

Swaps, Hacks, & Tips

Ideas for Swapping Ingredients in Recipes

Retrain Your Brain

If you think about it, the primary purpose of the Recipe Builder in the Weight Watchers App is to make us WANT to cook our food with less fat, calories, sugars and carbs. Every time you lower the point value of a recipe with ingredient swaps, you have cut 1 or all those 4 things.

Lowering the Points for Butter



Molly McButter Fat Free Sprinkles

This stuff is amazing. It's a fine powder that dissolves perfectly in liquids and gives the flavor and color of butter. You can use up to 1 tablespoon for 0 points. It's a go-to staple in my kitchen for sauces.

I Can't Believe It's Not Butter- Light

Don't get one of the other types of I Can't Believe It's Not Butter spreads. Make sure

you get the one that says "Light" and scan it to make sure. It is a butter flavored spread that can be used perfectly in place of butter, but at a fraction of the points. A ¼ cup is only 6 points, while ¼ cup of real butter is 23 or 24, depending on brand. Perfect for when you MUST use butter, but need to reduce the points, calories, and fat.

ULTRA Low Point Pie Crusts



Kellogg's All-Bran or Fiber One

Traditionally, for a pie crust you'd use crushed up graham crackers. But the amount of graham crackers and butter for that is around 36-46 points. If you put All-Bran or Fiber One cereal in a food processor with a little bit of FF Yogurt and some 0 point sugar replacement and sugar free maple syrup, along with some I Can't Believe It's Not Butter Light, you can make an entire pie crust for only 7-10 points.

Yogurt For Oil In Cake Mixes



Fat Free Plain Greek Yogurt

Yogurt is a good substitute for mayo and sour cream in most recipes, though it can easily curdle when introduced into sauces or hot liquids. Let the liquids or dishes cool a bit before you bring the yogurts up to temperature and mix them in. Adding cornstarch helps with the curdling issues. You can also use Greek to make salad dressings instead of mayo.

Fat Free Plain Yogurt I personally prefer to use Plain Yogurt as a substitute for sour cream, rather than Greek Yogurt, as it is thinner and more closely resembles the viscosity of oil.



The Fat Free "cheese hack" lets you have melty cheese for an entire pan of Lasagna for only 4-5 total points



Crushed Bran Cereal Pie Crust



Low Point & Carb Breading



13 points of Fresh Pasta

13 points of Store-Bought

0 Point Sugar Free Jelly/Spread



But... It's So High In Points??

NOPE!!! Want about 2/3 cup of fruit spread for 0 points? Sugar Free smucker's jelly used to let you have 1 Tbsp for 0 points, but now the new system has taken it down to only letting you have 2 tsp for 0. So, let's make our own, in under 10 minutes. Simply heat up 1 cup of berries in a pot, with 1/4 cup water

and 3 Tbsp 0 point sugar replacement. Once it breaks down, stir in 1-1/2 tsp cornstarch that's dissolved with 2 tsp water. Stir and let it boil for 3-4 minutes, till thickened. Done.

Sugar Free Syrup Instead of Honey



How To Swap Out Bee Puke.

As delicious and complex a flavor as honey is, it is also very high in points and sugars. My favorite sub. for honey, is cheap and easy to find... **Sugar Free Pancake Syrup.** The flavor profile is different, but it is sweet, thick and a lot lower in points. Unfortunately, under the 2023 plan, it's higher in points than before.

You USED to be able to have a least 2-1/2 Tbsp of it for 0 points. Now, the generic listing only lets you have 1-7/8 Tbsp for 0. There are still a few brands that let you have more, but they are harder to come across for most folks. Regardless, using Sugar Free syrup is a great way to keep a sweet flavor in a sauce or dish, while cutting hundreds or even thousands of calories from the recipe.

