

UI/UX Case Study: Designing a Cooking App for College Students



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Introduction

About a week ago, my partner and I were given the prompt of designing an app for college students that would allow them to make quick and easy meals for their busy schedule. This assignment resonated with me in particular, as I have just come off the meal plan provided by my university and about to face the daunting task of cooking my own meals.

The Process

User Research

We began with non-directed interviews and survey data to gather some information on the cooking/eating habits of college students. The non-directed interviews yielded some great insights on how different the college cooking experience could be like. However, there were some repeated trends across all user research:

1. Recipes were not used when cooking
2. People would look up how to cook an ingredient rather than a meal
3. A constant supply of base ingredients like grain, non-perishable products, and protein
4. Respondents felt that the cooking was a calming and relaxing experience
5. Tips on how to cook were often given by friends and family

6. The main source of help when cooking was Google

User Persona

From the user research, we created a user persona, Busy Betty, and created an app to specifically meet her needs.





Busy Betty

Bio: “Coffee and Exams”

Values efficiency

Goals:

- Just came off the dining plan and wants to be able to cook at home more often and save money this year!
- Quick and flavorful meals

Challenges:

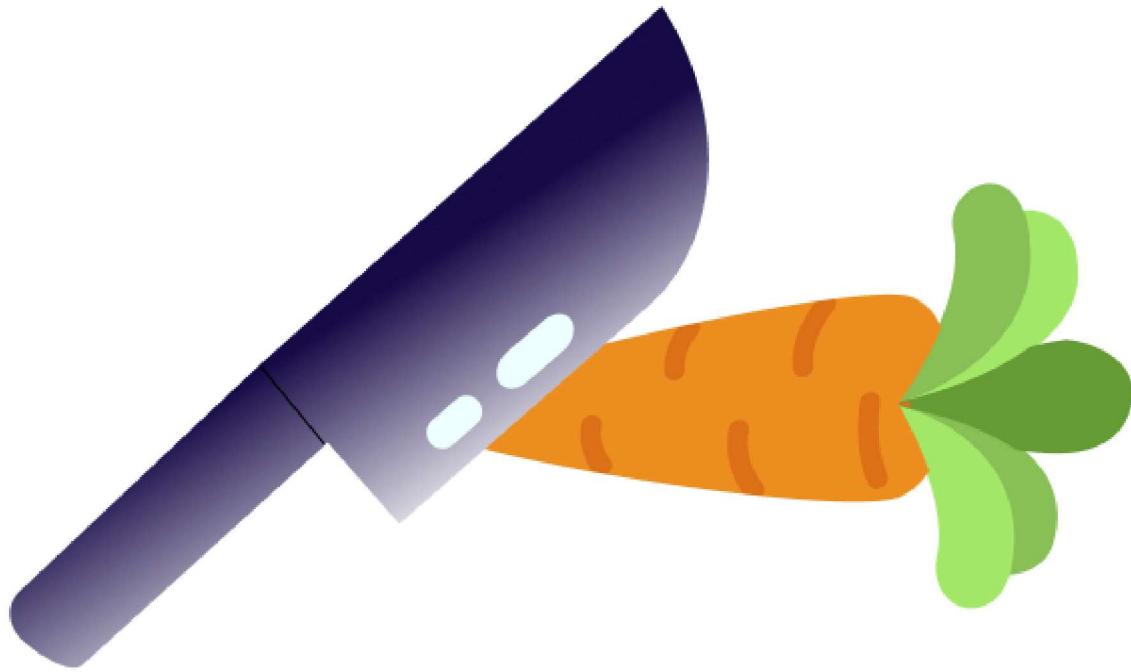
- Busy schedule
- Don’t know how to cook a wide variety of food

Keeping in mind the various goals and challenges Betty faced, we began with branding for our app.

Branding

We wanted to make the app simple, inviting, and modern to cater to the tech-savvy college student. We decided on the app to be called “Carrate Chop” as a pun that incorporated cooking and clever wordplay to better connect with our user group.

