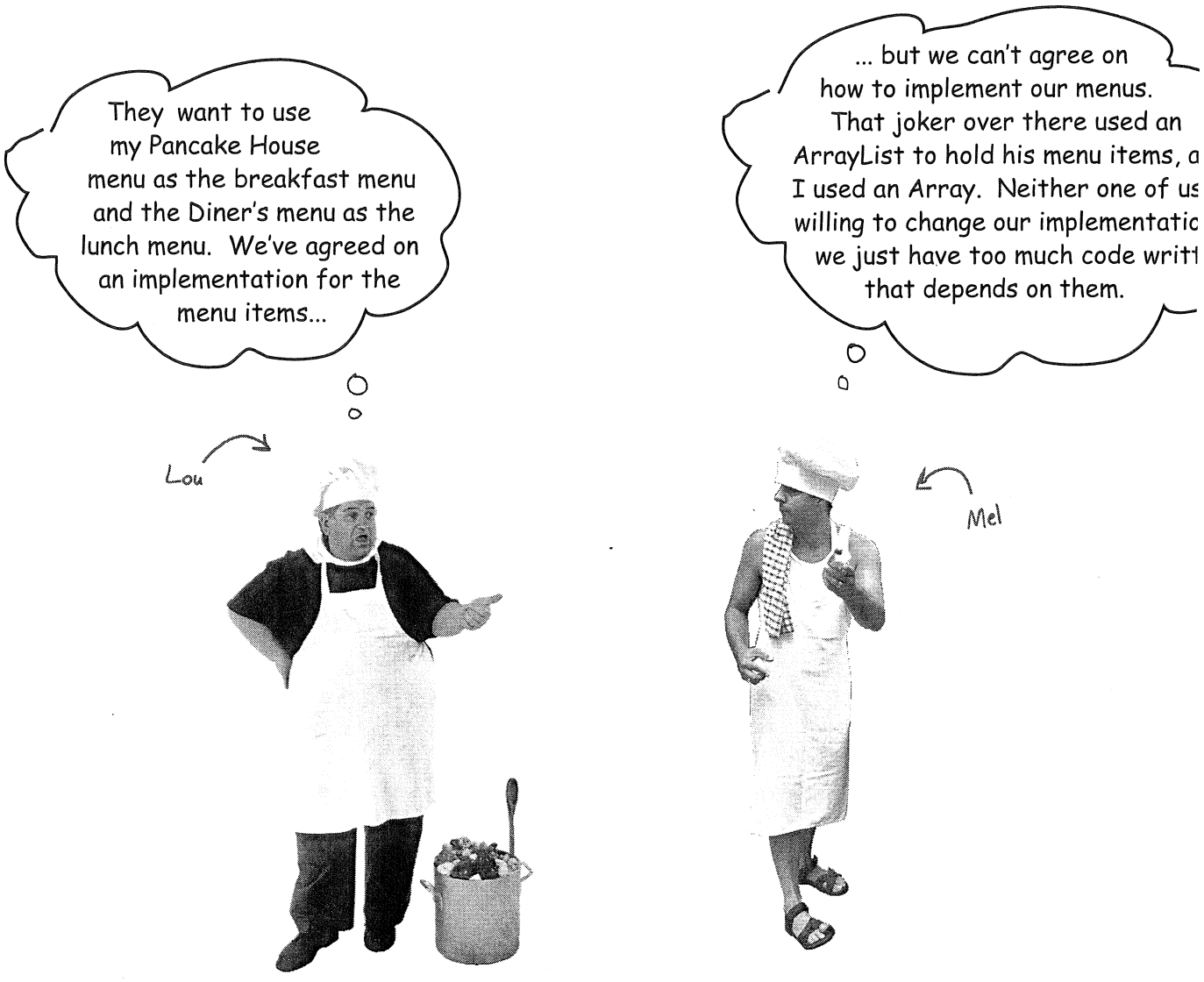
Breaking News: Objectville Diner and Objectville Pancake House Merge

That's great news! Now we can get those delicious pancake breakfasts at the Pancake House and those yummy lunches at the Diner all in one place. But, there seems to be a slight problem...



Check out the Menu Items

At least Lou and Mel agree on the implementation of the MenuItems. Let's check out the items on each menu, and also take a look at the implementation.

