

Gut Instinct

role: Bits of Good Design Bootcamper

timeline: Jan 2025 - present (10 weeks)

tools: Figma, Figjam

topics: User Research, Ideating, Wireframing, Prototyping, Testing

blurb: Designing a mobile app to help campus students with dietary restrictions easily find suitable food options, stay updated on menu changes, and report concerns about food availability and safety.

link: Final product coming soon!

01 | the vision

Problem Space

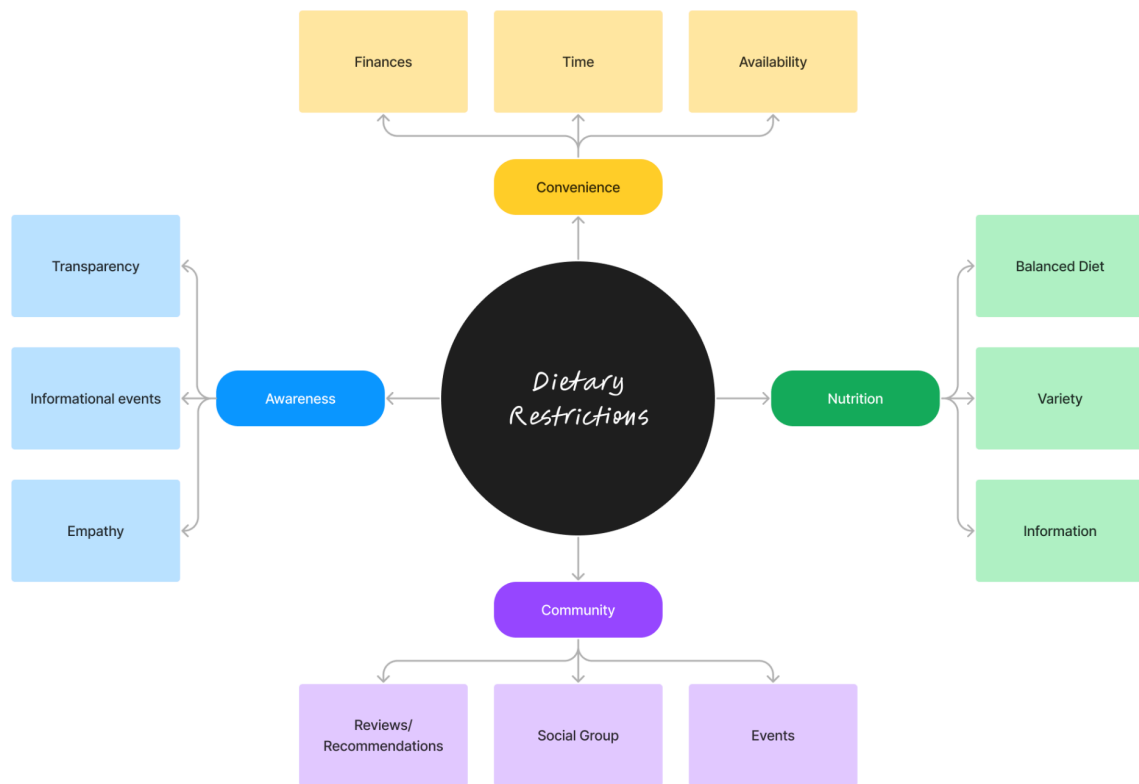
- Many college campuses offer a limited selection of food, making it especially challenging for students with dietary restrictions to find reliable meal options. This issue is particularly prevalent among first-year students adjusting to campus life without the support of home-cooked meals.

Solution

- We are currently developing a mobile app that helps students with dietary restrictions navigate campus dining by providing personalized food availability, real-time updates, and a platform to report concerns about food safety and accessibility.

02 | the research

Ideating



Secondary research: Competitive Analysis

- We looked through six app and websites that also tried to tackle the problems users with dietary restrictions faced. For each app or website, we evaluated the different features they offered, highlighting benefits and drawbacks based on the users' needs.



