Home Cooked Meals App

Prologue

For my Interaction Design Studio class, I was assigned to a group with two other students, Holden and Grace, to develop our first-ever design plan.

Seeking a Problem

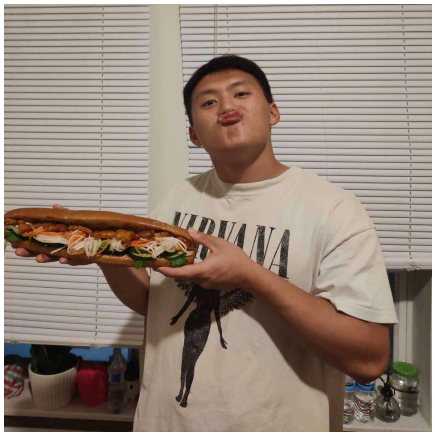
To develop a project we first had to seek the needs of people. Our group began by sharing our interests with one another and the inevitable downfalls of the activities that we experience in our lives.

The area that interested us the most is home cooking because our group enjoyed cooking at home but there was a lot of stress that stemmed from cooking and steered us away from certain dishes.

With that, we decided to set out to research other home cooks and their processes to seek specific needs that we might be able to accommodate.

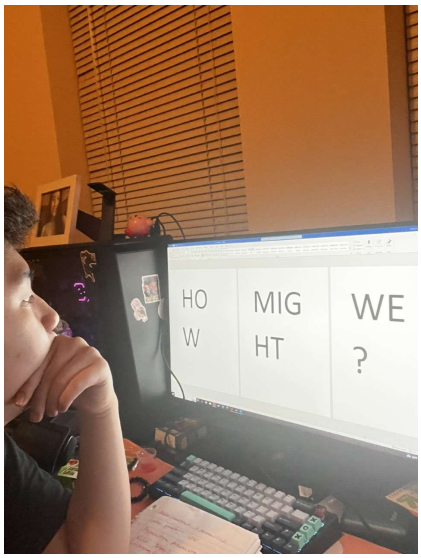
Research

Each of us looked for two participants to observe cooking at home in their normal context asking questions like “How did you choose this dish?”, “How much preparation did you need before this?”, and “Why did you do this the way you did?” to gain honest and realistic information about their experience.



Through our research, we found consistent stress that stems from not knowing what to cook as well as being restricted by time due to a busy schedule.

With these issues in mind, we had to create a “How might we…” statement that describes the core problems underlying many of the user's needs, helping us to ground ourselves and create ideas with that in mind.



Our team came up with this message statement.

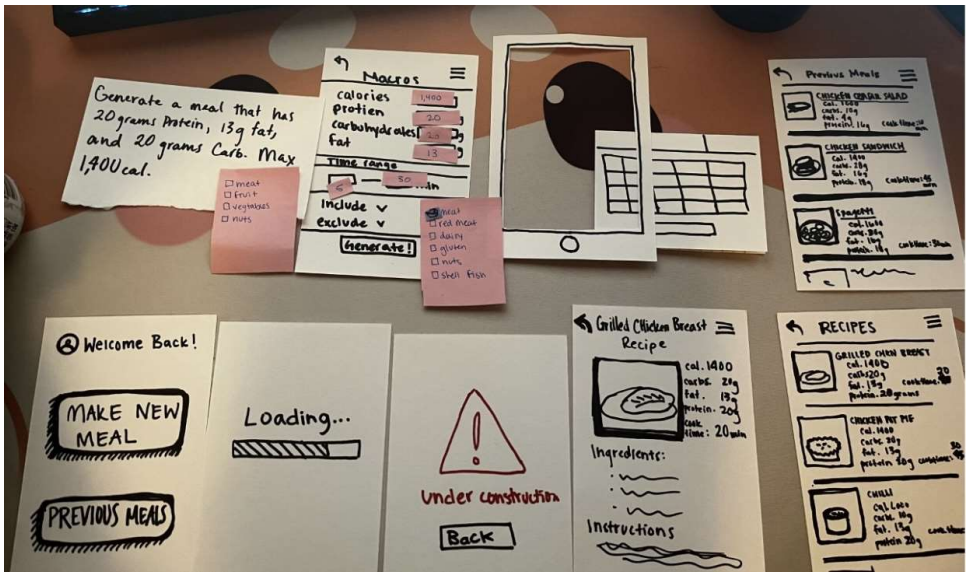
“How might we make home cooking less stressful
by reducing the time it takes to cook?”

We chose this as it focuses on the issue of time management because, through our data analysis, we found time to be the main stressor of home cooking.

To solve this problem, our team decided to create an app to assist in the preparation of our home cooks by recommending recipe choices as well as offering estimated cooking times.

