



Needfinding

Culture through Cuisine

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Our PotLuck



Defne



Kyla



Janet



Amrita

Potluck
item:



Potluck
item:



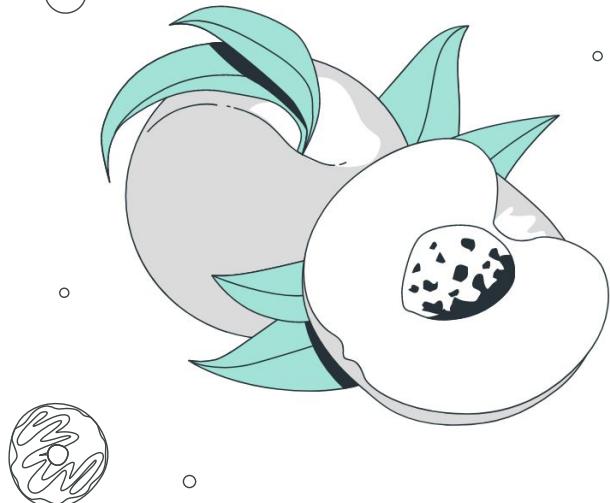
Potluck
item:



Potluck
item:



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Problem Domain
Food as a means of connection
and a measure of vitality.



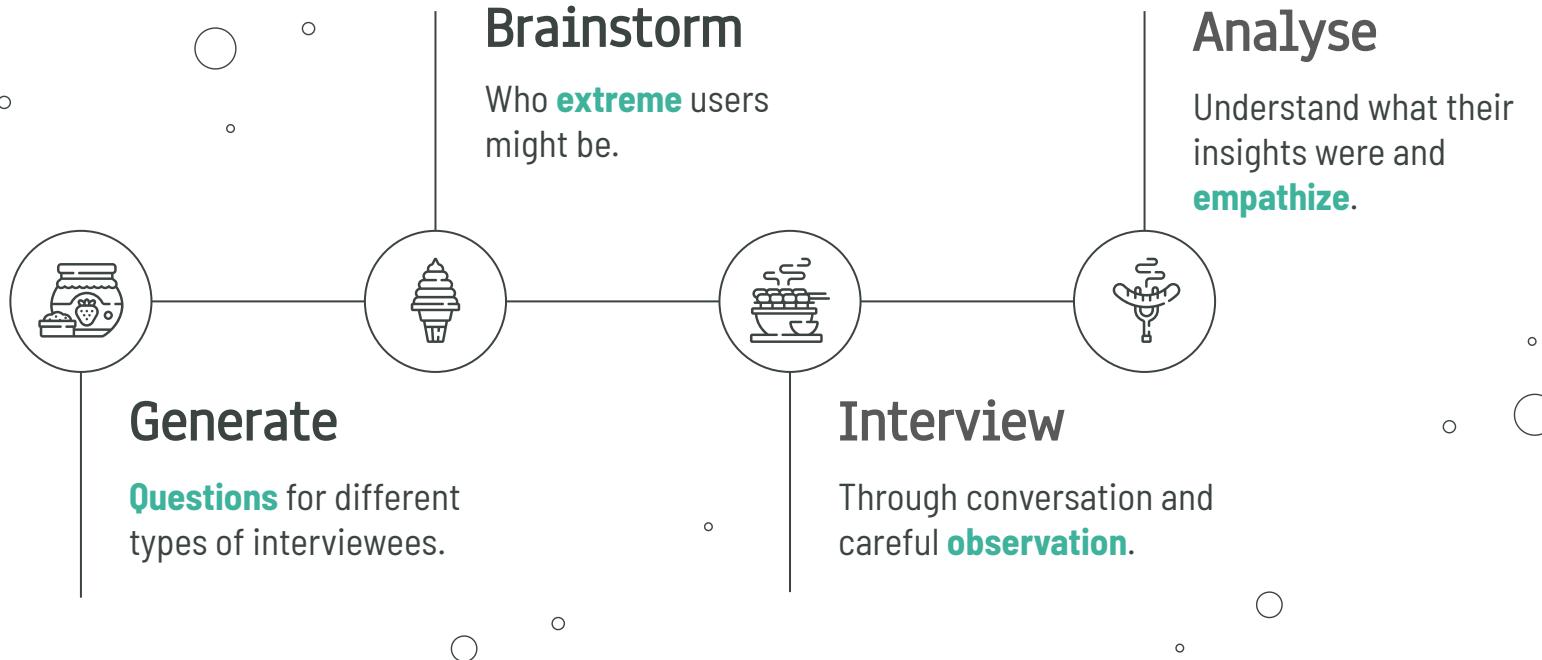
Needfinding
Methodology, Location, and
Extreme Users



Analysis
Selected empathy maps and
Key Findings



Methodology



Questions

How often do you cook, and what dishes do you make?

Traditions or rituals you have around food?

Strong memories you have around food?

