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I am a creative professional who brings together the worlds of architecture and UX/UI design. With a keen eye for detail and a passion for design, I have cultivated a distinctive skill set that sets me apart. My proficiency in various design software tools, coupled with a strong understanding of design principles, equips me to transform innovative design ideas into reality. My mission is to contribute my design expertise to create unique and high-quality solutions, enriching the projects I work on.



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Let's Cook: Simplifying Cooking for Youngsters Living Away from Family

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Abstract:

"Let's Cook" is a health recipe application designed to streamline cooking-related chores for young individuals living away from their families. This project aims to address the common challenges faced by this demographic, such as unhealthy eating habits and limited cooking knowledge (Nicole I. Larson C. L.-S.), by offering personalized, easy-to-follow recipes and a convenient ingredients delivery service. The application is built with user-centricity in mind, ensuring that it meets the needs and preferences of its target audience.

To achieve this goal, extensive user research was conducted, including interviews, surveys, and competitive analysis, to gain valuable insights and understand user pain points. The findings were used to develop a comprehensive design strategy, encompassing elements like user personas, journey maps, empathy maps, and a well-defined problem statement.

The project's development phase involved brainstorming and information architecture to create innovative solutions that cater to the specific needs of the users. Wireframes, style guides, and a

click-through prototype were meticulously crafted, ensuring that the interface not only complements the application's functionality but also maintains a high standard of design.

To validate the user-friendliness and effectiveness of the application, usability testing was conducted, and user feedback was incorporated into the final design. The "Let's Cook" project offers a holistic solution to the challenges faced by young adults living away from their families, ultimately promoting a healthier and more convenient cooking experience.

Key Words:

Health Recipe Application, Young Individuals, Simplifying Cooking-related Chores, Ingredients Delivery Service, Unhealthy Eating Habits, Limited Cooking Knowledge, Personalized Recipes

Introduction:

In today's fast-paced world, the transition to independent living is a hallmark of young adulthood. Yet, along with newfound freedom comes a challenge that many young individuals face: the need to cook and maintain a balanced, healthy diet (University, 2015). The "Let's Cook" project has emerged as a beacon of innovation, offering a health recipe application tailored to the unique needs of those living away from their families. This article takes you on a journey through the development and impact of "Let's Cook," a revolutionary solution designed to address the common culinary challenges faced by this demographic. (Anna Hertzler, 1992)

Empowering Independence with "Let's Cook":

Young adults venturing out on their own are often confronted with the twin dilemmas of unhealthy eating habits and limited cooking knowledge (Samara Joy Nielsen, 2002), (Nicole I. Larson M. S.-S., 2006). "Let's Cook" steps in as a guiding light, embracing user-centricity as its guiding principle. The foundation of this project is built on extensive user research, delving deep into the experiences and preferences of the target audience.

Extensive user research methods, such as interviews, surveys, and competitive analysis, were employed to gain invaluable insights into the pain points of young individuals living independently. This research laid the groundwork for a comprehensive design strategy that includes elements like user personas, journey maps, empathy maps, and a well-defined problem statement. The goal was clear: to create a cooking solution that truly resonates with its users.

Empathize:

During the Empathize stage, we conducted user research to gain insights from various users, in order to formulate a comprehensive design strategy. We engaged with a diverse range of users, actively inquiring about their challenges and concerns.

We interviewed 12 potential users over video calls to understand the challenges they face while cooking. A few sample questions are listed below:

1.From where do you have your meals usually?

2.Do you like home cooked food?

3.How often do you order food from outside?

4. Do you cook yourself? How much would you rate yourself in cooking?

5. Do you have any plans or follow any diet plan?

6. Do you have any cheat days?

7. What is your cooking journey?

8. How do you find new recipes?

9. What problems do you face while cooking a new recipe from the internet?

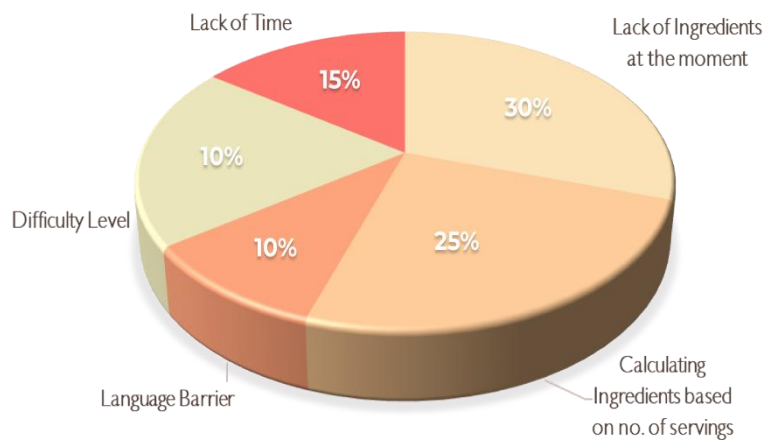
10. Do you avoid any ingredients while cooking?