Design

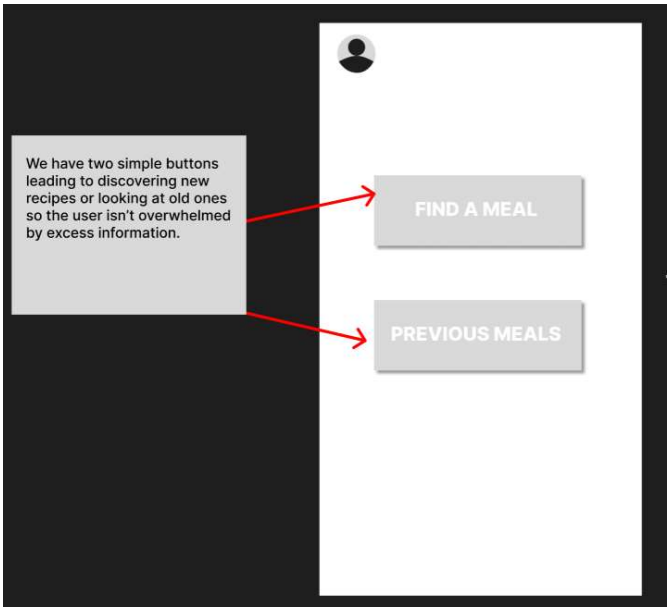
To gain an idea of how we wanted the app to look like we created paper prototypes that would simulate the use of our app. In this step, we tested layouts and interactions by giving our participants a task to complete with our prototype.



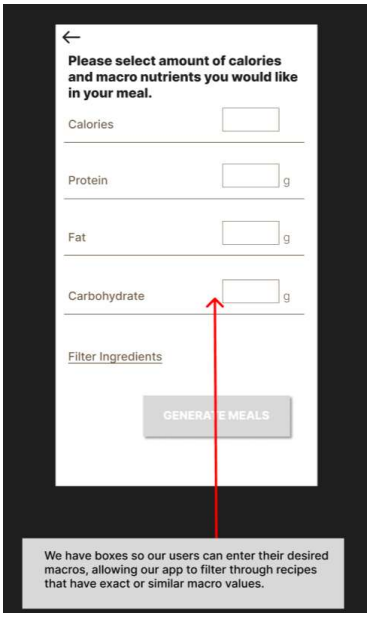
Our paper prototype of how the app would look like. We used this along with a task to see if our prototype would work with no dead ends.

Once we had confirmed how our app would be used and that it was realistic, we started making wireframes to create a visual representation of the layout, structure, and functionality of the user interface.

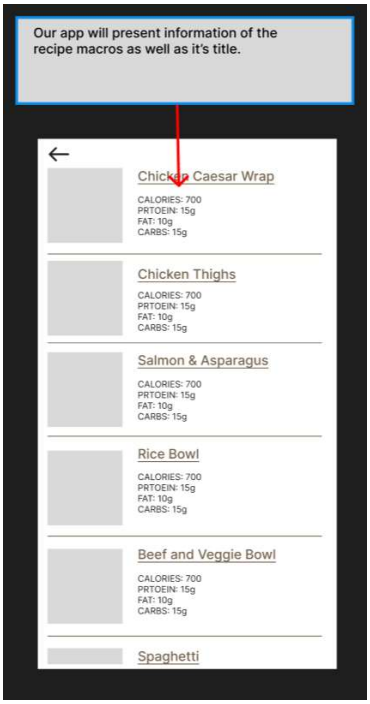
Our home screen would consist of two buttons that would lead to finding a new recipe or using a recipe that had been selected before.



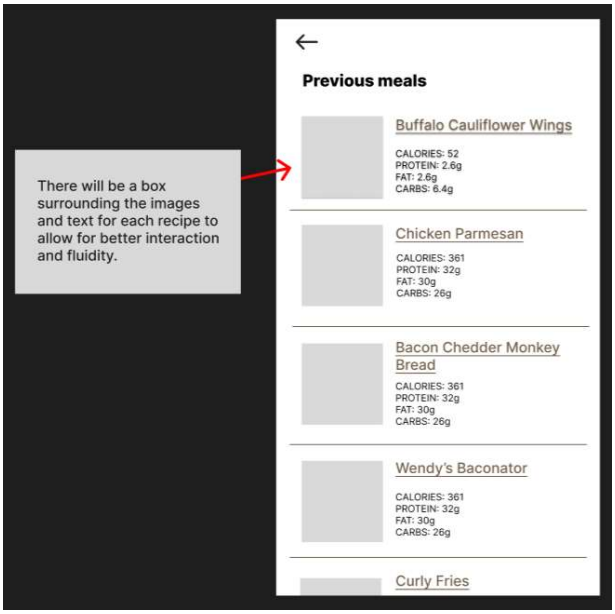
The first one labeled “Find A Meal” would allow the user to enter their desired macros as well as the ingredients they would like to include. Our app would then display recipes from our database that would match or be close to the desired macros that had been entered containing preferred ingredients. Selecting a recipe would display an image of the dish, a rating of the dish, an ingredient, an estimated time commitment, and recipe instructions.