Low Point Breading for Meats & Veggies



Non Traditional Breading Ideas

Store bought breadcrumbs pack a pretty high point punch. Want lower point bread crumbs? Try Mashed potato flakes, or crushed rice krispies, whole wheat cheerios, or corn flakes. There's also the obvious fix... buy low point bread, like Sara Lee 45 calorie, or 'Keto' 1 point slices, then make crumbs.

Melting Fat Free Cheese Hack



Fat Free Mozzarella & Cheddar

Using this hack you can "cheese" an entire pan of Lasagna with 3 cups of fat free mozzarella, with an extra 1 cup of Greek (4 total cups) for 4 points. The biggest problem with FF cheese is it doesn't melt. That's solved if you mix it with a bit of FF plain (or Greek) yogurt. Sounds wrong, but it's amazing. Mix any

amount of Kraft (or other brand) Fat Free shredded cheese with about 3/4 as much FF plain yogurt and mix until it forms a cheesy goopy mixture. Use it on Chicken Parmesan, Lasagnas or stuffed in a chicken breast. It works like a charm.

Fresh Pasta to the Rescue



Don't Give Up Your Pasta!!!!

For most people who are on a 'diet', pasta is your sad emoji. Yes, there's store bought pasta that's crazy-high in carbs, calories and points... then there's homemade low point pasta! Rejoice! Using the recipe on pages 40-43, I'll show you how real, fresh pasta is lower in carbs, points and is easier to portion than

store bought pasta. Not to mention it tastes 10,000 times better than that dried stuff you buy for \$1.

99% Fat Free Bratwurst, Chorizo, & More



with Seasoned Ground Turkey

Don't get me wrong, I like beef... but ground beef is expensive, is high in points and sits in my gut like a brick. I've spent a LOT of time developing ground meat seasonings (pg's 26-31), that allow you to have low point, calorie and fat, chorizo, italian sausage, bratwurst and more. It's an incredibly tasty way to cut

calories from your meals, without really losing much in the way of that dish's traditional flavor. Give the recipes a try, you won't regret it.

Quickly "Ripen" Yellow Bananas



Sweeten up those baked goods

Ever tried to make a banana bread or another baked item that calls for "very ripe" bananas, but all that you have are the firm yellow ones without a fleck of black on them? Here's a quick fix. Throw the firm bananas (in their skin) onto a pie pan, and bake them at 325 degrees for 15-20 minutes, then let it cool.

Pudding without Milk or Yogurt



Thickening without Dairy or Fat

It's one of the annoying things about pudding, it just won't thicken if you use water, soy milk, almond milk or whatever. Well, that's not the case. If you use HALF as much of a non fatty fluid as the directions call for milk, it works. If you want it to have the consistency of regular pudding, use 1 cup of COLD liquid in

place of the 2 cups milk. If you are wanting it thick enough to where it can keep its shape for a frosting, use 2/3 cup. So, use (1) 1oz packet of instant pudding and 1 cup cold water for pudding or 3/4 to 2/3 cup for frosting.



Celery Root is actually a good substitute for french fries

Research Tirelessly

Other than telling you to dig into the Recipe Builder, this is the best advice I can give you on this food journey. When it comes to ideas for food substitutions, the Internet is your friend. Most of the things that I've thought to try came from late night Google searches, trying to figure out how I could substitute or make lower versions of things.

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX!! I didn't reinvent the wheel with this stuff, I just pulled it from somewhere else and Weight Watcher-ized it. A prime example is the Low Point Pie Crust. I found the idea for that on a Diabetic cooking site because they have to drastically reduce their sugar intake. When I wanted to find 0sp potato alternatives for French fries, I figured that I should look on "low carb" cooking forums and sites. The goal of this system is to retrain us to make healthier food choices, and the goal of the recipe builder is to subtly push us towards making our foods as healthy (and lower in points) as possible.

Challenge yourself to think. Find or try new ways to substitute ingredients. Then you'll be able to have pretty much anything, guilt free, with a little bit of time in the kitchen.