The Diner menu has lots of lunch items, while the Pancake House consists of breakfast items. Every menu item has a name, a description, and a price

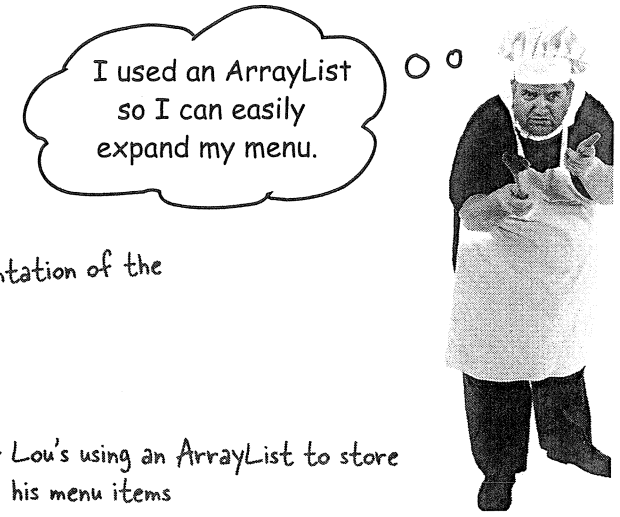
```
public class MenuItem {
    String name;
    String description;
    boolean vegetarian;
    double price;

    public MenuItem(String name,
                    String description,
                    boolean vegetarian,
                    double price)
    {
        this.name = name;
        this.description = description;
        this.vegetarian = vegetarian;
        this.price = price;
    }

    public String getName() {
        return name;
    }

    public String getDescription() {
        return description;
    }

    public double getPrice() {
        return price;
    }

    public boolean isVegetarian() {
        return vegetarian;
    }
```

A MenuItem consists of a name, a description, a flag to indicate if the item is vegetarian, and a price. You pass all these values into the constructor to initialize the MenuItem.

These getter methods let you access the fields of the menu item.

Lou and Mel's Menu implementations

Now let's take a look at what Lou and Mel are arguing about. They both have lots of time and code invested in the way they store their menu items in a menu, and lots of other code that depends on it.



Here's Lou's implementation of the Pancake House menu.

```
public class PancakeHouseMenu {
    ArrayList menuItems;

    public PancakeHouseMenu() {
        menuItems = new ArrayList();

        addItem("K&B's Pancake Breakfast",
            "Pancakes with scrambled eggs, and toast",
            true,
            2.99);

        addItem("Regular Pancake Breakfast",
            "Pancakes with fried eggs, sausage",
            false,
            2.99);

        addItem("Blueberry Pancakes",
            "Pancakes made with fresh blueberries",
            true,
            3.49);

        addItem("Waffles",
            "Waffles, with your choice of blueberries or strawberries",
            true,
            3.59);
    }
    public void addItem(String name, String description,
                        boolean vegetarian, double price)
    {
        MenuItem menuItem = new MenuItem(name, description, vegetarian, price);
        menuItems.add(menuItem);
    }

    public ArrayList getMenuItems() {
        return menuItems;
    }

    // other menu methods here
}
```

Lou's using an ArrayList to store his menu items

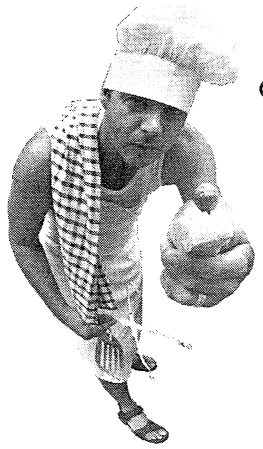
Each menu item is added to the ArrayList here, in the constructor

Each MenuItem has a name, a description, whether or not it's a vegetarian item, and the price

To add a menu item, Lou creates a new MenuItem object, passing in each argument, and then adds it to the ArrayList

The getMenuItems() method returns the list of menu items

Lou has a bunch of other menu code that depends on the ArrayList implementation. He doesn't want to have to rewrite all that code!



Haah! An Arraylist... I used a REAL Array so I can control the maximum size of my menu and get my MenuItems without having to use a cast.