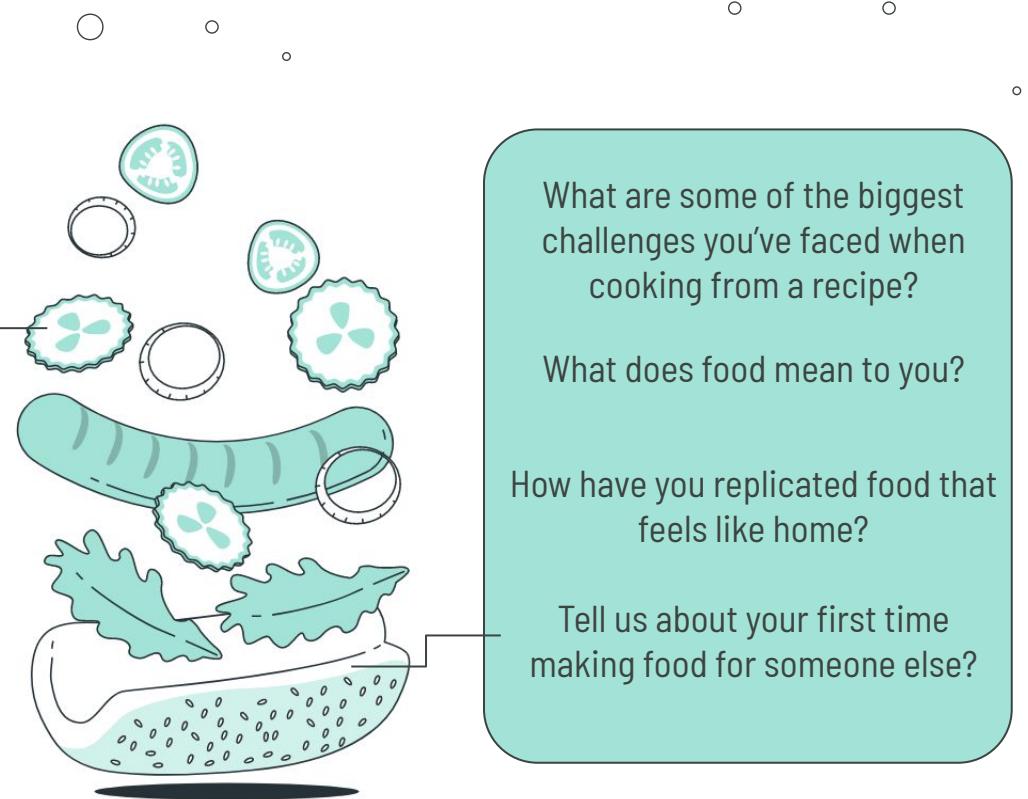
What were mealtimes like for you growing up? How has that changed?

What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced when cooking from a recipe?

What does food mean to you?

How have you replicated food that feels like home?

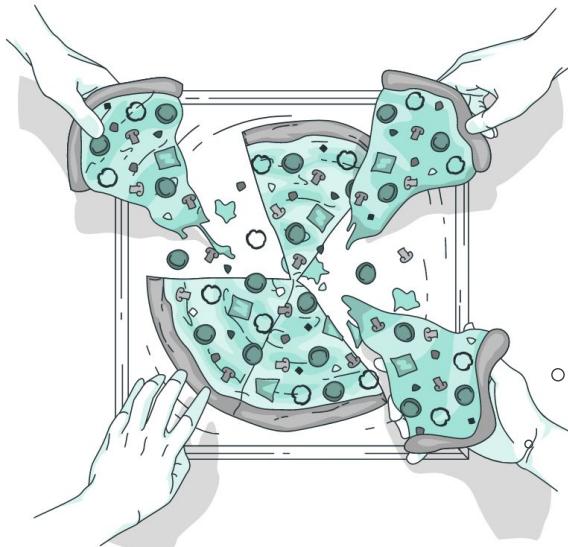
Tell us about your first time making food for someone else?



Our PotLuck-ers

Interviewees

- Average users (consumers), extreme users (chefs), non-user (industry expert)
- Non-Stanford students

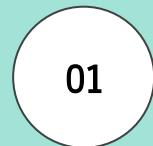


Perspectives

- Diverse backgrounds: immigrants from different countries
- Variety of job roles
- Variety of motivations behind cooking
- Variety of cooking experience and interest levels

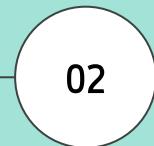
Meet Our PotLuck-ers

Food Consumer



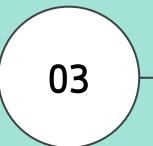
Martin

Shop Owner



Grace

Chef



Jaclyn

Chef



Sofia

(Extreme) (Extreme)



01

Martin

Real estate developer from Oakland

Interview conducted at Verve cafe while taking physical notes

Context & Observations

Who is Martin?

- Avid biker in his mid-30s
- Can recognize “well-made food with high-quality ingredients”
- From Oakland, **no strong cultural ties** outside the Bay Area
- Puts together very simple meals on most days and eats out twice a week

Surprises:

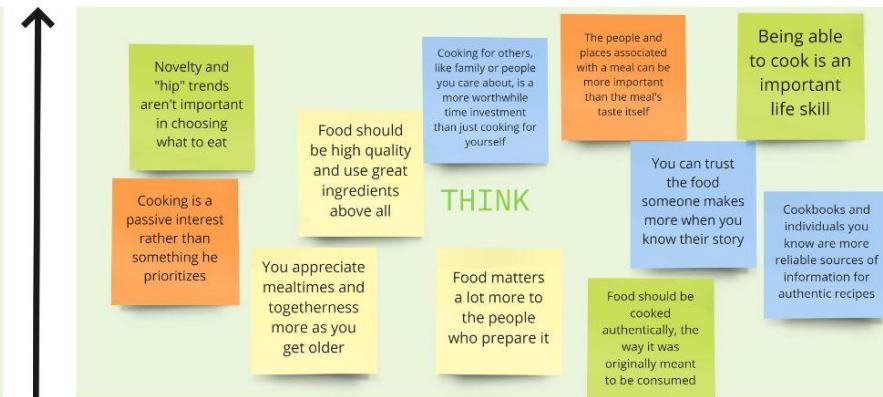
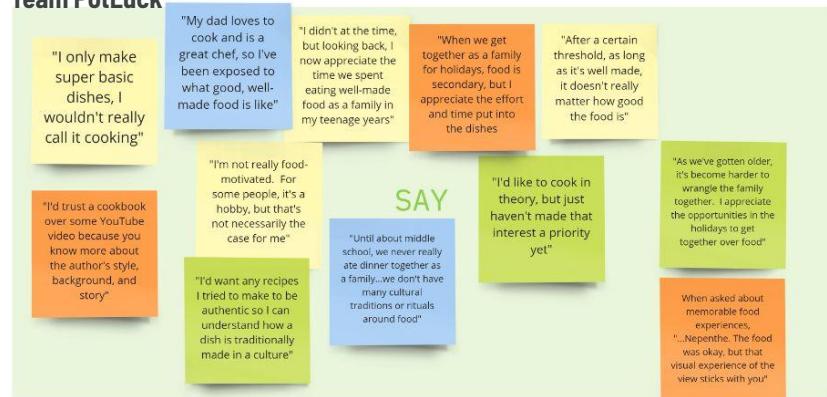
- Holds “no traditions or rituals associated with food” and enjoys trying food from other cultures that are prepared traditionally
- Describes himself as **not particularly “food-motivated,”** sees exploring food as a hobby