Potato Substitutes (depending on your 'plan')



0 Point Potato Alternatives

There are some of you folks that are going to cling to your potatoes being 0 points still... It's ok, you do you. But, for everyone else, I thought it'd point out a few root-ish veggies that, if used in the right way, can be viable substitutes for potatoes in different dishes. Some have similar flavors and textures, while others range from having an herby or a slightly sweet taste. All you can do is experiment and find what works best for you. My personal favorite is 'celery root'.

Rutabaga, Radish & Parsnips

Rutabaga is a root vegetable that falls into the same family as broccoli, brussel sprouts and kale. Once it's washed and peeled, a rutabaga's orange flesh is similar in texture and flavor to a turnip. As for Radish, you normally only see them as a raw garnish. In their raw form, they are bitter and spicy. However, when you cook them, they mellow out and take on a more potato-like texture. Parsnips are FANTASTIC. They taste like a cross between a carrot and a potato. However,... parsnips aren't 0 on all plans.

Celery Root (listed as "celeriac" in the App)

Celeriac has a mild celery flavor and is often used as a flavoring in soups and stews. It can also be used on its own, usually mashed, or used in casseroles, au gratins and baked dishes. It has a naturally savory flavor.

Jicama

Jicama resembles a large light-brown colored turnip. The white, creamy interior has a very crisp texture somewhat similar to a firm apple or raw potato. Cooking jicama or serving it raw are equally tasty ways to prepare this lightly sweet root

Pureed/Mashed Fruit & Veggies in Cake



More alternatives to oil in baking

As well as using fat free plain yogurt like we mentioned earlier, no sugar added and pureed fruits and vegetables are perfect 1:1 swaps in baking for most, if not all, of the recommended liquid ingredients listed on boxed cake mixes. Make sure to scan labels first though, as some brands DO add sugar.

DIY Self Rising Flour



Perfect for Gluten Free folks

Members with Gluten sensitivities have a rough time with a lot of recipes, especially the 2 ingredient dough that we all know and love. Simply add 1-1/2 teaspoons of baking powder and 1/4 teaspoon of salt to every 1 cup of WHATEVER flour you would like to use. Whether it's gluten free, whole wheat, cornmeal or any type of flour you want.

Also, I HIGHLY RECOMMEND 'Bob's Red Mill' 1 to 1 Baking Flour blend.

Replacing Heavy Cream



Thickening soups, sauces, gravies

One of the most annoying things about "normal" recipes is how much heavy cream goes into EVERYTHING. I don't use cream or half and half in ANY of my recipes. How do I thicken soups and sauces? I use cornstarch, heated with almond, nonfat, or low carb milk. You can also try, powdered milk, silken tofu, potato

flakes, xanthum gum, tempered Greek yogurt... heck, you can even use canned pumpkin puree or blended white beans to act as a thickener agent.

Fat Free & Reduced Fat Cheeses



The Hard To Find Ingredient

It's obvious that you should swap full fat cheese for reduced fat cheese, however, there's another variety that you can try, if you can find it. Fat Free cheese. You can have up to 3 cups of fat free Kraft mozzarella cheese for only 4 points, while 3 cups of regular mozzarella cheese is 41 points!

Unfortunately, fat free cheeses are

pretty hard to find in most areas. I sometimes find it at Walmart.

Flavored Popcorn Seasonings



They Ain't Just For Popcorn!!

Want a wide range of low calorie, low point, non traditional flavor seasonings that pack a TON of punch? Go to the popcorn aisle at the store and take a look at all the flavors of popcorn sprinkles. Scan them to see the points, but you can use them to flavor desserts, sauces, appetizers... there is a TON of different flavors and

brands. My cheese sauce, later in the book, calls for Molly Mcbutter brand cheese powder. You can use one of these though. Every store has them.