And here's Mel's implementation of the Diner menu.

```
public class DinerMenu {
    static final int MAX_ITEMS = 6;
    int numberOfItems = 0;
    MenuItem[] menuItems;

    public DinerMenu() {
        menuItems = new MenuItem[MAX_ITEMS];

        addItem("Vegetarian BLT",
            "(Fakin') Bacon with lettuce & tomato on whole wheat", true, 2.99);
        addItem("BLT",
            "Bacon with lettuce & tomato on whole wheat", false, 2.99);
        addItem("Soup of the day",
            "Soup of the day, with a side of potato salad", false, 3.29);
        addItem("Hotdog",
            "A hot dog, with saurkraut, relish, onions, topped with cheese",
            false, 3.05);
        // a couple of other Diner Menu items added here
    }

    public void addItem(String name, String description,
                        boolean vegetarian, double price)
    {
        MenuItem menuItem = new MenuItem(name, description, vegetarian, price);
        if (numberOfItems >= MAX_ITEMS) {
            System.err.println("Sorry, menu is full!  Can't add item to menu");
        } else {
            menuItems[numberOfItems] = menuItem;
            numberOfItems = numberOfItems + 1;
        }
    }

    public MenuItem[] getMenuItems() {
        return menuItems;
    }

    // other menu methods here
}
```

Mel takes a different approach; he's using an Array so he can control the max size of the menu and retrieve menu items out without having to cast his objects.

Like Lou, Mel creates his menu items in the constructor, using the addItem() helper method.

addItem() takes all the parameters necessary to create a MenuItem and instantiates one. It also checks to make sure we haven't hit the menu size limit.

Mel specifically wants to keep his menu under a certain size (presumably so he doesn't have to remember too many recipes).

getMenuItems() returns the array of menu items.

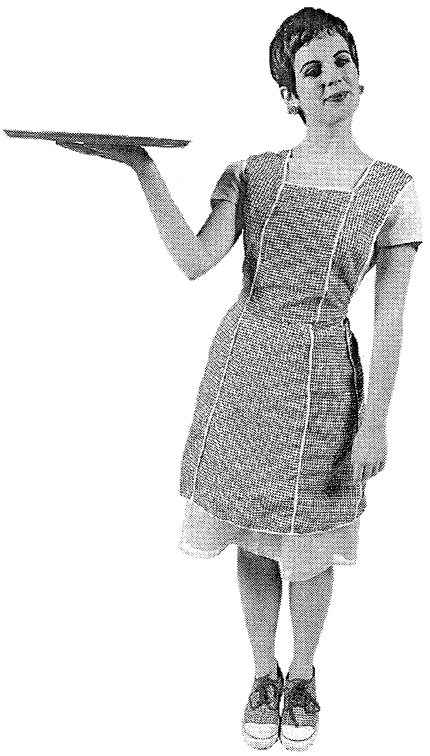
Like Lou, Mel has a bunch of code that depends on the implementation of his menu being an Array. He's too busy cooking to rewrite all of this.

What's the problem with having two different menu representations?

To see why having two different menu representations complicates things, let's try implementing a client that uses the two menus. Imagine you have been hired by the new company formed by the merger of the Diner and the Pancake House to create a Java-enabled waitress (this *is* Objectville, after all). The spec for the Java-enabled waitress specifies that she can print a custom menu for customers on demand, and even tell you if a menu item is vegetarian without having to ask the cook – now that's an innovation!

Let's check out the spec, and then step through what it might take to implement her...

The Waitress is getting Java-enabled.



The Java-Enabled Waitress Specification

Java-Enabled Waitress: code-name "Alice"

```
printMenu()
   - prints every item on the menu

printBreakfastMenu()
   - prints just breakfast items

printLunchMenu()
   - prints just lunch items

printVegetarianMenu()
   - prints all vegetarian menu items

isItemVegetarian(name)
   - given the name of an item, returns true
     if the items is vegetarian, otherwise,
     returns false
```

The spec for the Waitress

Let's start by stepping through how we'd implement the printMenu() method:

1. To print all the items on each menu, you'll need to call the getMenuItem() method on the PancakeHouseMenu and the DinerMenu to retrieve their respective menu items. Note that each returns a different type:

```
PancakeHouseMenu pancakeHouseMenu = new PancakeHouseMenu();
ArrayList breakfastItems = pancakeHouseMenu.getMenuItems();

DinerMenu dinerMenu = new DinerMenu();
MenuItem[] lunchItems = dinerMenu.getMenuItems();
```

The method looks the same, but the calls are returning different types.

The implementation is showing through, breakfast items are in an ArrayList, lunch items are in an Array.