Contradictions:

- Doesn’t consider food a passion/hobby of his
 - Cares about the **quality** and **cultural authenticity** of his food, but doesn’t feel that replicating more complex dishes is worth it when only cooking for himself
-

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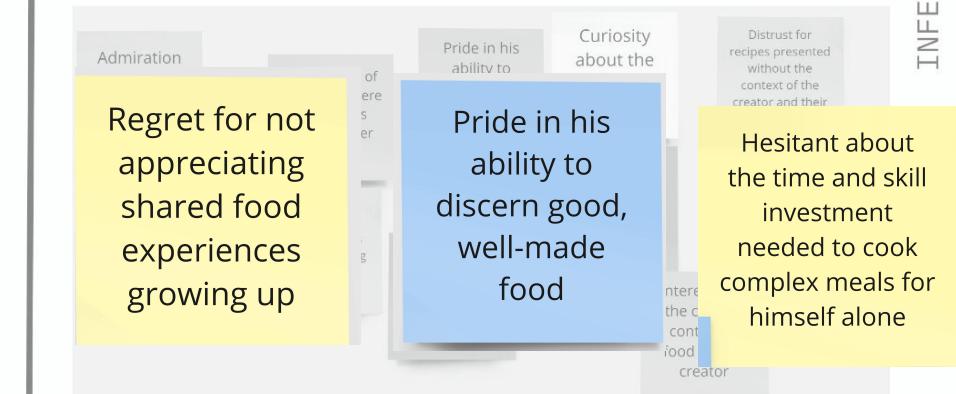
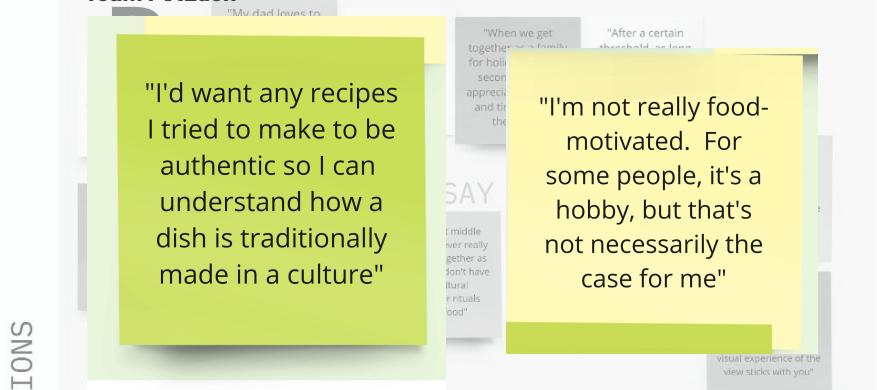
OBSERVATIONS



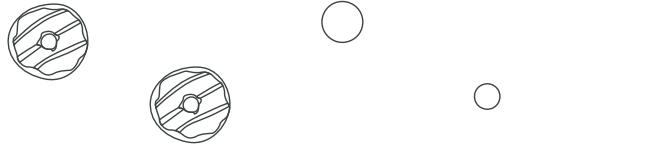
INFERENCES

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OBSERVATIONS



Key Insights

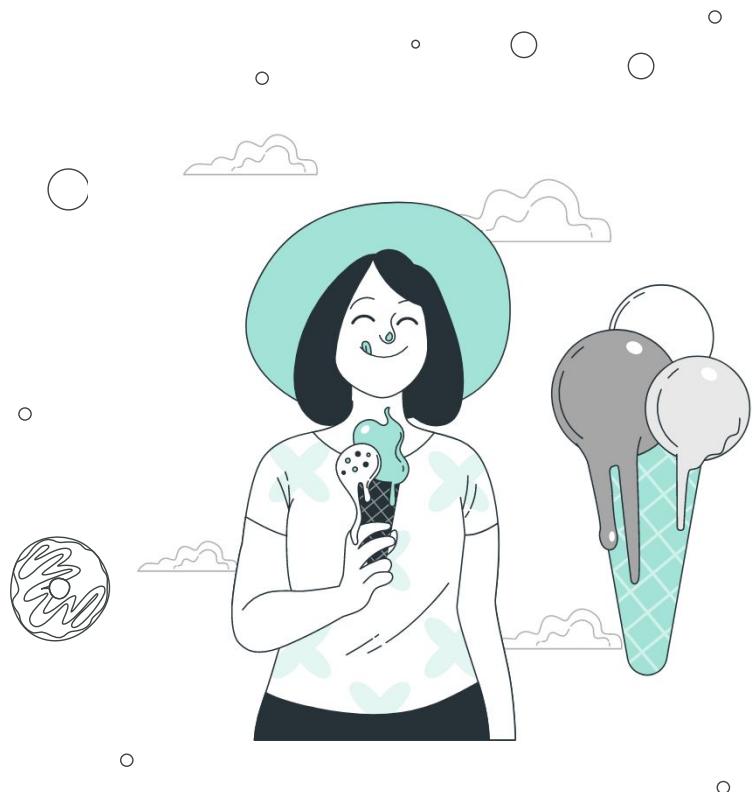


Key Insights:

- Some people see food as a **passive interest** rather than a passion or hobby
- People can appreciate well-made, high-quality, home-cooked food and still feel that making such food for themselves is **not worth** the difficulty

We wonder if this means...