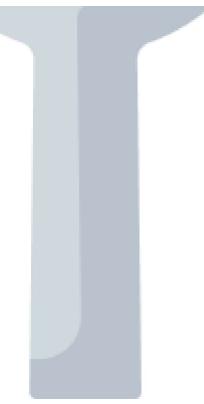
Our first iteration of the logo included a carrot being chopped by a knife, to take the name of the app literally.



The first iteration of the logo

However, upon further discussion, we decided that the logo above was too complicated in its design, and something that was simpler and could be turned into a white or black format would better fit the app's purpose. The final logo design is a simple carrot pierced by a fork, pictured below:





Next, we moved on to the color scheme of the app. After doing some research, we decided that orange would be our primary color because of the effect the color has on inducing hunger. Although red is the most effective in making people hungry, we wanted to keep our app relatively calming given the feedback from the user research that indicated cooking as a meditative activity. Our color palette for the app included only warm colors that would keep the app an inviting and relaxing experience for all users.



Color Palette for Carrate Chop

Landing Page

We created a landing page with the purpose of inviting users to download Carrate Chop. This was one of the most challenging stages in the whole process because of my limited HTML and CSS experience, but nonetheless, was a valuable learning experience in learning more about front-end coding.





Above the Fold Landing PAge

The landing page included our color palette and includes the call to action, “download now” in the center of the page. The navigation bar includes our logo in white and the three main functions that our app would include.



About Us Page



Our last page is the final call to action is a contact us page to give users the opportunity to reach out to us for any questions or concerns.

If we were to redo this page, we would consider changing the last page to another call to action to download the app because the contact page isn't as useful for a page that isn't a full website.

Wireframes

We finally moved on to iterating our first wireframes that outlined how our app would look like.



The onboarding process is pictured above with three pages that explain the three main functions that the app provides. We initially made the buttons span across the screen so it could be easy for people to press no matter how they hold their phone. However, through usability testing, we found that buttons that span the whole screen are not recognized as clickable.



The first screen in the set of wireframes above includes one personalization option that asks what dietary restrictions the user has. Later on, we expanded the personalization process so it could better fit each user's needs.

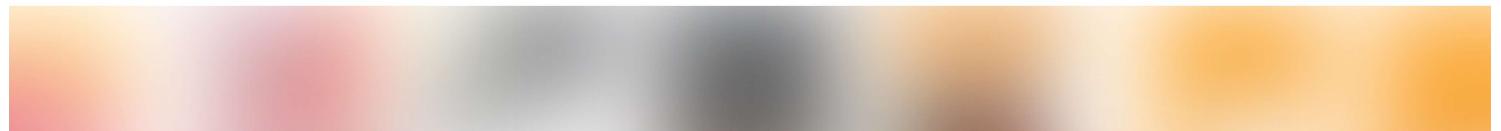
The homepage is meant to show recipes and foods that the user could be interested in. The favorites page would have foods and recipes that the user has starred and would lead to a screen like the one pictured in the last wireframe which has prioritized information like the cooking time and the user ratings.

