**Why?**

Good morning, everyone,  
Today, I’d like to present my project: a weekly meal planner. The idea behind this app is to simplify meal organization by providing an easy-to-use tool for planning, shopping, and cooking.

The planner helps users create a weekly meal schedule, complete with a shopping list that consolidates all the ingredients needed. This way, users can save time, reduce food waste, and stay organized.

Another key feature is the inclusion of detailed recipes. Once a recipe is assigned to a meal, users can follow step-by-step instructions when they’re ready to cook.

The inspiration for this project came from the common frustration of last-minute meal decisions.

**What?**

Now, let me walk you through the app.

When you log in, the first thing you see is the calendar, which is the central part of the application. This is where you plan your weekly meals by assigning recipes to specific days and meal slots. The calendar is interactive and allows you to easily manage your schedule.

Whenever you assign a recipe to a meal, the app automatically updates the shopping list. This list consolidates all the ingredients needed for your planned meals, even combining quantities for shared ingredients. This ensures that you only buy what you need, making shopping more efficient.

The app also has a dedicated recipe section. Here, you can browse through existing recipes, view their details, and follow instructions for cooking. Additionally, you can create new recipes or delete ones you no longer need. Creating a new recipe is simple: you can add ingredients, specify quantities, and write detailed cooking instructions. This flexibility allows the app to adapt to individual preferences and encourages creativity in the kitchen.

**How?**

From a technical perspective, this project consists of a React client that communicates with an Express server. The server handles requests and interacts with a MongoDB database. I chose MongoDB as it’s a non-relational database, offering the flexibility needed to manage dynamic data structures.

**Insights**

Throughout this project, I encountered some interesting challenges. One of the most significant was managing the shopping list. Initially, I thought it would be straightforward, but I quickly realized that ingredients often have variations in names and units of measurement. For example, one recipe might use “200 grams of flour,” while another calls for “2 cups of flour.” Addressing this required implementing a standardization process to avoid duplicates and ensure accurate totals.

Finally, designing the app to be scalable was an important consideration. Features like the recipe and ingredient sections are built in a way that allows for future expansion, such as categorizing recipes, adding dietary filters, or integrating with external recipe APIs.