- What we liked:
 - Apps where users can scan items to learn about its ingredients and nutritional value
 - Community based apps that shared information about whether different restaurants had options for different dietary restrictions
 - Tools that focused on subjective ingredients
 - Tools that provided breadth of information where users could check sources for credibility
 - Delivery apps for convenience
- Drawbacks we saw:
 - Apps that separated food into rigid categories like "good" or "bad"
 - Scanning apps were limited to certain packaged foods
 - Community based websites and apps depended on other users to update information
 - Some tools required subscriptions
 - Some tools were too broad, making it hard to find specific information
 - Concerns on credibility

Primary Research: User Interviews

- In order to better understand the goals and frustrations of our users, we conducted 5 interviews with current students with dietary restrictions.
- We tried to reach a variety of demographics and dietary restrictions:
 - P1: 3rd year college student who has a moderately severe allergy to apples, peaches, pears, plums, durian, all dairy products, and all products that use nuts

- P2: 1st year college student with a mild allergy to all fruits
- P3: 1st year college student who cannot eat milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts and shellfish
- P4: 1st year college student who is vegetarian.
- P5: 3rd year college student who cannot eat meat on all days except Monday and cannot eat beef or pork on all days due to religious reasons

Findings

- After reviewing interview notes and debriefing with my partner, we found that our user group's primary concerns could be split into six categories: Cross Contamination, Mislabeling, Variety of Available Food, Health Problems, Consideration, and Inconvenience.
- Here is an affinity map we used to organize our key findings:

CROSS CONTAMINATION	MISLABELING	VARIETY OF FOOD AVAILABLE	HEALTH PROBLEMS	CONSIDERATION	INCONVENIENCE
Helle Huang	Sargema Shrestha	Helle Huang	Sargema Shrestha	Sargema Shrestha	
"There's a lot of cross contamination between the meat and the vegetarian food. For instance, if there's if some of the scrambled eggs at breakfast falls into this bacon, that's in the next compartment, the tech dining worker will take the eggs out of that bacon compartment and put it back into the eggs compartment, which cross contaminates the food."	"I ate a carrot cupcake. That was supposedly vegan. It didn't say it had like dairy in it. But I ended up having dairy and I had an allergic reaction. And then I didn't trust Nav for a while."	"Finding enough protein and just honestly finding any food to eat, that's not pizza."	"Um, well, I've lost weight since being here because I have no access to food at Georgia Tech. And I've also recently become an iron deficient because of my lack of access to food"	"I don't think they really treat me any differently, but it's like... it's really nice when people remember like your allergies and they're careful about it...so sometimes like they forget but then I don't really feel like reminding them."	"Yeah, actually, every time I go out to eat, if I know where I'm going to be eating beforehand, I like try to look up the menu so I know what to order?"
Sargema Shrestha	Helle Huang	Sargema Shrestha	Sargema Shrestha	Helle Huang	Helle Huang
"I think cross-contamination is probably bigger of an issue than like incorrect labeling."	"So, like, for example, with like the desserts, there's the vegan chocolate cake and there's regular chocolate cake. Sometimes they put the wrong label out."	"Um, there are very minimal options. I'm forced to be on a dining plan that and often I go to the dining halls and I leave with nothing to eat."	"My biggest challenge would be protein because I can't eat dairy products and like dairy is like a really big protein source so then I have to substitute that with something else. And that's not always readily available."	"People don't really understand the levels of dietary restrictions or the allergies someone can have. So like I'm allergic to dairy. And then when I say allergic to dairy, people assume I'm lactose intolerant."	"But I usually cannot have them, so I'll eat dinner before"
Helle Huang	Sargema Shrestha	Sargema Shrestha	Helle Huang	Helle Huang	Sargema Shrestha
"So like every time I volunteer at PSA or ISA, I never eat any of the food...because I'm very scared of cross contamination"	"I would say at the dining halls I always make sure to read the labels, but sometimes they're labeled incorrectly so I end up like having allergic reactions to things."	"There's like a lot of not like too much variety and like over the course of like a few weeks, it's like the same thing over and over again"	"...can't eat fruit too much so I have to like take supplements for vitamins. And then usually for like dining halls and stuff, most of the main food they have isn't super nutritious"	"I feel very unsupported."	"If I can't identify like what kind of food is there I'll make sure to check the menu. And if it's not a place I can eat, then I should have let that be known. Like the people I'm with are pretty receptive to that."
Helle Huang	Helle Huang	Helle Huang	Helle Huang	Sargema Shrestha	Helle Huang
"For like example I guess when at Wilago some things like when you have like, they start Pokebowls once and it was kind of like worried about like fruit cross contamination "	"I've only had the spigen myself from one due to a dining hall encounter, and then if you're thinking of like student like center type situation, I've only had maybe one issue in a student center."	"They don't have chicken dishes and the vegetarian dishes are also, they also suck. And I'm kind of just like left with mid food"	"In terms of having vegetarian or like whatever like restrictive options they do basically always have something. But it's not like that option is always good"	"There are just also just people who don't care."	"... some people like eat beforehand before they go to an event because they can have any of the food served there"
Helle Huang	Sargema Shrestha	Helle Huang	Helle Huang	Sargema Shrestha	Helle Huang
"Workers you can tell like some of them care more than others like switching gloves when they should and shouldn't."	"There was also one time when I got a dish with pork in it and it was florally just because it wasn't labeled"	"I feel like there's a lot of options to choose from."	"Yeah, they do forget quite often because it's just like a weird allergy to have."	"I mean, like overall about any dietary restrictions I think people were like mostly like okay with it like everyone understands that people have their needs and what they can't have and can't have."	"Plant-based foods are much more expensive."
Helle Huang	Helle Huang	Helle Huang	Helle Huang	Helle Huang	Helle Huang
	"I feel like the labeling has gone better recently like compared to my freshman year, something got better."			"I feel like verbally I'm very supportive I think like obviously like when it comes to just like individual people, sometimes people just like don't care"	
				"It does get really frustrating when you're like, wait, I can't eat this because the people don't listen to my concerns or there was a lack of consideration for my concerns in the first place."	
				"There were a couple of times, especially Asian restaurants, where I'll like specify things and like other like there's a miscommunication or they just don't understand me. And I'll get dishes where like, I genuinely just can't eat that."	
				"We're pretty open to dietary restrictions. I haven't met anybody that's just like you should eat beef."	

