the 2 plans. I did decide to try looking into lower point alternatives to Greek yogurt for the Green version though. I tried swapping it out with 1 cup of fat free cottage cheese, but though the cottage cheese is lower in points than Greek, the difference was so minimal that the points per serving stayed at 4 for the first serving. It wasn't worth swapping out, though you can if you choose. The only other place to do an easy swap, would be using regular bread crumbs instead of crushed rice crispsies. But you get more "crumbs" from 3 points of rice krispies than you do from 3 points of bread crumbs, so...It's fine as is.

Purple Changes:

With this particular recipe, there really isn't a whole lot of room for improvement, going from Blue to Purple. All of the foods that are 0 points on Blue, stay 0 points on Purple.

However, on purple, you COULD bulk this baby up and get even more servings out of it, which would lower the points per serving. There is a large number of whole grain foods that stay 0 points on Purple. You could add a cup or two of cooked wild rice into the casserole if you wish, that would definitely add servings and make for a much more hearty and filling dish, with no added points.

Ok... now that we have this basic intro out of the way, showing you how to input a recipe along with some simple ideas for how to cut the points, calories and fat down... let's REALLY dive into it and get you to try it out. The next 2 pages are going to have exercises, that will help get your recipe-tweaking gears turning.
Recipe Exercise #1

Green Chili Chicken Tamales
Servings: 8
Points: 12 points per tamale

Ingredients: 99 total ingredient points

Filling: (56 points)
- 2 lb Boneless, Skinless Chicken Thighs - 19sp
- 1/4 cup Olive Oil - 17sp
- 1 lb Tomatillos - 0sp
- 1/2 tsp Salt - 0sp
- 1/4 tsp Pepper - 0sp
- 1/2 tsp Cumin - 0sp
- 1/2 tsp Chili Powder - 0sp
- 1 medium Onion - 0sp
- 1 Jalapeno Pepper - 0sp
- 1/2 lb Poblano Peppers - 0sp

Masa: (43 points)
- 2 cups Masa Harina Corn Flour - 24sp
- 1-1/2 cup Water
- 1/2 cup Lard - 39sp
- 1/2 tsp Salt - 0sp

WHAT WOULD I DO? (with basic swaps):
Modified Points: 3 points per Tamale, on the Blue plan
(minus 75 total ingredient points)

Filling: (-36 ingredient points)
- Cook, then shred, boneless skinless chicken breasts, rather than chicken thighs. I'd then simmer them in the roasted & pureed green chili/tomatillo sauce. (-19sp)
- Use 0 point cooking spray instead of 1/4 cup of olive oil, to cook the chicken and roast the vegetables. (-17sp)

Masa: (-39 ingredient points)
- Use 1/2 cup of fat free Greek yogurt, rather than Lard, in the Masa. I'd also add 2 tsp of baking powder. It makes the tamales very soft and fluffy. (-39sp)

I actually HAVE made this. I even posted a video in Connect and on Youtube showing how to make them. In Connect, search #dhallaktamales. You can also find my video for my 0 point roasted tomatillo sauce and my 3 point tamales in my Youtube channel, The Guilt Free Gourmet.
Recipe Exercise #3

“Healthy” Slow Cooker Meatloaf
Servings: 8
Points: 9 points per serving (Blue)

Ingredients: 69 total ingredient points
Filling: (54 points)
• 1/2 cup Tomato Sauce - 0sp
• 2 large Eggs, beaten - 0sp
• 1/4 cup Ketchup - 3sp
• 1 tsp Worcestershire Sauce - 0sp
• 1 small Onion, chopped - 0sp
• 1/3 cup Crushed Saltines (10 crackers) - 4sp
• 3/4 tsp Garlic, minced - 0p
• 1/4 tsp Seasoning Salt - 0sp
• 1-1/2 lbs. 90% Lean Ground Beef - 30sp
• 1/2 lb. Reduced-Fat Pork Sausage - 17sp

Sauce: (15 points)
• 1/2 cup Ketchup - 7sp
• 3 tbsp Brown Sugar - 8sp

WHAT WOULD I DO? (with basic swaps):
Modified Points: 0 points per serving (Blue)
(minus 61 total ingredient points)
Filling: (-49 points)
- Replace the ground beef with 2 pounds of my Savory Ground Turkey, page 30 (-30 points)
- Replace pork sausage with “Italian Sausage” from page 28. (-17 point)
- Reduced sugar ketchup instead of regular (-2 points)

Sauce: (-12 points)
- Replace regular Ketchup with Reduced Sugar Ketchup. (-5 points)
- Replace Brown Sugar with 3 Tbsp. Sugar Free Maple Syrup (-7 points)

Recipe Exercise #2

Old Fashioned Chicken Pot Pie
Servings: 6
Points: 20 points per serving (Blue)

Ingredients: 119 total ingredient points
Filling: (35 points)
• 1/3 cup Butter - 27sp
• 1/3 cup All Purpose Flour - 4sp
• 1 medium Garlic Clove, minced - 0sp
• 1/2 tsp Salt - 0sp
• 1/4 tsp Pepper - 0sp
• 1-1/2 cups Water - 0sp
• 2/3 cup Whole Milk - 4sp
• 2 tsp Chicken Bouillon Granules - 0sp
• 2 cups Cooked Boneless Chicken Breast, Cubed - 0sp
• 1 cup Frozen Mixed Vegetables - 0sp

Crust: (84 points)
• 1-2/3 cups All Purpose Flour - 21sp
• 2 tsp Celery Seed - 0sp
• 8 oz Cream Cheese, cubed - 36sp
• 1/3 cup Cold Butter - 27sp

WHAT WOULD I DO? (with basic swaps):
Modified Points: 5 points per serving (Blue)
(minus 89 total ingredient points)
Filling: (-25 ingredient points)
- Replace Butter with I Can’t Believe It’s Not Butter “Light” (-19sp)
- Use 1 Tbsp Cornstarch instead of the All Purpose Flour (-3 points)
- Use Almond Milk instead of whole milk (-3 points)

Crust: (-64 ingredient points)
- Use 1-1/2 cup portion of Yeast Pizza Dough (pg. 52) as the crust for the pot pie, it’s not as traditional, but it’s a lot healthier (-64sp)
(Use whole wheat flour to make the pizza crust, on Purple, and it’ll be even lower)