- People need to understand the **story, cultural context, and experience behind food** in order to be connected to it and appreciate it further
- Cooking for others may feel more meaningful than cooking for yourself



02

Grace

Manager of 99 Ranch (Asian Grocery)

Interview conducted at 99 Ranch while taking physical notes

Context & Observations

Who is Grace?

- Immigrated with her husband and children from Taiwan 10 years ago

Surprises

- Some immigrants feel a lot of **comfort** at an Asian grocery because it **reminds them of home**
- The Asian grocery also has western products, so can help **bridge cultures**
- When people bring recipes of a cuisine they are not used to, they are not always authentic

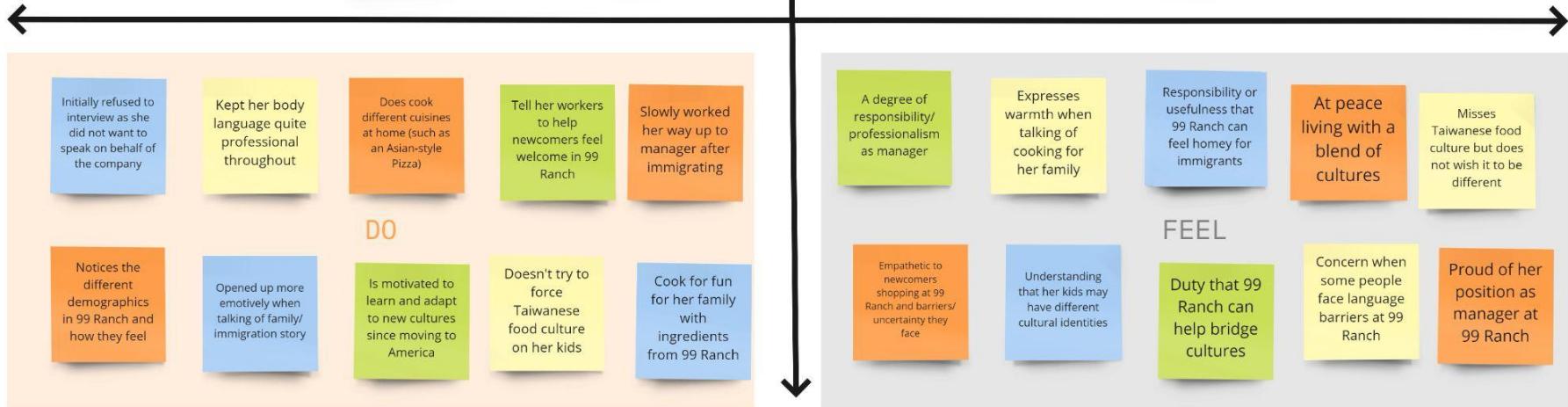
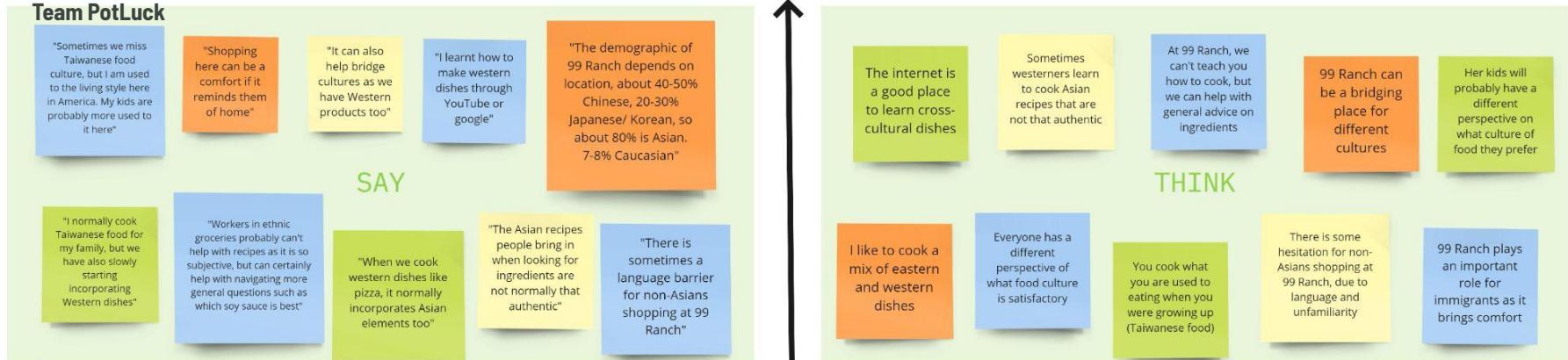
Contradictions