2. Now, to print out the items from the PancakeHouseMenu, we'll loop through the items on the breakfastItems ArrayList. And to print out the Diner items we'll loop through the Array.

```
for (int i = 0; i < breakfastItems.size(); i++) {
    MenuItem menuItem = (MenuItem)breakfastItems.get(i);
    System.out.print(menuItem.getName() + " ");
    System.out.println(menuItem.getPrice() + " ");
    System.out.println(menuItem.getDescription());
}

for (int i = 0; i < lunchItems.length; i++) {
    MenuItem menuItem = lunchItems[i];
    System.out.print(menuItem.getName() + " ");
    System.out.println(menuItem.getPrice() + " ");
    System.out.println(menuItem.getDescription());
}
```

Now, we have to implement two different loops to step through the two implementations of the menu items...

...one loop for the ArrayList...

and another for the Array.

3. Implementing every other method in the Waitress is going to be a variation of this theme. We're always going to need to get both menus and use two loops to iterate through their items. If another restaurant with a different implementation is acquired then we'll have *three* loops.

Sharpen your pencil

Based on our implementation of printMenu(), which of the following apply?

- ❑ A. We are coding to the PancakeHouseMenu and DinerMenu concrete implementations, not to an interface.
- ❑ B. The Waitress doesn't implement the Java Waitress API and so she isn't adhering to a standard.
- ❑ C. If we decided to switch from using DinerMenu to another type of menu that implemented its list of menu items with a Hashtable, we'd have to modify a lot of code in the Waitress.
- ❑ C. The Waitress needs to know how each menu represents its internal collection of menu items; this violates encapsulation.
- ❑ D. We have duplicate code: the printMenu() method needs two separate loops to iterate over the two different kinds of menus. And if we added a third menu, we'd have yet another loop.
- ❑ E. The implementation isn't based on MXML (Menu XML) and so isn't as interoperable as it should be.

What now?

Mel and Lou are putting us in a difficult position. They don't want to change their implementations because it would mean rewriting a lot of code that is in each respective menu class. But if one of them doesn't give in, then we're going to have the job of implementing a Waitress that is going to be hard to maintain and extend.

It would really be nice if we could find a way to allow them to implement the same interface for their menus (they're already close, except for the return type of the getMenuItems() method). That way we can minimize the concrete references in the Waitress code and also hopefully get rid of the multiple loops required to iterate over both menus.

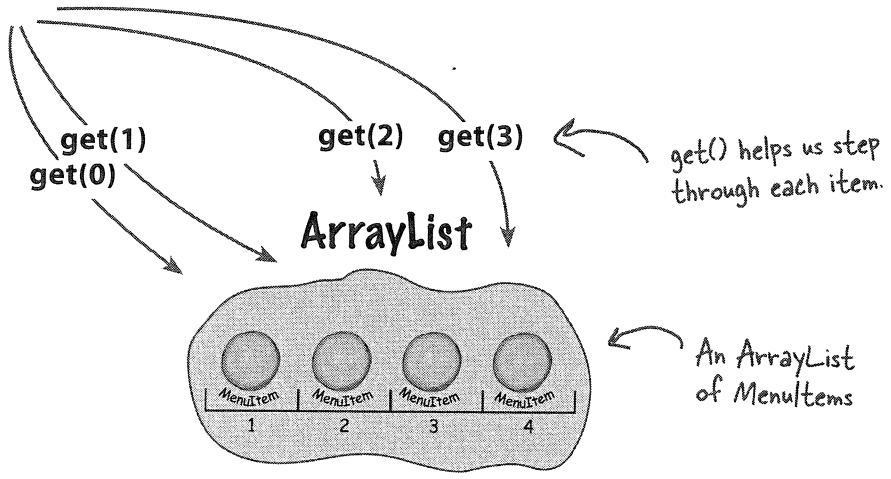
Sound good? Well, how are we going to do that?

Can we encapsulate the iteration?

If we've learned one thing in this book, it's encapsulate what varies. It's obvious what is changing here: the iteration caused by different collections of objects being returned from the menus. But can we encapsulate this? Let's work through the idea...