11. What do you do when you come to know you are lacking on some ingredients while cooking?

12. How do you manage your grocery shopping? Any online apps?

13. What is your biggest roadblock from cooking meals yourself?

14. Do you have any favorite celebrity chef? What do you like the most about him and his channel?



Quantitative Analysis:

We circulated survey form to about 30 potential users to understand the challenges they face while cooking.

Competitive Analysis:

We mapped out 2 competitors and did a competitive analysis to

Figure 1 Pie diagram showing challenges faced by people while cooking.

assess the strengths and weaknesses of current competitors and



Figure 2 Competitive Analysis

build a strategy, identifying potential opportunities to outperform. (BigOven, 2022) (Pepperplate, 2022)

Table 1 Competitive Analysis (BigOven, 2022) (Pepperplate, 2022)

Applications	BIGOVEN	PEPPERPLATE
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic search • Grocery list • Use up leftovers • Menu planner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage recipes • Plan meals • Build shopping list • Add own recipes.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to navigate. • Aesthetically pleasing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add as many recipes as you want. • Cook Now feature allows you to set timer while viewing the recipe.
Pain Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No icons • Meal planner is dysfunctional. Need subscription. • To add items in the grocery list, you will have to manually enter every item. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poorly designed user interface. • No colour theme used. Black colour is used. • Icons used are not easy to understand. • Multiple fonts used. • You have import recipes on their site from other websites and then check it in the app.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Icons could be used instead of only text. • In home page, different sections could be added for the ease in searching recipes instead of scrolling. • Different categories for grocery items could be provided for the ease of searching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A suitable colour theme could be used. • Recipes could be self imported rather than uploading it each time to the website. • User interface could be improved.

**Figure 3 Key Insights from user interviews, Survey and Competitive analysis**

Define

In the Define stage, we gathered research data and created strategic elements like User Journey, User Persona, Empathy map, Information Architecture, Site maps, Wireframing, and more.



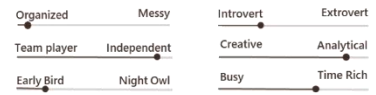
Organized Vinita

#efficient
#responsible
#mother

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age: 42
Education: University graduate
Location: Bangalore, India
Family: Married, nuclear family
Occupation: Software Engineer

PERSONALITY



“
Food is the way to nutrition. I want to make healthy recipes for my family, that my children like. But, sometimes the ingredients are not available at home”

GOALS

- Make healthy meals for family.
- Reduce the amount of time spent in cooking and buying ingredients.

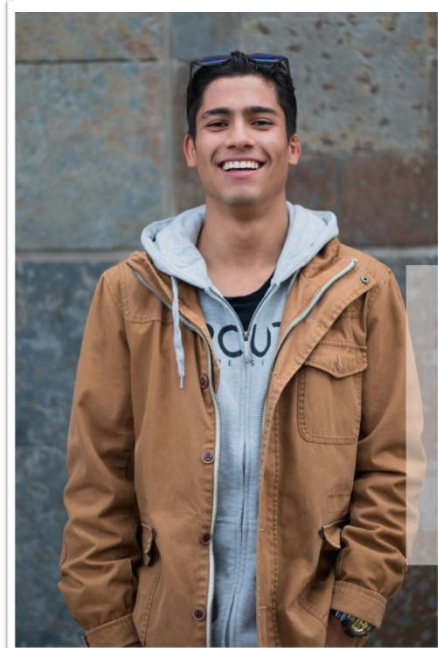
NEEDS

- Recipes for kids that are healthy and easy to make.
- Meal plan for entire week so that the diet is balanced and can buy ingredients accordingly.

FRUSTRATIONS

- Recipes have unusual ingredients, that are not available at home and she doesn't have time to go to market.
- Doesn't like throwing away leftover food or vegetable peels.

Figure 4 User Persona 1



Energetic Siddhant

#teampayer
#messy
#adventurous

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age: 24
Education: University undergraduate
Location: Delhi, India
Family: Single, lives alone
Occupation: Student

PERSONALITY



“
I enjoy cooking, but I often lack time to cook, due to my classes. Ingredient shopping is a tedious task for me. I am very diet conscious.”

GOALS

- Wants to cook and eat healthy.
- Wants to follow a proper diet plan.

NEEDS

- Find recipes which are healthy and quick to cook.
- To make ingredient shopping easy.
- Create diet plans after discussing with a nutritionist.

FRUSTRATIONS

- Often find it difficult to find a quick healthy recipe.
- Ingredient shopping is a big task for me.
- Gets confused in proportion of ingredients.