Fat Free "Cream Cheese" & "Ricotta"



Seriously Simple Substitutions

By using cheese cloth, or paper coffee strainers, to strain Greek yogurt overnight, it takes on the texture of softened cream cheese. On the new plan, as long as you don't select 'Diabetic', it's 0 points for you. I often use it in my spreads, dressings, dips even in my frostings for cakes and cupcakes. To make a substitute for

Ricotta Cheese, blend fat free cottage cheese in a food processor, then follow the same process, straining it overnight.

Flavored Cooking Sprays Instead of Oil



Obvious, but deserves a shout-out

I personally use a TON of butter flavored cooking spray. When seasoning raw meats, I hit both sides with butter flavored or olive oil flavored cooking spray to help flavor the meat. You can also use the butter spray on popcorn. Use the olive oil spray to lightly hit the top of

homemade low point hummus or other dishes instead of drizzling olive oil on them. There are tons of ways to use flavored sprays as a seasoning.

Powdered Peanut Butter



Dehydrated and nearly Fat Free PB

Powdered peanut butter, regardless of the brand, is freaking awesome. You can mix it with water to rehydrate it for use as regular peanut butter or you can add the powder to recipes and baked goods to give a PB flavor without all the added mass, points, or stickiness. It's great in everything from smoothies

to satay sauces, baking mixes or mixed with pudding or yogurt. The best part being that it's a fraction of the points of regular peanut butter. Allergic to peanuts? There's powdered Almond butter.

Dairy Free Yogurt Hack



Go Go Gadget, TOFU!

When I first started posting recipes for Greek yogurt based salad dressings, then began using strained Greek yogurt instead of Fat Free cream cheese in my frostings... people started asking about something I'd never thought of before. What to use instead of Greek, when you're allergic to dairy?

Greek yogurt is such a huge building block of so many things in system. 2 Ingredient dough, breakfast parfaits, using it in place of sour cream... heck, I even use it to replace Lard in my Tamales. It made me start looking around for an easy alternative. I found one, it works, but it's a bit unconventional. Tofu. Yup... that's right. It's readily available at grocery stores, inexpensive, and doesn't have a strong flavor (unlike Greek). It comes in different levels of firmness. Firm, which you can dent a Buick with. Semi or Medium Firm, which is like a cooled block of cream cheese, then Silken (or soft), which is almost like Plain yogurt.

I blend a 16 ounce block of semi firm tofu with 1/2 cup water, to make a viable replacement for Greek yogurt. It works for 2 ingredient dough and salad dressings. It does "tighten" up a bit in the fridge though, so add more water if necessary. If you want that tang that Greek has, add a splash of lemon juice. After you blend it, you can also strain it again, like my Fat Free "cream cheese", to use it in frostings. Does it taste the same as Greek? No, but it's a great alternative, if you have allergies. It works.

Coating Meat with Flour for 0 Points



ULTIMATE HACK!

This one is a Godsend for if you're planning to 'bread' some meat for baking or frying. The typical way to coat raw meat with flour is to use a TON of it. However, you CAN coat a lot of meat with only 1-1/2 tsp of flour, which is 0 points. Spread all your meat out, then place 1-1/2 tsp of

flour into a fine wire mesh strainer/sieve. You know how on cooking shows, they fill them with powdered sugar and lightly tap them over desserts to 'dust' them? Well, you can do the same thing, but using flour. Gently tap the strainer while holding it over the meat, then flip it and dust the other side. You can thoroughly coat 4 thick chicken breasts for 0 points.

DIY Low Point Brown Sugar Substitute



A Little Molasses Goes a Long Way

First off... YES... I know that you can buy 0 point brown sugar substitutes. Popular ones are Lakanto brand "golden" monkfruit, Swerve, Sukrin Gold, even Truvia has a 0 calorie brown sugar replacement. However... some people don't have access to them, locally. Luckily there's an easy fix. Real brown sugar

is simply regular sugar mixed with a little molasses. Well, if you have molasses and any type of sweetener, you can sub it in recipes. 1/4 tsp of molasses is 0 points. If I'm making a dish that calls for 1/4 cup or less of brown sugar, I'll use that much sweetener, then add the 1/4 tsp molasses to the dish.