- She misses Taiwanese food culture, but also enjoys American food culture

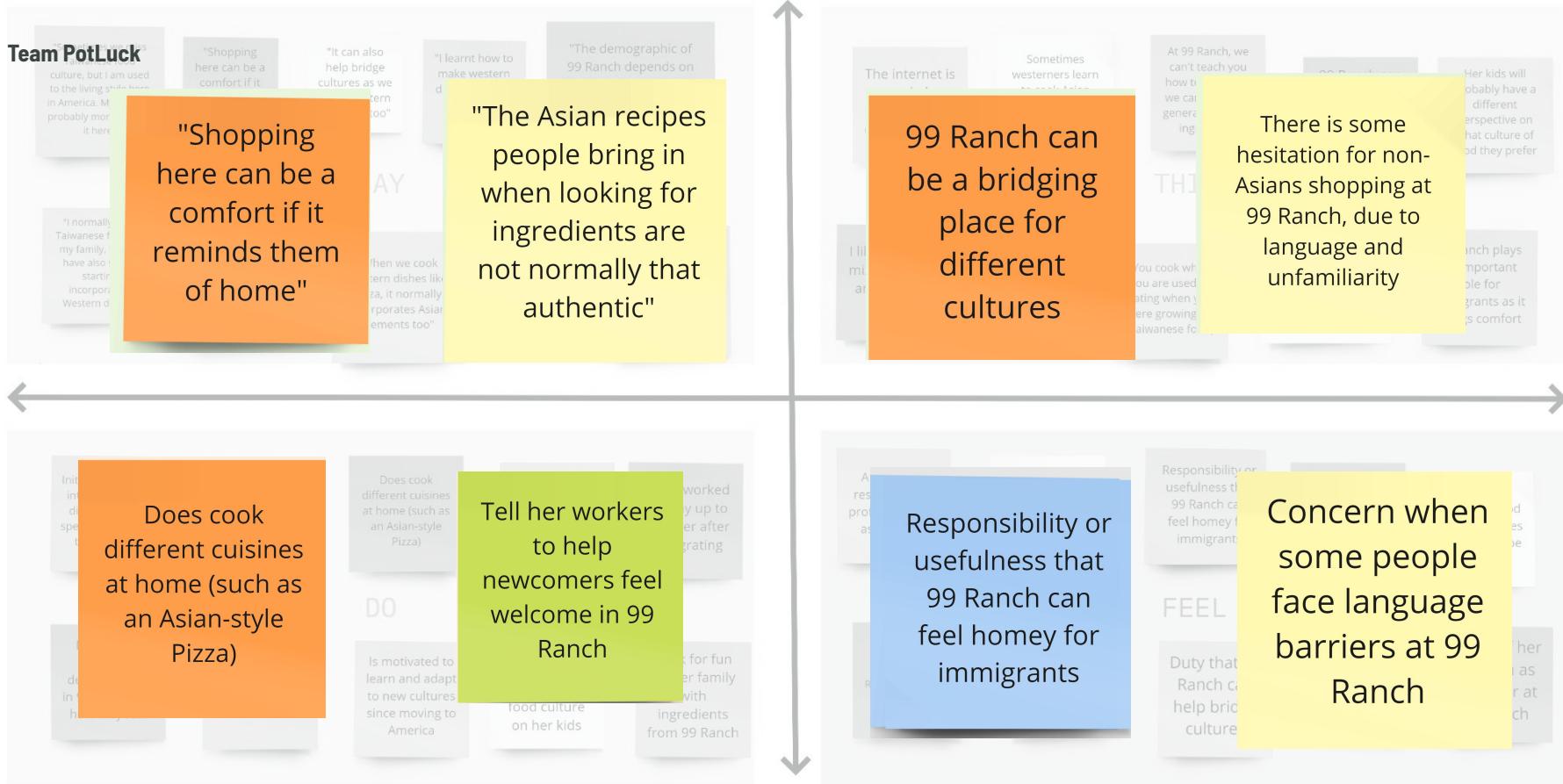


OBSERVATIONS

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OBSERVATIONS



Key Insights

Key Insights:

- There is some **difficulty in finding authentic recipes** from different cultures due to language barriers and where to find these resources
- Familiar and unfamiliar foods can lead to feelings of comfort/ belonging or discomfort/ hesitation

We wonder if this means...

- There are **more barriers** to cooking cross-cultural dishes than we realized (logistic / language difficulties as well as self-consciousness)
- **Authentic ingredients** can have a big impact on one's connection to culture



03

Jaclyn

Owner and Head Chef of Comida Peruana

Interview conducted at Farmers Market and transcribed using with **Otter.ai**

Context & Observations

Who is Jaclyn?

- Immigrant from **Peru**, Mother
- Dreams of opening up a Peruvian coffee shop one day

Surprises:

- To experience authentic Peruvian food, Jaclyn believes you must visit Peru.
- Jaclyn was incredibly knowledgeable about the **historical traditions** that the food represented: e.g. Chasqui Peruvian messengers gaining strength through quinoa
- What you eat is a representation of your health and discipline

Contradictions:

- Wants to expand her business and scale, but is scared to teach other individuals and let go of "her way" of cooking