This is the first example of how our recipe filter would look like.

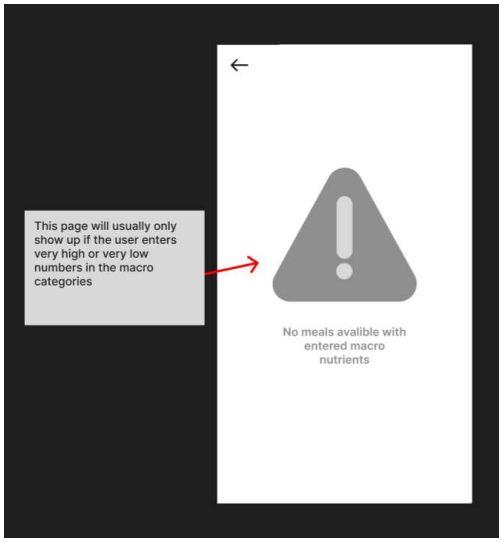


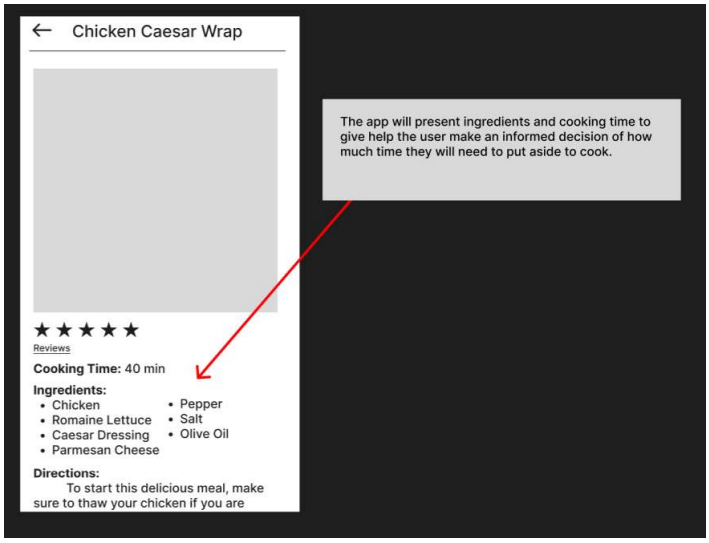
The next button would contain a list of previous recipes that had been selected, displayed in the same format.



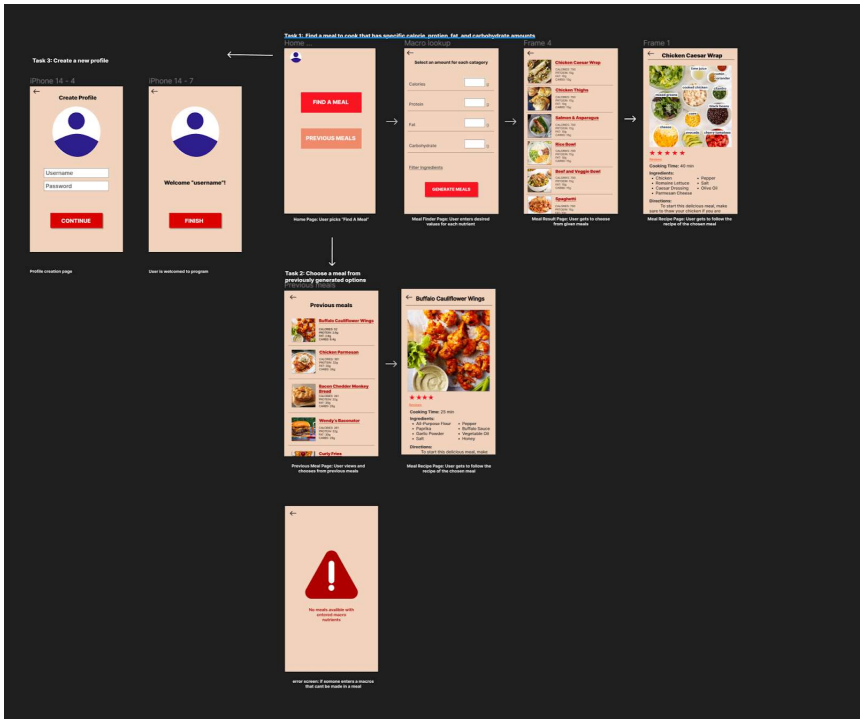
There would be a sign-in screen that would allow the user to create an account and leave reviews on recipes.