Substitutions For Food Allergies



Just a few to consider

I'm going to be mentioning a bunch of stuff in here, so let's quit with the bantering. Allergic to peanuts but need a little peanut butter in a recipe? Puree some garbanzo beans. The flavor's a little different, but it'll work. If you can have sesame seeds, add up to 1/4 tsp sesame oil to the puree.

Allergic to eggs? replace 1 egg in a baked good with 1/4 cup of pumpkin puree or mashed banana. Add a little baking powder if you want to help add a little lift. Bob's Red Mill makes certified Gluten Free All Purpose Flour that already has xanthum gum and other binders in it to help fortify the flour. If you are making a Greek Yogurt based creamy dressing and are allergic to dairy, blend tofu with water. If you want to make one of my cake recipes, that are based on Pillsbury Sugar Free cake mixes, but you're allergic to gluten or splenda, "Swerve" makes a gluten free, sugar free cake mix, that is sweetened with erythritol. Also, "Namaste" brand baking mixes has a ton of ALL allergen free mixes, though they are a little higher in points (not sugar free).

Low Point Pasta Options



Pasta, Pasta!

Want a big bowl of pasta but the thought of the points involved makes your cringe? Well, luckily there's a few ways around that. First, I'll bring up the obvious, make it yourself. On pages 40-43 of this book, I have detailed instructions showing you how to make your own low point fresh pasta.

If you're more of a visual learner, I have videos showing how to do it, so you can watch me go through the process. If you go head to Youtube, do a search for the following vids:

- *The Guilt Free Gourmet, How to make fresh pasta*
- *The Guilt Free Gourmet, Fresh pasta with a food processor*
- *The Guilt Free Gourmet, Fresh pasta without a pasta machine*

Lastly, if you go into [Connect](#), in the app, watch my 2 videos at: [#DHallakLowPointLasagna](#). If you watch both videos, I show you how to make a 4 layer, 13x9 lasagna, using only 9 points of pasta.

Aside from that, we still have a couple of options. One is shiratake noodles, commonly called 'magic pasta'. You can find them in the grocery store, next to the tofu, in the refrigerated aisle. Know that they DO NOT HAVE the same texture as traditional noodles. Do not use them for spaghetti or Italian dishes. They work best if used for Asian dishes, due to their slightly firm, springy texture. If you give them a try, you HAVE TO thoroughly rinse them off first, then boil them for a few minutes. The water solution they come packed in has a similar smell to imitation crab. Hence, whey it's so important to rinse, rinse, and rinse them off first.

For lower point store bought pasta, you can also find lower carb pastas, like 'Caba-nada', in a lot of major grocery stores. They are lower carb egg-noodles. Though you can find similar brands that offer lower carb linguinie, fettucini, etc.

Stretch The Servings with Low Point Fillers



Recipe Building 101

Your recipe has a certain amount of points in it. If that recipe makes 2 servings, it'll be twice the points if it made 4 servings. By bulking up a dish with 0 or low point vegetables or proteins (depending on your plan), you can drastically increase the servings and decrease the points. Pictured to the left, is my awesome

pasta salad recipe. I use my Ricotta Gnocchi recipe for the pasta, use sliced, grilled chicken breast for the meat, have it loaded with a TON of roasted 0 point vegetables and wilted spinach, then I have it dressed with some of my low point roasted garlic and onion salad dressing. The points from the ricotta gnocchi get stretched out with a BUNCH more servings, by adding the vegetables and chicken. It stretches the 10 points of ricotta gnocchi and 2 points of my dressing to make enough pasta salad for (6) 1 cup servings. So that gives us an entire cup of freakin' GOURMET gnocchi pasta salad, loaded with grilled vegetables, chicken, wilted spinach and creamy dressing... for just 2 points per serving... on the old-school Blue plan.