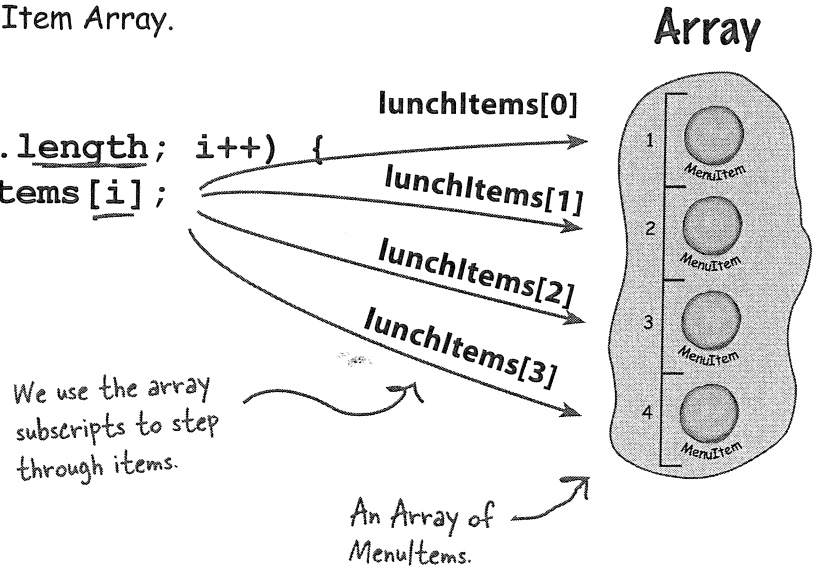
1. To iterate through the breakfast items we use the size() and get() methods on the ArrayList:

```
for (int i = 0; i < breakfastItems.size(); i++) {
    MenuItem menuItem = (MenuItem)breakfastItems.get(i);
}
```



2. And to iterate through the lunch items we use the Array length field and the array subscript notation on the MenuItem Array.

```
for (int i = 0; i < lunchItems.length; i++) {
    MenuItem menuItem = lunchItems[i];
}
```



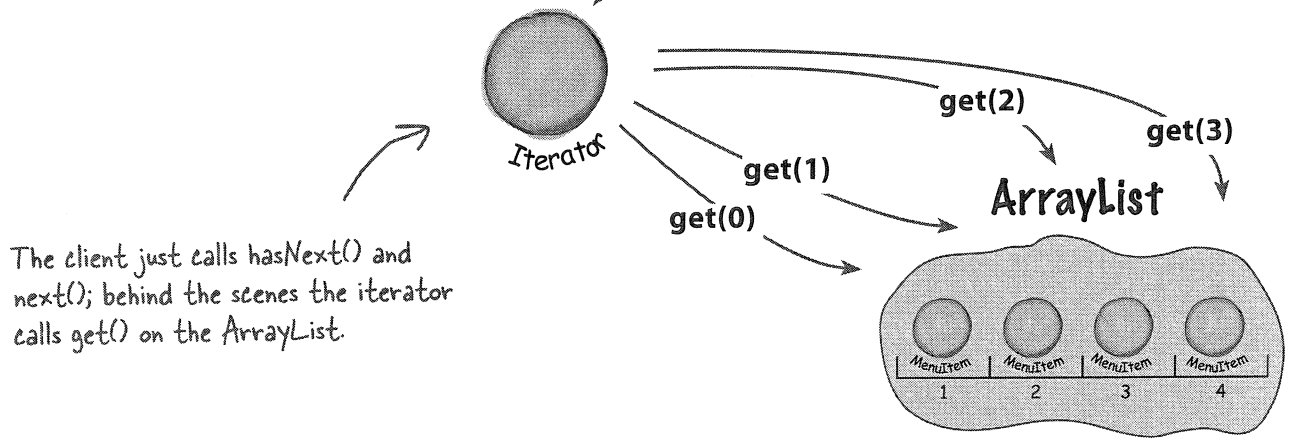
3 Now what if we create an object, let's call it an Iterator, that encapsulates the way we iterate through a collection of objects? Let's try this on the ArrayList

We ask the breakfastMe for an iterator of its MenuItems.

```
Iterator iterator = breakfastMenu.createIterator();

while (iterator.hasNext()) {
    MenuItem menuItem = (MenuItem)iterator.next();
}
```

And while there are more items left...

We get the next item.