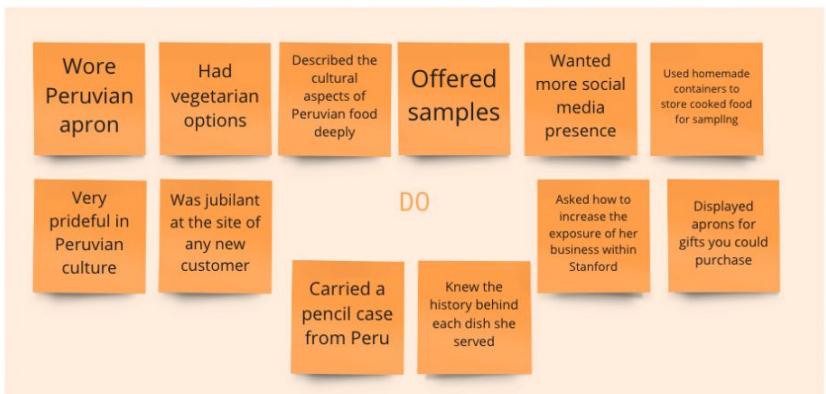


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OBSERVATIONS

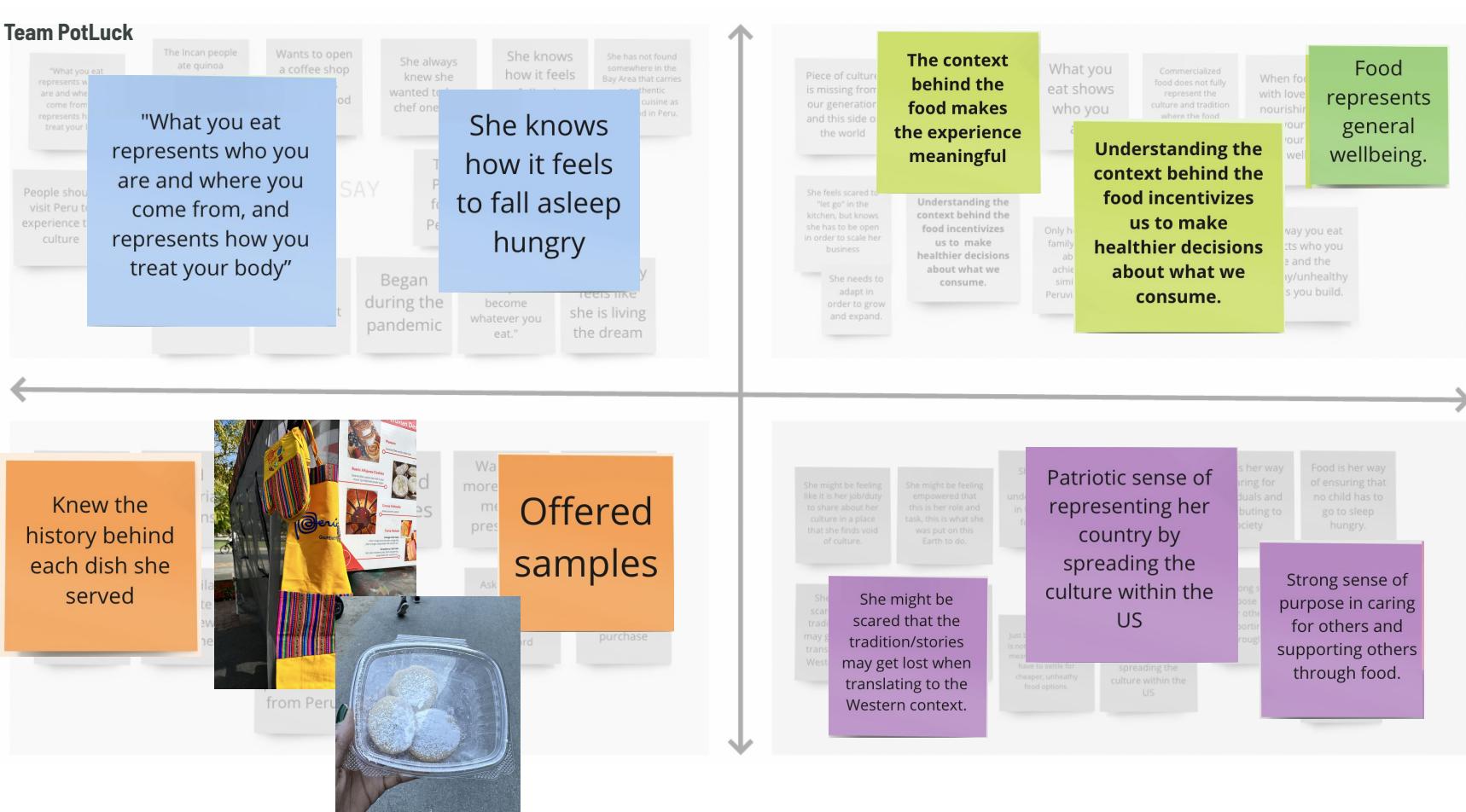


INFERENCES



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OBSERVATIONS



INFERENCES

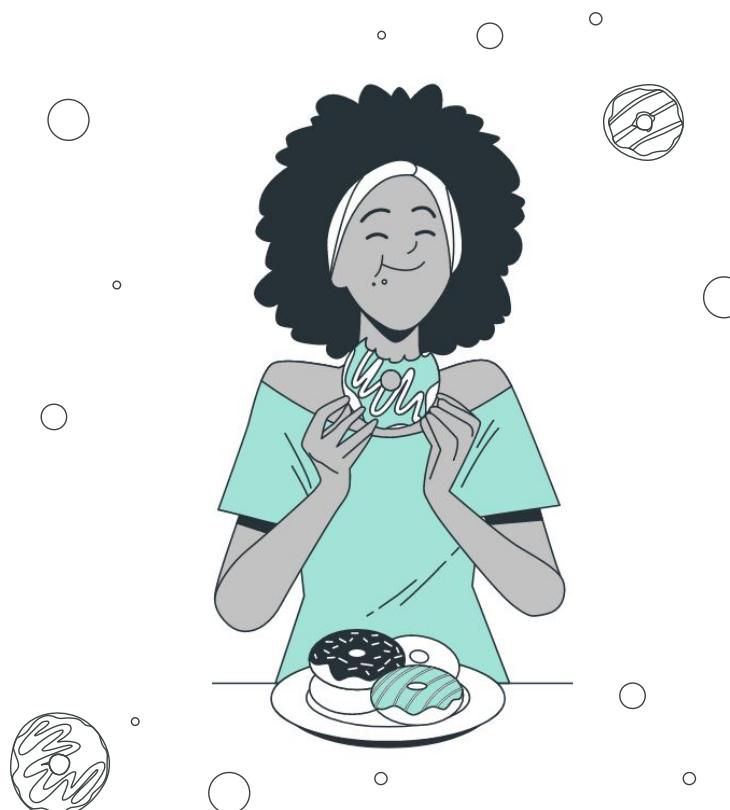
Key Insights

Key Insights:

- The **history of a food** can be used to contextualize its health benefits.
- Authentic cuisine is difficult to recreate in a casual setting without the right ingredients and equipment.
- Scaling means more chefs trained with similar recipes—this is a source of worry!

We wonder if this means...

- People need to be informed on the **cultural/historical context** of a food to recognise its health benefits
- Chefs want to balance **preserving authenticity** with making recipes **easy-to-replicate and scalable**



Extreme user!

04

Sofia

Chef at Xanadu House at Stanford.

A teal rounded rectangle containing the number 04, the name Sofia, and her title as Chef at Xanadu House at Stanford.