Figure 5 User Persona 2

User Personas

Storyboarding



Figure 6 Storyboard depicting the journey of a user who decides to cook.
Source: (Freepik, n.d.)(edited by author)

Journey Map

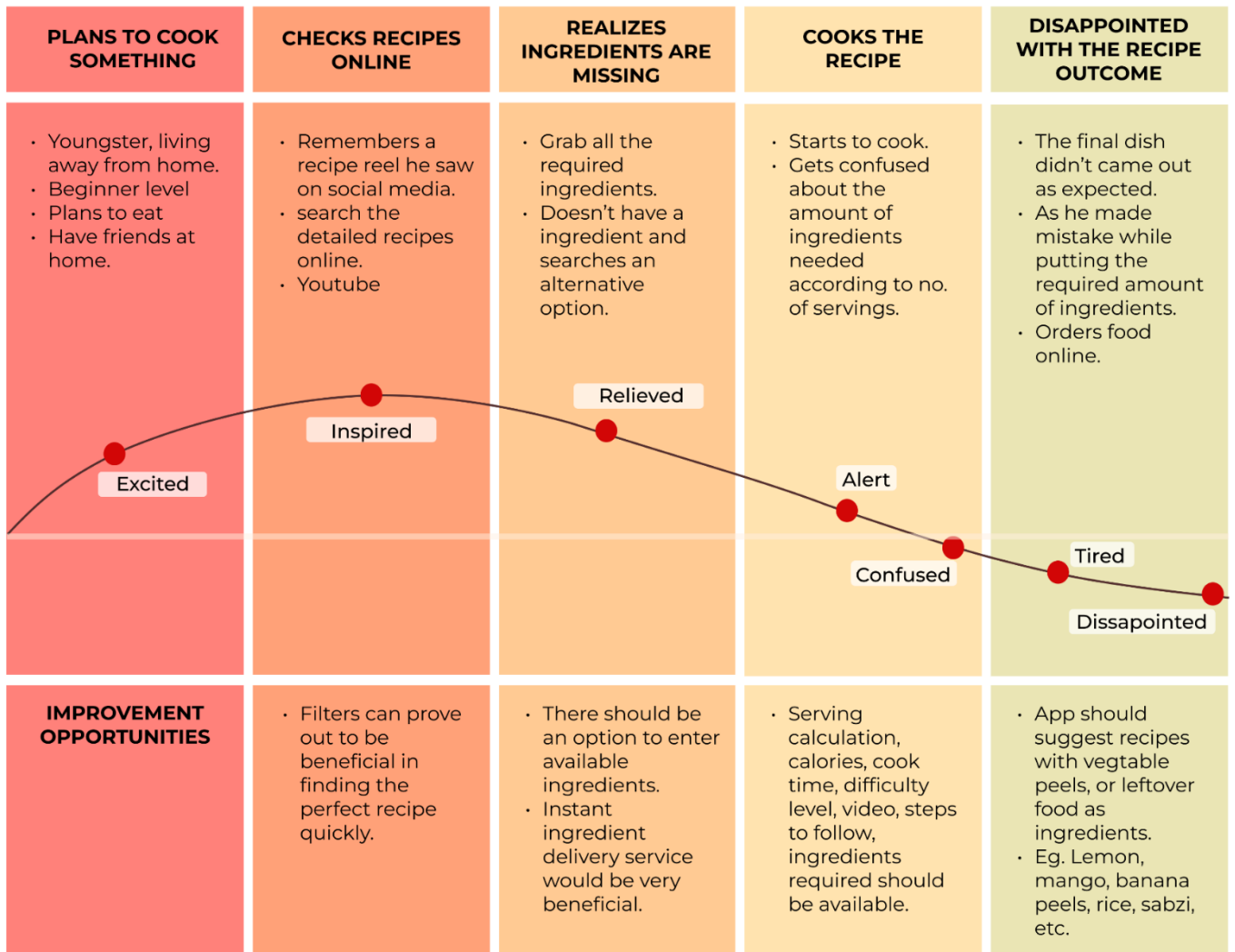


SIDDHANT

SCENARIO: Siddhant is a Young guy, who is living away from home. He wants to quickly cook something tasty as he have his friends at home.

EXPECTATIONS

- Able to follow the recipe steps easy.
- He wont need to go for grocery shopping.
- The final dish turns out well.



(University, 2015)