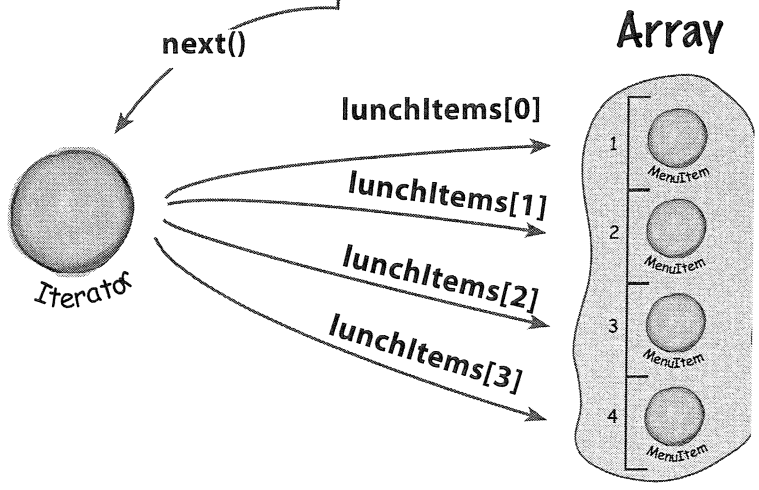


The client just calls hasNext() and next(); behind the scenes the iterator calls get() on the ArrayList.

4 Let's try that on the Array too:

```
Iterator iterator = lunchMenu.createIterator();

while (iterator.hasNext()) {
    MenuItem menuItem = (MenuItem)iterator.next();
}
```

Wow, this code is exactly the same as the breakfastMenu code.

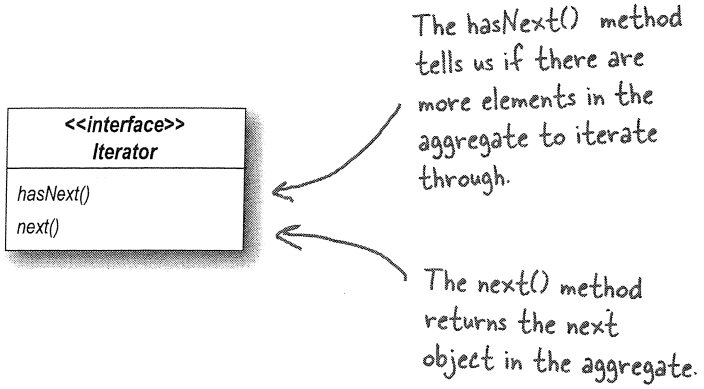


Same situation here: the client just calls hasNext() and next(); behind the scenes, the iterator indexes into the Array.

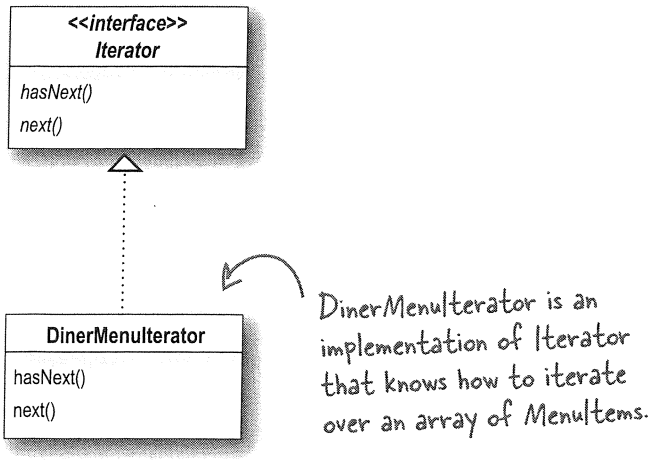
Meet the Iterator Pattern

Well, it looks like our plan of encapsulating iteration just might actually work; and as you've probably already guessed, it is a Design Pattern called the Iterator Pattern.