Interview conducted in Xanadu computer cluster, recorded with **Otter.ai**

Context & Observations

Who is Sofia?

- Came to the U.S. from Mexico when she was 16.
- Used to be a hasher before she became a chef at Stanford.

Surprises:

- She hated to cook as a child and learned to cook on the job as a hasher.
- Dislikes the idea of cooking at home and goes out to eat on weekends.
- Goes to English websites even for Mexican dishes.

Contradictions:

- Enjoys the appreciation for her cooking from students, but never cooks for family or loved ones.
- Says she has more screenshots of recipes than pictures with her family on her phone, yet doesn't ever cook outside of Stanford.
- Says her mother is the best cook she knows, but also doesn't reference her as a source of recipes.



Trending Now

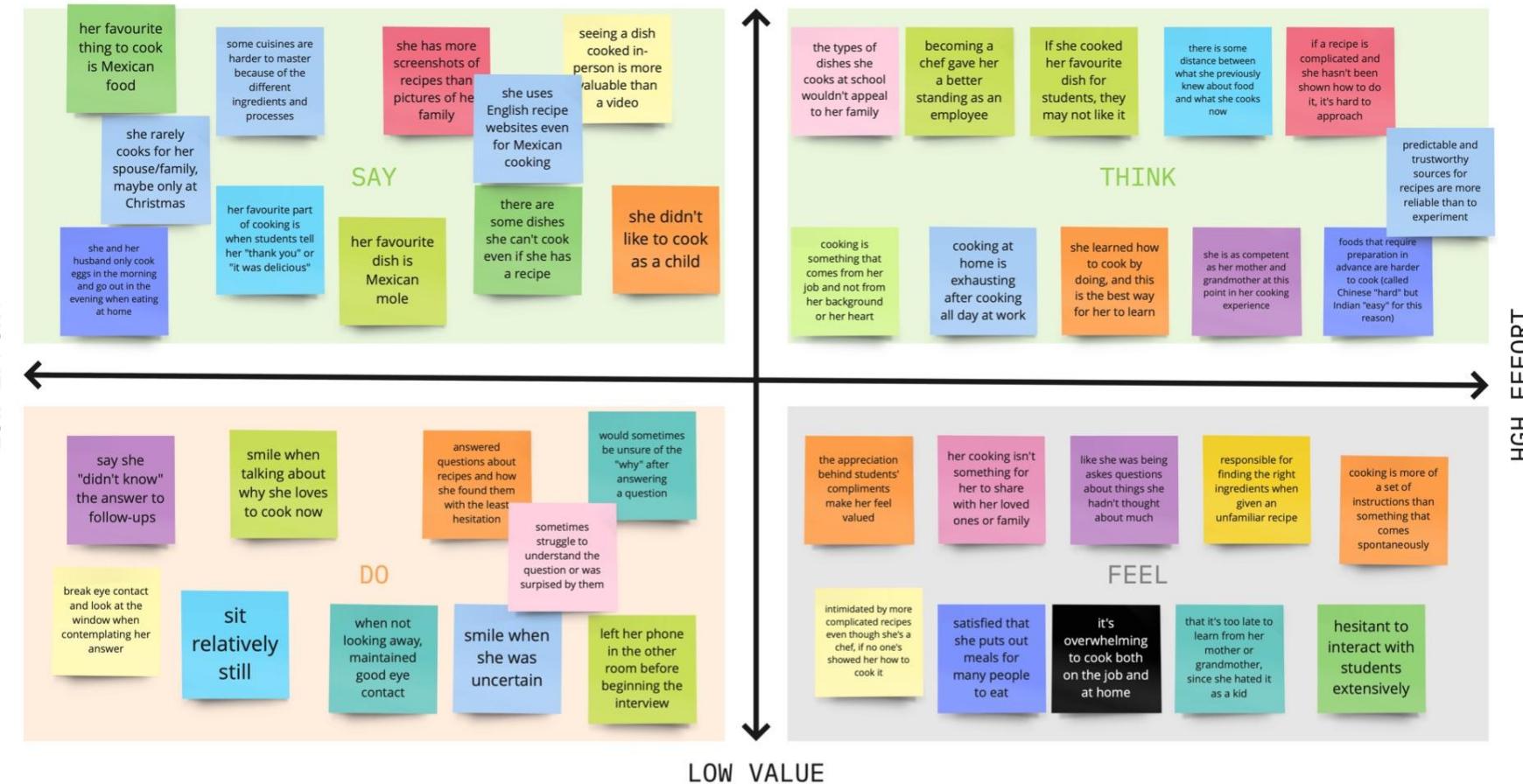


10 Fall Flavors That Are Better Than Pumpkin Spice

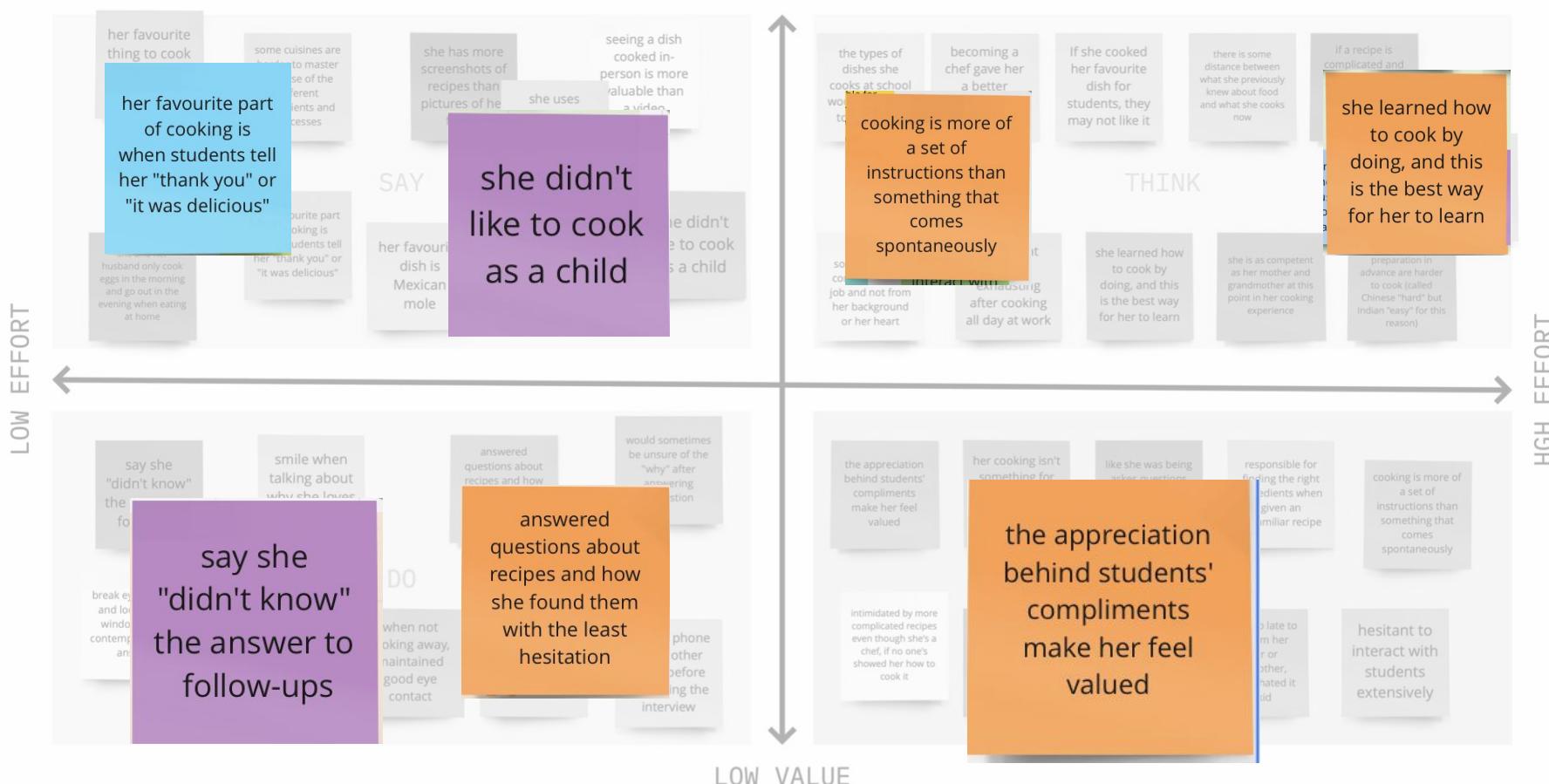
By Bailey Fink



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Key Insights

Key Insights:

- Seeing the real-life movements of somebody cooking greatly **accelerated** her learning process.
(preferred videos > recipe books)
- She didn't like the idea of cooking until she learned it **on the job**.
- Her favourite part of cooking is receiving **compliments** from students.
- She wouldn't cook the same things for the students and her family, and always uses **English** recipe sites.