Figure 7 Journey Map

Empathy Map

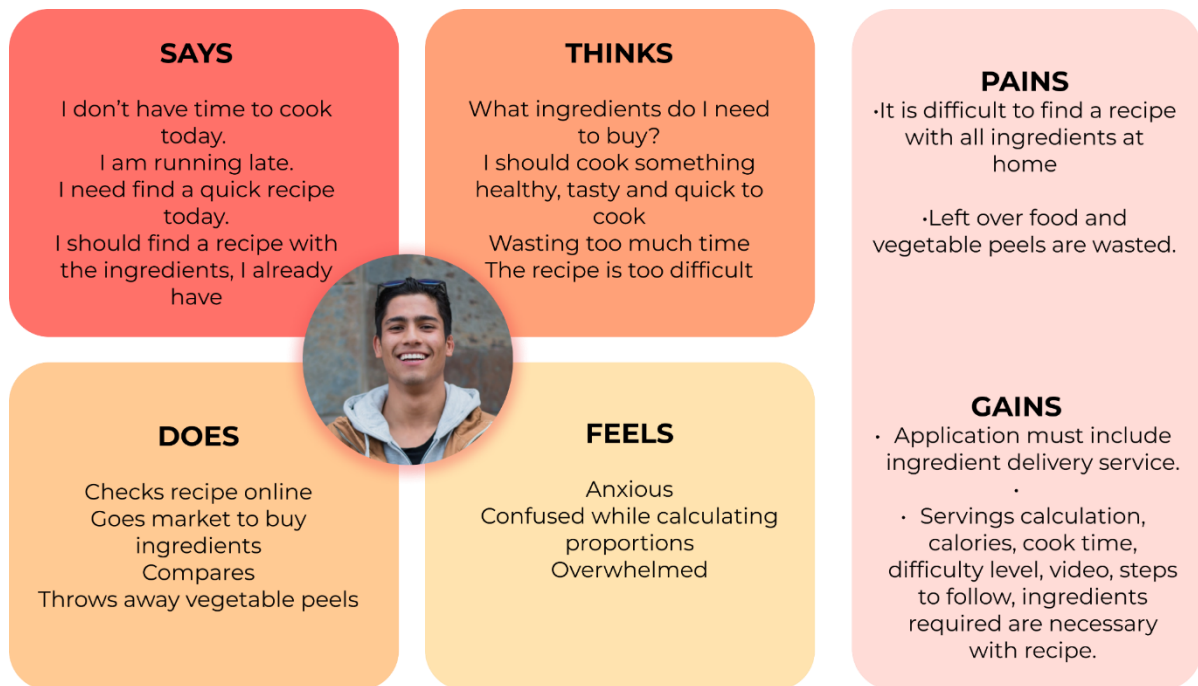


Figure 8 Empathy Map

Invisible Problem:

Based on results of the user interviews, following are some of the findings:

- **Measuring proportion of ingredients according to number of servings**
- **Unavailability of ingredients**
- **Lack of motivation**
- **Lack of time**

How Might We Statement:

How might we enable youngsters who don't know how to cook and live alone to consume healthy self-cooked food.

Innovation in Action:

The development phase of "Let's Cook" was marked by creative brainstorming and an emphasis on information architecture. The focus was on devising innovative solutions that catered specifically to the needs of the users. (Tanya M Horacek, 1998)

Brainstorming:

We drew some insights and brainstormed further to develop creative solutions. We created a set of user stories to carve out the attributes required to solve the problem.

The following are the strategies and approaches that we decided to work further, which would provide essential features and functionalities.

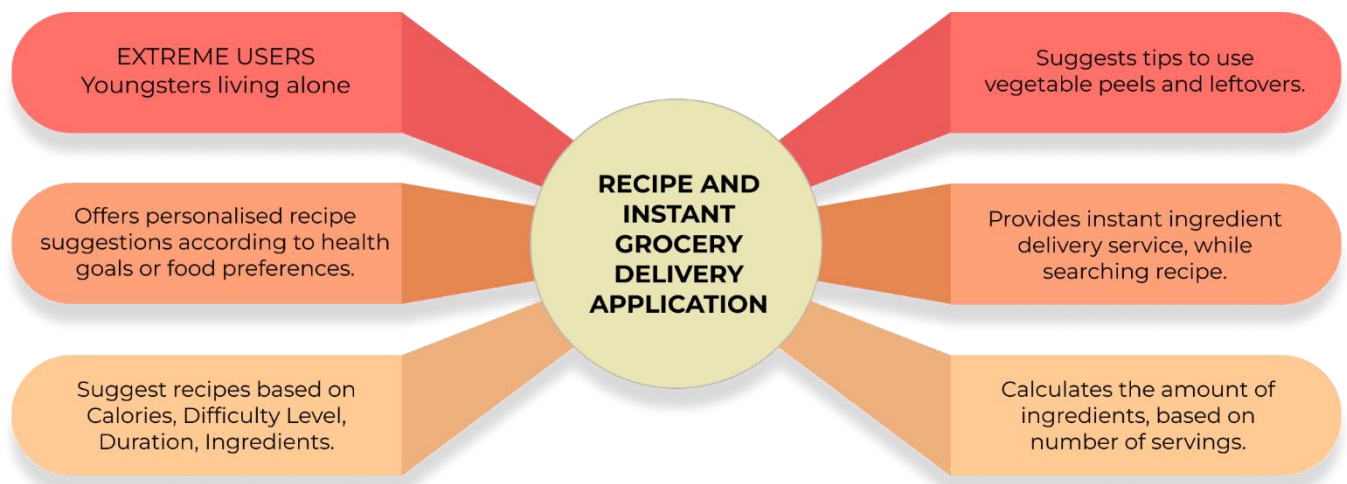


Figure 9 Features of the application

Information Architecture:

After analyzing the data (through research, User needs and key insights), we were able to draw information Architecture which will help us to communicate what the structure of the application will be.