03 | the analysis

Key findings

1. Uncertainty of Food
 - a. "I ate a carrot cupcake. That was supposedly vegan. It didn't say it had dairy in it, but I ended up having dairy and I had an allergic reaction And then I didn't trust Nav for a while."
2. Lack of Awareness
 - a. "The institution as a whole and tech dining does not really seem to care about people's dietary restrictions, even after my parents and many other parents have reached out regarding this situation in the dining halls."
3. Lack of Variety of Food Options
 - a. There's like a lot of not like too much variety and like over the course of like a few weeks, it's like the same thing over and over again and then some. So, it's just like not the best quality.

Design Goals

- .How can we better inform users of the ingredients, and keep the information up to date?
- How can we promote awareness among organizers and staff to create actual change?
- How can we keep users updated on changes in availability?

User Personas

- We then created two user personas to represent some of our user demographics based on the information we gathered during our research



"I just want to have options that I can enjoy."

Bianca Morris

Information

- 19 years old
- Out of State (Charlotte, North Carolina)
- 1st year Industrial Engineering Major

Bio

Bianca is a first year Industrial Engineering major from North Carolina. Bianca has been vegetarian for the past 6 years out of choice, and she is on the first year unlimited dining plan, and mostly relies on the food from Nav dining hall.

Frustrations

Bianca finds the options at Nav to be very limiting. Many times there are never enough options for her. Even if there is options, she finds the food is not very enjoyable, but feels the need to eat it so she can try to get the nutrition she needs. Since coming to college, she feels that she is not getting the proper nutrition she needs due to the limited at the dining hall. At the Student Center she finds that she can always find an option, but prefers not to always rely on the Student Center for meals because the food is not always the healthiest. As an out of state student she wishes she could regularly go home on the weekends to bring food, but she does not have the option. Also, since she is living in the dorms, she cannot regularly use the kitchen and cook meals, and she finds that to be expensive.

Wants & Needs

- To have more options at the dining halls, and for them to actually be healthy and enjoyable to eat
- Find a community to know she is not alone, and so she can find people to rely on



"I need to know what I can and can't eat to stay safe."

Michael Pan

Information

- 20 years old
- In State (Alpharetta, Georgia)
- 3rd year Computer Science Major

Bio

Michael is a third year Computer Science major from Alpharetta. Michael has a severe allergy to all dairy products, and he gets most of his food by cooking at his apartment off campus.

Frustrations

Michael cooks most of the food he eats because that way he can be sure that there are absolutely no dairy product in the food he eats. When eating outside, he has to be careful about foods that even contain trace amounts of milk, cheese, yogurt, etc. As a result, he does not eat at dining halls often and chooses not to eat during events at times because he is not sure what went into the food, or if there was any cross-contamination. As a student, Michael finds that he is very busy during certain weeks when he has exams and projects, and wishes that he can order food to eat during those times so that he does not have to spend time cooking. Unfortunately, it is sometimes hard to find restaurants he knows he can trust and he often has to rely on the same few places he knows he can eat from.