Low-ish Point and Calorie Milk & Cream Alternatives

Because of calories and points, I don't really use regular milk or cream in ANYTHING. I pretty much use almond milk, soy milk, or CARBMaster brand (from Kroger stores) lactose free milk in everything. They are all extremely low in points and calories, but equally as important, they are all THICKER THAN REGULAR MILK, which makes them ideal for helping to thicken pudding and sauces.

My coconut cupcakes and cake, call for "coconut flavored beverage", rather than canned, Light coconut milk. I use Silk or So Delicious brands, because they are 2 points for an entire cup of thick and light coconut milk. If your local store doesn't have them (they can be found by the almond milk), you can most likely find an almond/coconut milk blend that you can use in its place. If you are allergic to nuts and can't use almond milk in one of my recipes that calls for it, use ANY low point and calorie milk you can find.

Stevia, Truvia, Monkfruit & Erythritol-Based Sweeteners

Whether people agree with me or not about using them... I have absolutely no problem whatsoever with using Sweeteners. "They aren't natural!" There are plenty of natural sweeteners that are NOT white sugar. My personal favorite is erythritol based 1 to 1 granulated sugar replacements, such as 'Swerve Granular' and the Lakanto brands.

IMPORTANT NOTE: As of today (11/03/23), the points for certain brands of erythritol based granulated sweeteners has drastically changed. For YEARS they have been 0 points, because they're all 0 calories and non-glycemic (such as Lakanto Classic). However, in typical point-changing nonsense, Lakanto classic now has points. It's still 0 calories and the carbs aren't absorbed as sugar (according to the packaging). Swerve brands, which are the exact same, are still listed as 0 points. Use what you want and track accordingly. For the purposes of these recipes, my points are calculated with a 0 point sugar replacement.

My primary reason for using them is calories. In general, I am always determined to use anything I can to cut calories from my recipes, without cutting flavor or portion sizes. Though I mention Erythritol sweeteners, feel free to use any type of 1-to-1 sugar replacement you want.

LOW POINT, REAL FLOUR!!!!

This is such a huge thing for me that I'm completely deleting what used to be in this area for the past 4 years... just so that I could add this in.

- IMPORTANT COMPARISON:

- 1 cup of regular All Purpose Flour is 13 points
- 1 cup of Self Rising Flour is 13 points
- 1 cup of Semolina Flour is 16 points (typically)

- KING ARTHUR'S '00' PIZZA FLOUR:

- 1 Cup.... IS ONLY 8 POINTS!!!!

I have recently discovered and started using this flour about 2 weeks ago. In that time I have used it as a substitute for all purpose flour, to make my pizza dough, 2 ingredient dough, AS WELL AS MY FRESH PASTA DOUGH!!!! This allowed me to make fresh pasta for only 2 points per serving!!! Then, I also made an entire 14" pizza crust for only 8 points. Along with this brand, there are some other brands with the same points, however, not all '00' pizza flours are the same. Quiet a few are the same points as AP flour. So, scan your bag.

Tenderizing Meat With Baking Soda

This is the one that I get asked about, more than anything else. "Why in the heck do you put baking soda on your chicken, Daniel!?!?" Well, because of science!!

Baking Soda actually DOES tenderize meat a whoooooole heck of a lot more than you'd think. I'm not talking about dusting meat with a pound of baking soda... that'd taste horrible. However, by making a solution of a little baking soda with a little water, then rubbing it all over your meat and letting it sit for 20-30 minutes, the baking soda actually begins to BREAK DOWN the outer protein walls of your meat. This results in EXTREMELY tender beef, chicken and pork. For 1 to 2 lbs of meat, I dissolve 1/4 tsp baking soda with 2 tsp water. Stir the 2 together, then rub over the meat and let it rest. Trust me.