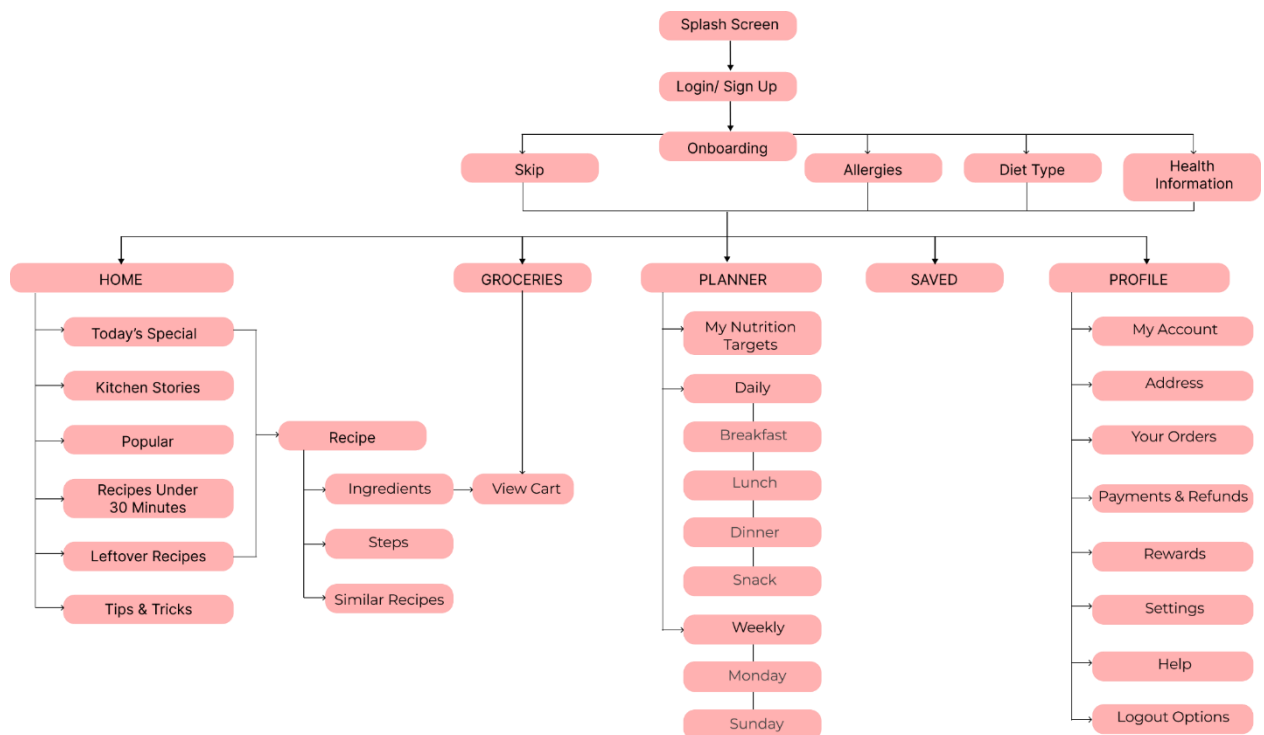


Figure 10 Information Architecture

Wireframes, style guides, and a meticulous click-through prototype were crafted to ensure that the application was not only functional but also visually appealing and intuitive to use.

Wireframes:

After finalizing the overall flow and structure of the application, we started working on the wireframes, to establish a basic structure (layout) of the portal before we proceed with the visual design.