Wants & Needs

- To be able to tell for sure what foods he is able to eat at dining halls, events, and restaurants
- To have more options for food that does not contain dairy products

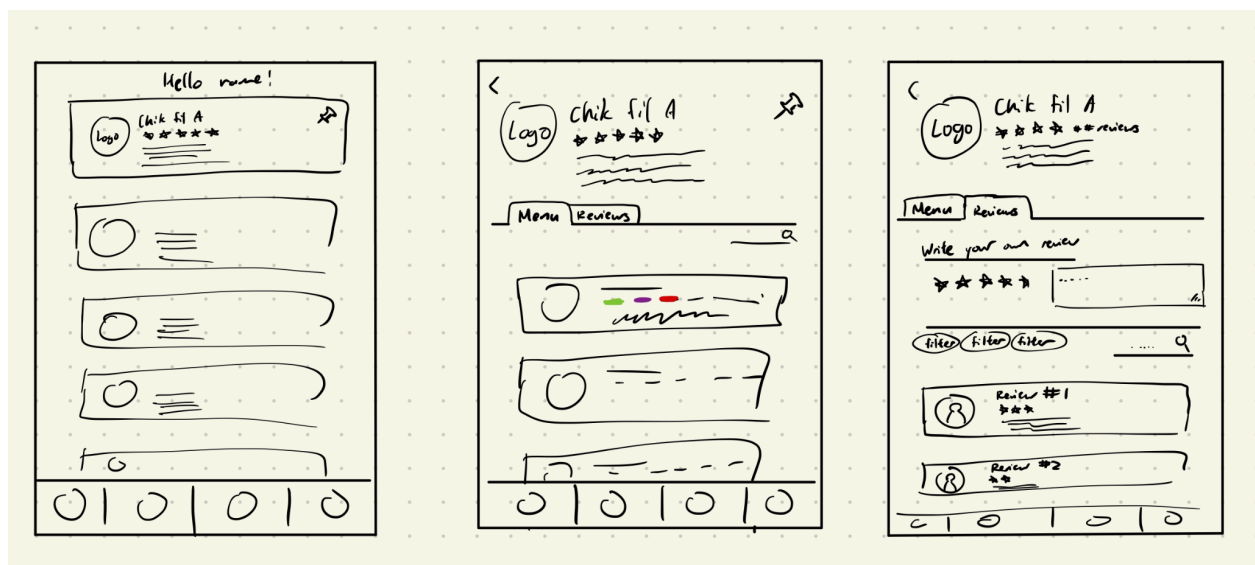
03 | the execution

Possible solution ideas

- The user's can personalize the application to look out for their specific food restriction.

- A browser extension that provides the user with information about specific ingredients based on the online menus at the food places.
- **Live updates that show the user any changes that have been made in dining halls and on campus food places. (new dishes, change in ingredients, availability etc.)**
- **User's have the ability to provide feedback and rate on campus food options. For example, talking to workers directly or liking specific menu options for metrics**
- User's have the option to find people with the same food restriction has them. This way they can connect and discuss where to find the best options for them.
- **Live updates about on campus community events, and the ability to organize an event for students. Specifically events about food restrictions. (EX: Gluten Free Day!)**
- **When logging in, users can search for their campus and login with the school specific email. This way the app will be personalized to what each campus offers in terms of food options.**
- **Each food option on campus will be given a rating dependent on different food restrictions. For example, Chick-Fil-A could get 2/5 for Vegetarian friendly, and 0/5 for Halal friendly.**
- **User's have the ability to submit support requests directly to those on campus that are in charge of dining.**
- **Recommendations tab that is personalized to every user. For example, someone who is vegetarian would be recommended places that are vegetarian friendly on campus.**

Wireframes



Mid-Fi





[NAME]
-Georgia Institute of Technology-

Restrictions

Three horizontal input fields for restrictions.

Log Out



Name

John Smith

University

Georgia Institute of Technology

Restrictions

Three horizontal input fields for restrictions, with a plus icon at the end of the last field.

SAVE



Name

John

Univer

Geor

Save Changes?

Go Back

Discard Changes

Restrictions

Three horizontal input fields for restrictions, with a plus icon at the end of the last field.

SAVE