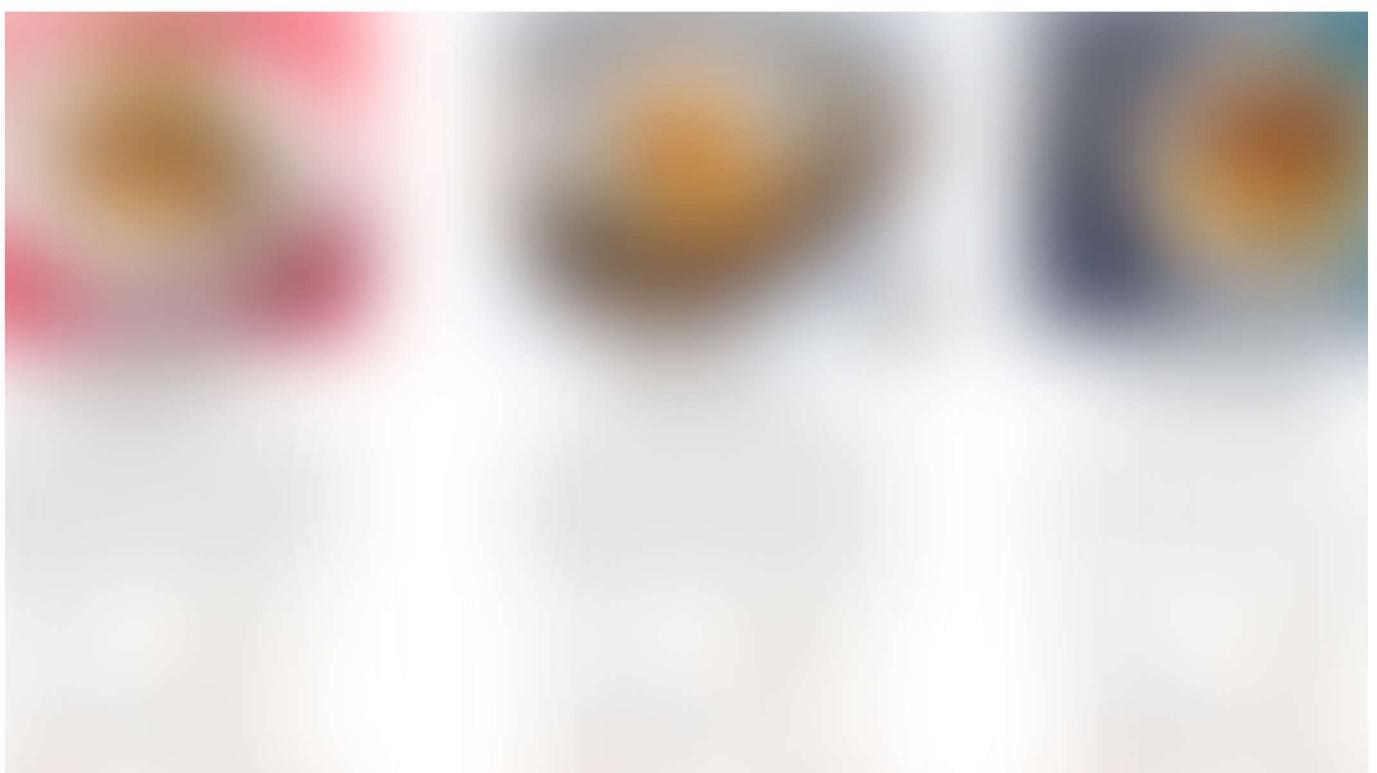


The last set of wireframes have the last two functions of the app, the calendar and tips sections. The calendar function allows users to set an alarm when they want to cook to help fit it into their busy schedule. The tips function would allow users to post and read tips that have helped other users in making better food or just tips in the kitchen.

Mockups

After perfecting the mockups through usability testing, the final screens are shown below:



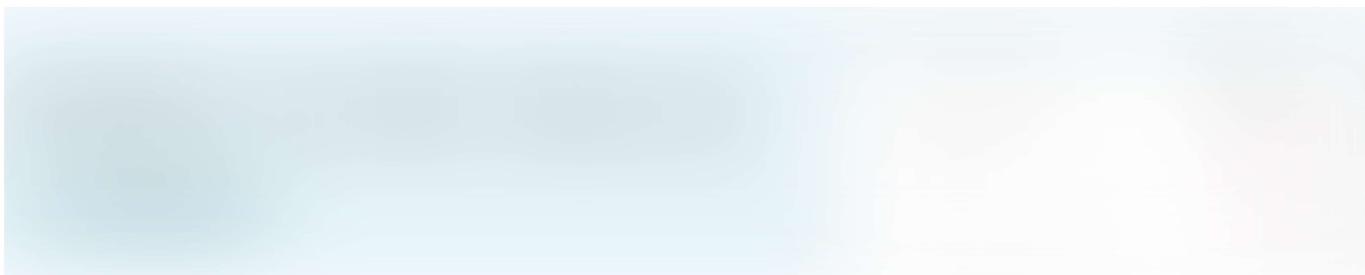


Looking through the mockups, the improvements mentioned above are included in the final version.

Conclusion

This was the first project that I was given where I had to make a whole app from scratch. Considering small things from the functionality and rationality of each button to the overall idea for the app was a tricky process where I had to constantly think as I worked on creating the app. It provided me an opportunity to apply everything that I had learned and hopefully will help me in projects to come.

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