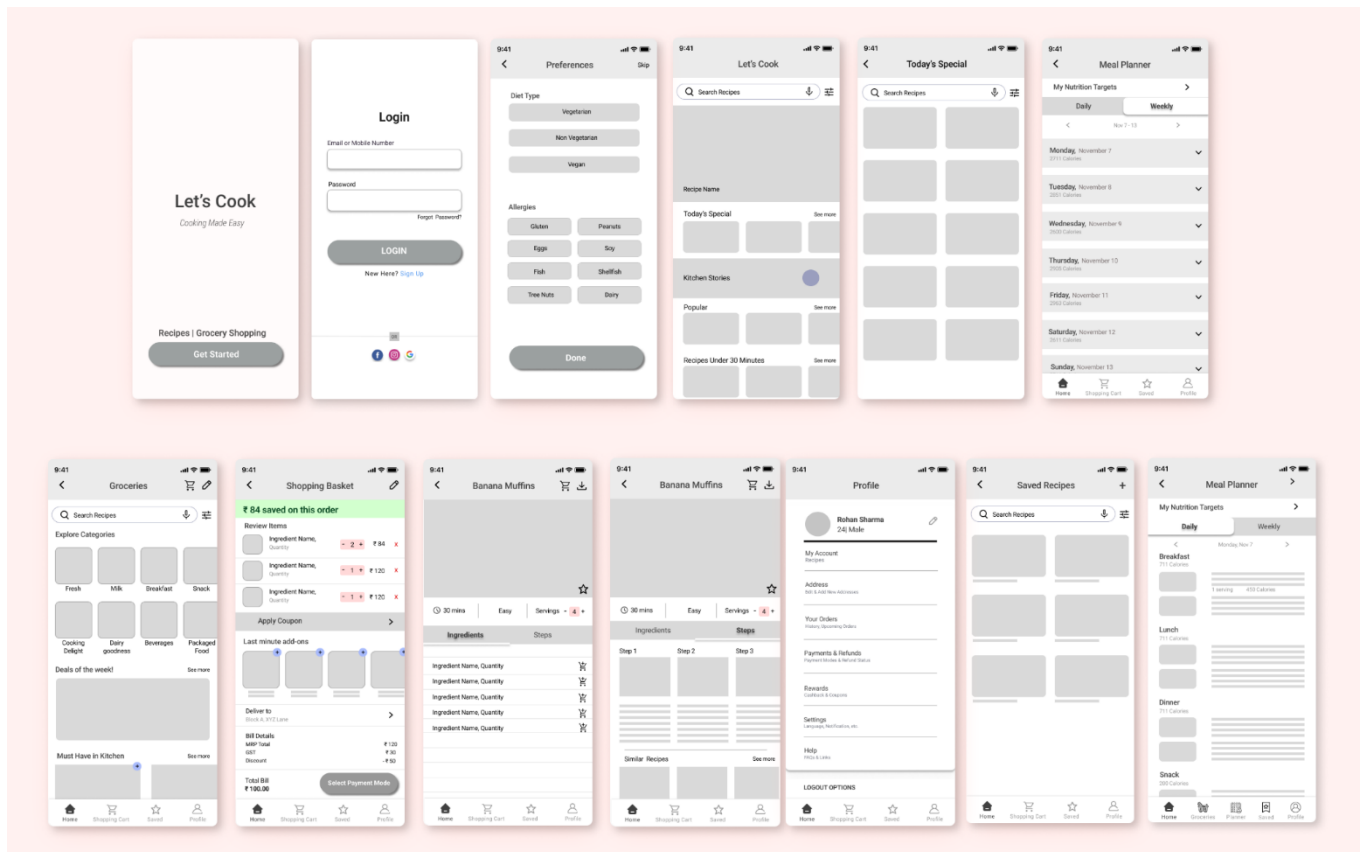


Figure 11 Low Fidelity Wireframes

The user experience was at the forefront of every design decision, from the layout of the interface to the color schemes used. This meticulous attention to detail is what sets "Let's Cook" apart from other cooking apps. It transforms the cooking experience from a daunting task into an enjoyable, stress-free activity.

Style Guide:

Style Guide is the set of standards for the design which covers all the visual standards to design a product.

Color Pallet

Color Selection Rationale: Red and yellow colors are thoughtfully chosen for their strong association with food, evoking the

tastebuds and stimulating the appetite, aligning with the application's motive and services.