We wonder if this means...

- Her perspective on the food she cooks is heavily influenced by **whom** she's cooking it for.
- Learning how to cook oftentimes **comes from necessity** and not genuine passion or interest.
- More **widely-accepted** dishes are less **intimidating** to want to cook for others.

Recurring Themes

Authenticity

Authentic food made from authentic ingredients is hard to come by, but extremely relished.

Outlook

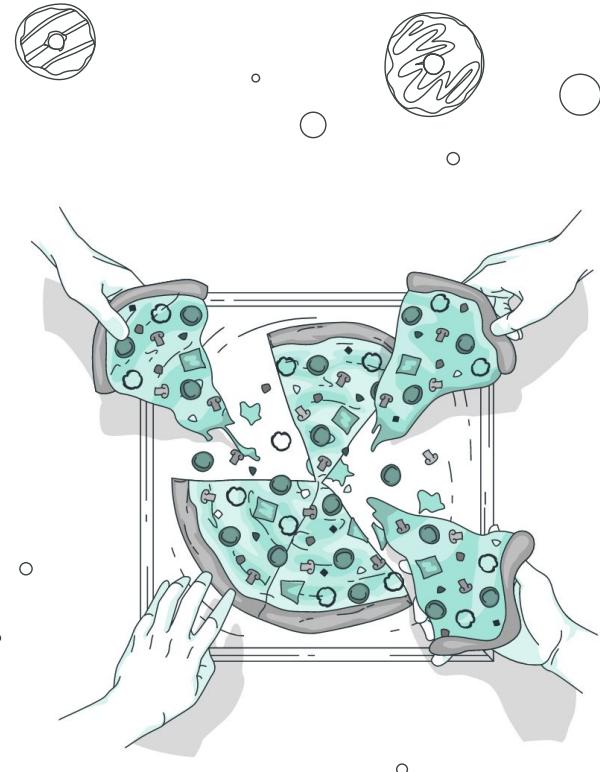
The experience of cooking and eating can be purely transactional (for work, just to be full) rather than deeply personal and intentional.

Hesitation

There is some barrier to sharing food/cooking for others (perfectionism, being unsure if palatable to different cultures, etc.)

Audience

Who they cooked for mattered to most of our interviewees and shaped the way they think about cooking.



Summary: What's Next?

- Diving further into effective ways of **preserving tradition while spreading culture.**
- Diving further into **reducing barriers (effort, language, insecurity)** to authentic cooking
- We've seen common threads of hesitation and with several topics around food- what could help them?
- Interviewing more people and **validating/invalidating** these insights.
- Developing prototypes for re-emerging ideas!

Appendix

<https://food52.com/recipes/84225-mole-sencillo-recipe>

<https://www.allrecipes.com>