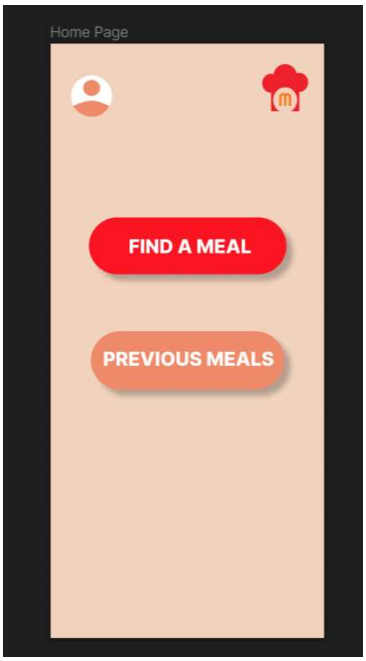
Finally, we had an error message screen in the case that there were macronutrient preferences that did not pull any recipes as well as a recipe screen that would go together as we had not set up reviews yet. Our recipe screen would include ingredients, directions, and reviews.





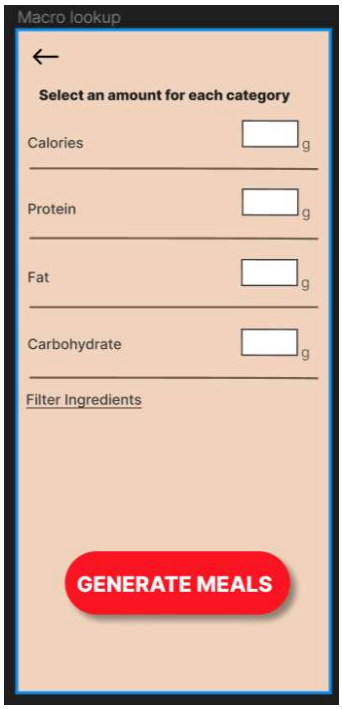
After finalizing the wireframes we added some color and images to enhance the user experience. We used a light orange as the background and red to make the buttons stick out without completely contrasting the colors to add some continuity. The profile button would contrast with the others to make it stick out as it is a smaller icon. The recipe titles would also be in color red so that they would stick out of the light orange background.





We changed the colors of our home page to be friendlier to the eyes by having the background be a peach color and rounding the buttons

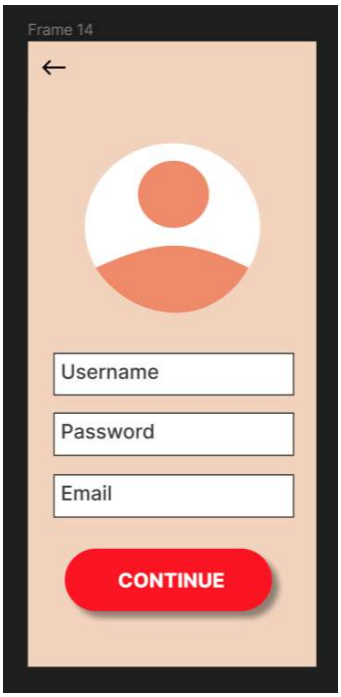
Our home page had changed drastically by adding the light peach background. We used this color as it was soft on the eyes and combined it with the rounding of the buttons to make it more enjoyable to look at. We also added our symbol to the top right corner of the screen.



For our macro filter page, we added the same background color but centered our button

For our Macro lookup page, the design was kept relatively the same with small changes. We aligned the separating lines and titles of the macros to be more compact, keeping a certain amount of pixels between each entity. This adds consistency throughout the page and makes it all feel like one entity.

We improved our recipe list by changing the colors of the recipe titles and adding more passing to the sides of the recipes for better focus.



For our signup page, we added an option for emails and changed the color pallet. We also made a continue button to add a welcome page with an initial as the profile picture.

Finally, we improved our recipe and error pages by applying our color pallet and adding more padding to the edges of our screen.

For the final recipe page, we made the stars and the reviews link red to match the color pallet. We used a grid to center the page to have even padding all around.

What I Learned

I learned that, as a user experience designer, every issue cannot be addressed by one project. In the brainstorming process, I need to let go of realistic limitations to create various ideas to solve various issues, but not every idea can solve every issue. By focusing on one issue and creating a solution with the available resources, you can refine and polish that product better than getting lost in a sea of ideas.

Additionally, I learned the importance of user research to gain insights into the needs, goals, and behaviors of the target audience. Observing our participants was very effective in allowing us to collect data that might otherwise be overlooked if one of us were to do the activity or just base our research on our memory.

Finally, the most important insight I got from this project was the importance of prototyping. By creating a prototype it allowed me to test and validate my design ideas before creating the wireframes. The solid foundation that is created in the prototyping phase from feedback from the participants gives direction to fine-tune the app and create more effective iterations of our prototype.