Hierarchy

Heading 1

Size: 22 | Weight: Extra Bold

Heading 2

Size: 16 | Weight: Medium

Heading 3

Size: 14 | Weight: Regular

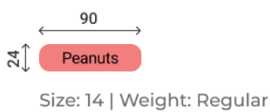
Body 1

Size: 12 | Weight: Regular

Body 2

Size: 11 | Weight: Regular

Buttons



Navigation Bar

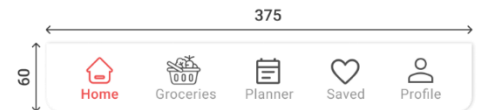


Figure 12 Style Guide of the application

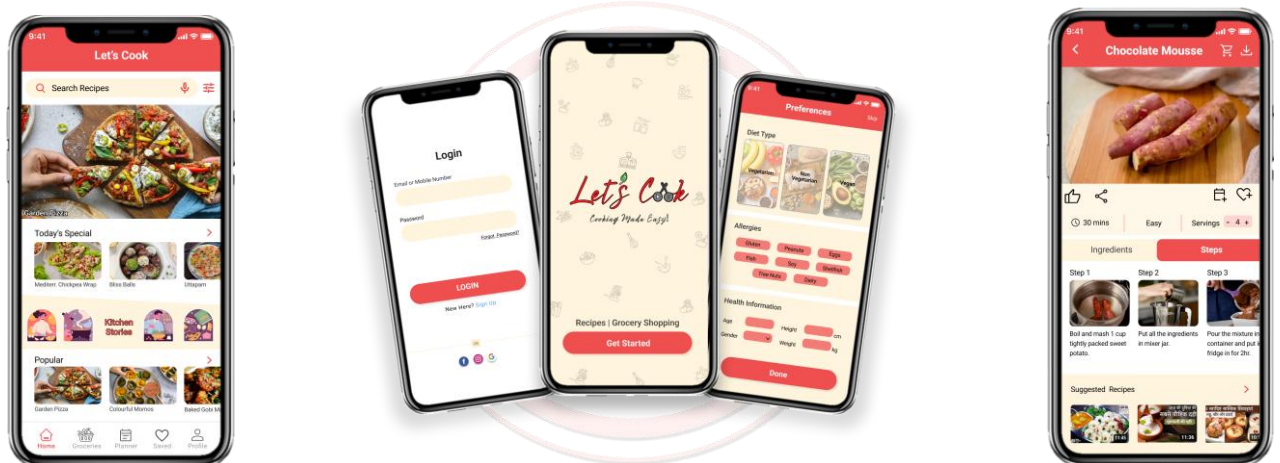
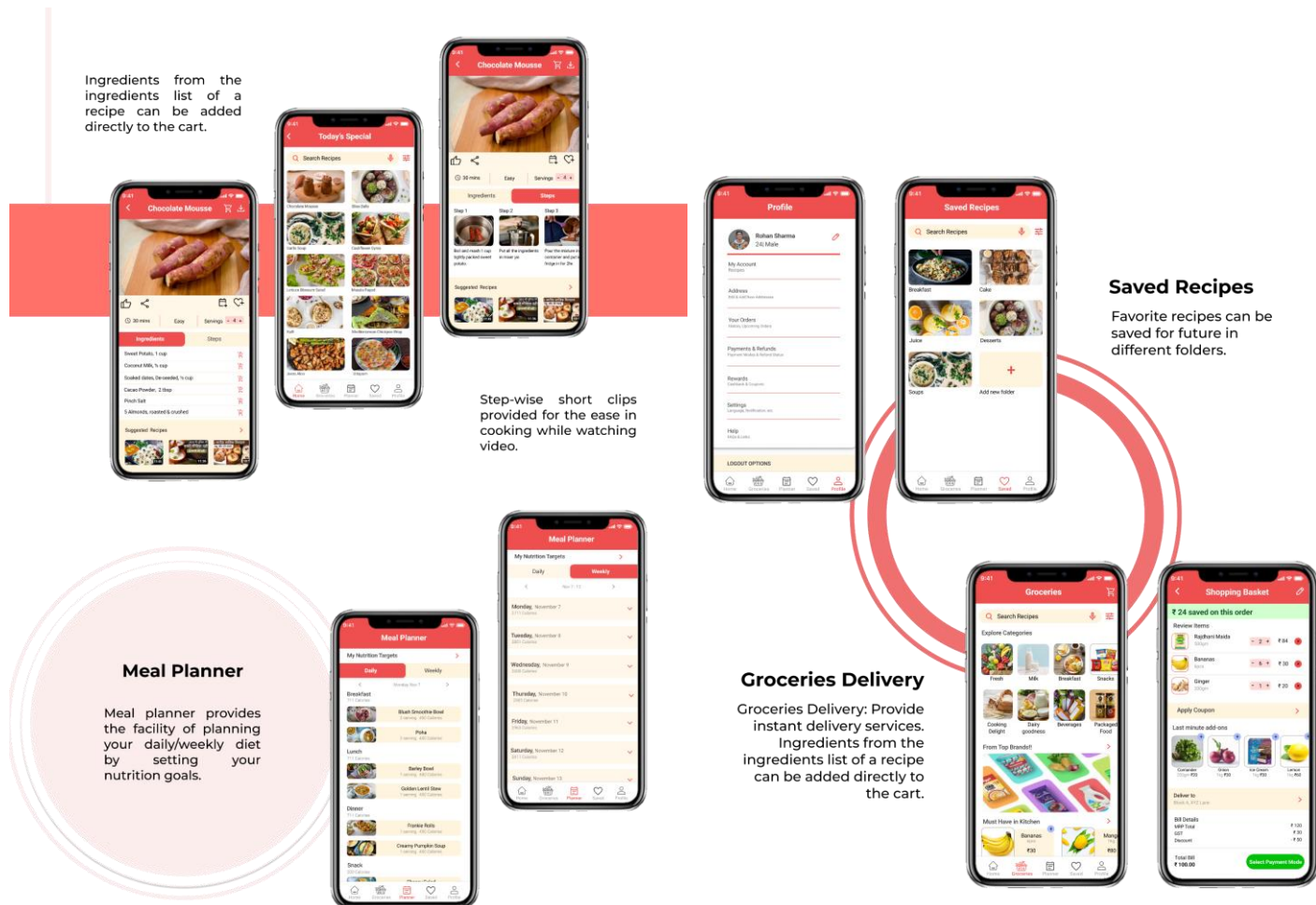


Figure 13 High Fidelity Screens

Final Screens

This iterative approach ensures that "Let's Cook" evolves in sync with the changing needs of its users. It is an application that adapts to the preferences and expectations of its dynamic demographic, making cooking a seamless and enjoyable process.



Ingredients from the ingredients list of a recipe can be added directly to the cart.

Step-wise short clips provided for the ease in cooking while watching video.

Saved Recipes

Favorite recipes can be saved for future in different folders.

Meal Planner

Meal planner provides the facility of planning your daily/weekly diet by setting your nutrition goals.

Groceries Delivery

Groceries Delivery: Provide instant delivery services. Ingredients from the ingredients list of a recipe can be added directly to the cart.

Figure 14 High Fidelity Screens

Continuous Improvement through User Feedback:

Usability testing is a cornerstone of user-centric app development, and "Let's Cook" exemplifies its commitment to enhancing user experience through a moderated usability study. Conducted in Delhi with remote participants, this study lasted 10-15 minutes and unveiled valuable insights. Users found ease in navigating recipes, and their activity steps offered insights into app usage. Notably, participants expressed a desire for a feature allowing recipes to be added to their meal plans seamlessly. Furthermore, users highlighted a keen interest in last-minute add-ons,

indicating the need for a feature suggesting complementary ingredients at the checkout stage.

This iterative approach ensures that "Let's Cook" evolves in sync with the changing needs of its users. It is an application that adapts to the preferences and expectations of its dynamic demographic, making cooking a seamless and enjoyable process.

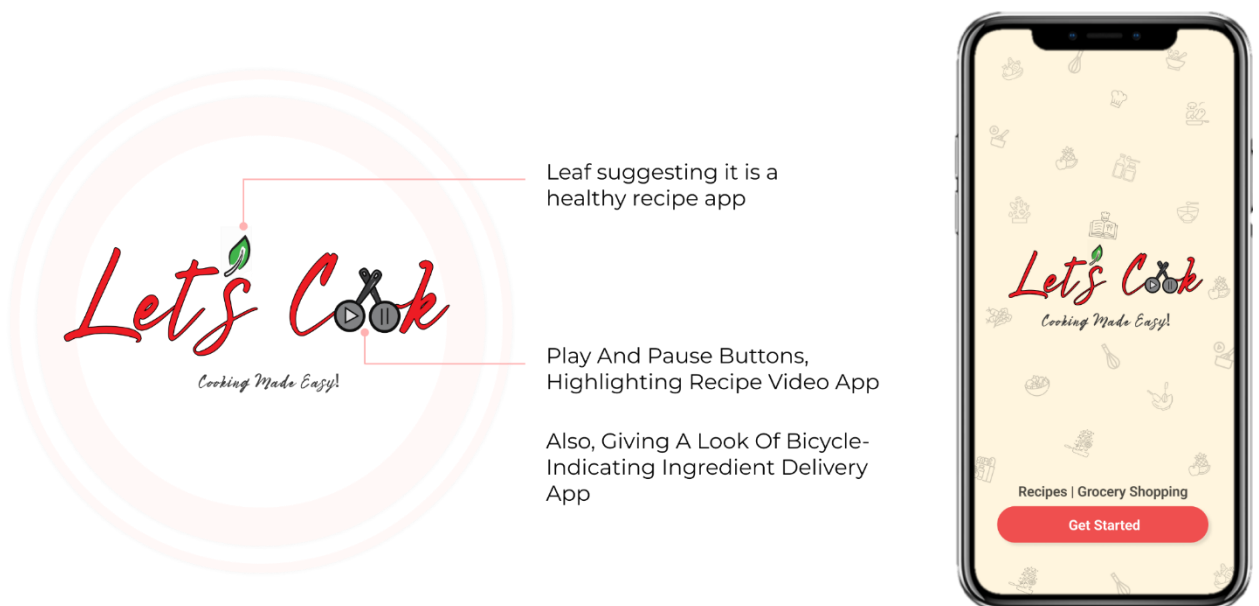


Figure 15 Application Logo

Logo Design:

Typeface: Bright Sunshine font

It is hand-drawn, giving it a unique and creative feel that's perfect for young adults. Its playful and energetic design makes it an excellent choice for cooking apps, adding a sense of fun and excitement to the activity. Using this playful font, gives a message cooking can become a more engaging and enjoyable experience for users of all ages.



Figure 16 Mockups

Conclusion:

In a world where fast food and takeout often tempt young individuals living away from their families, "Let's Cook" is a breath of fresh air. This health recipe application not only offers personalized, easy-to-follow recipes but also provides a convenient ingredients delivery service, making cooking at home a hassle-free endeavour (Nancy M. Betts 1, 1997). Through extensive user research, innovative design, and an unwavering commitment to user feedback, "Let's Cook" has emerged as a holistic solution to the challenges faced by young adults living independently. It promotes healthier eating habits and offers a convenient path to culinary self-sufficiency. As we've explored in this article, "Let's Cook" is more than an app; it's a culinary companion for young adults navigating the journey of independent living, making it a true game-changer in the world of cooking applications.

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