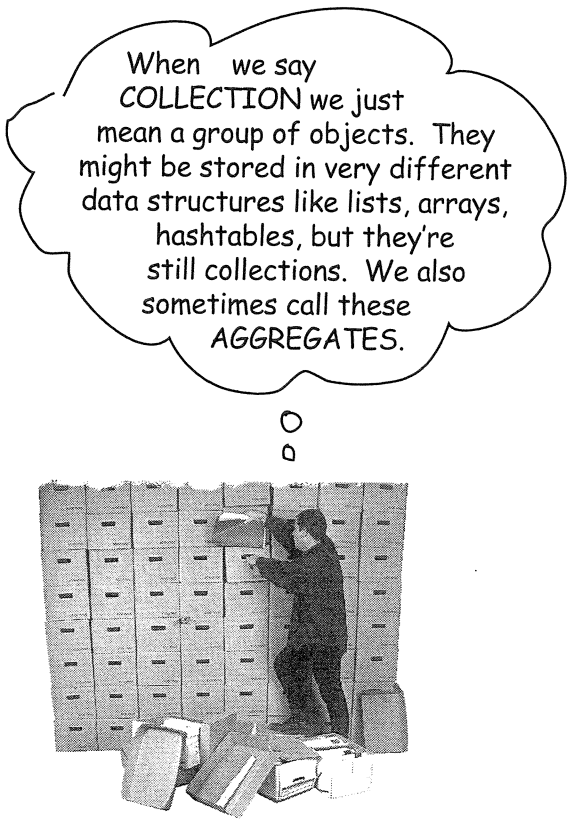
The first thing you need to know about the Iterator Pattern is that it relies on an interface called Iterator. Here's one possible Iterator interface:



Now, once we have this interface, we can implement Iterators for any kind of collection of objects: arrays, lists, hashtables, ...pick your favorite collection of objects. Let's say we wanted to implement the Iterator for the Array used in the DinerMenu. It would look like this:



Let's go ahead and implement this Iterator and hook it into the DinerMenu to see how this works...



Adding an Iterator to DinerMenu

To add an Iterator to the DinerMenu we first need to define the Iterator Interface:

```
public interface Iterator {
    boolean hasNext();
    Object next();
}
```

Here's our two methods:

The hasNext() method returns a boolean indicating whether or not there are more elements to iterate over...

...and the next() method returns the next element.

And now we need to implement a concrete Iterator that works for the Diner menu:

We implement the Iterator interface.

```
public class DinerMenuIterator implements Iterator {
    MenuItem[] items;
    int position = 0;

    public DinerMenuIterator(MenuItem[] items) {
        this.items = items;
    }

    public Object next() {
        MenuItem menuItem = items[position];
        position = position + 1;
        return menuItem;
    }

    public boolean hasNext() {
        if (position >= items.length || items[position] == null) {
            return false;
        } else {
            return true;
        }
    }
}
```

position maintains the current position of the iteration over the array.

The constructor takes the array of menu items we are going to iterate over.

The next() method returns the next item in the array and increments the position.

The hasNext() method checks to see if we've seen all the elements of the array and returns true if there are more to iterate through.

Because the diner chef went ahead allocated a max sized array, we nee check not only if we are at the en the array, but also if the next ite null, which indicates there are no m items.

Reworking the Diner Menu with Iterator

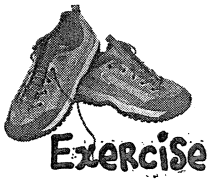
Okay, we've got the iterator. Time to work it into the DinerMenu; all we need to do is add one method to create a DinerMenuIterator and return it to the client:

```
public class DinerMenu {
    static final int MAX_ITEMS = 6;
    int numberOfItems = 0;
    MenuItem[] menuItems;

    // constructor here

    // addItem here

    public MenuItem[] getMenuItems() {
        return menuItems;
    }

    public Iterator createIterator() {
        return new DinerMenuIterator(menuItems);
    }

    // other menu methods here
}
```

We're not going to need the getMenuItems() method anymore and in fact, we don't want it because it exposes our internal implementation!

Here's the createIterator() method. It creates a DinerMenuIterator from the menuItems array and returns it to the client.

We're returning the Iterator interface. The client doesn't need to know how the menuItems are maintained in the DinerMenu, nor does it need to know how the DinerMenuIterator is implemented. It just needs to use the iterators to step through the items in the menu.



Go ahead and implement the PancakeHouseIterator yourself and make the changes needed to incorporate it into the PancakeHouseMenu.

Fixing up the Waitress code

Now we need to integrate the iterator code into the Waitress. We should be able to get rid of some of the redundancy in the process. Integration is pretty straightforward: first we create a printMenu() method that takes an Iterator, then we use the createIterator() method on each menu to retrieve the Iterator and pass it to the new method.

New and improved with Iterator.

```
public class Waitress {
    PancakeHouseMenu pancakeHouseMenu;
    DinerMenu dinerMenu;

    public Waitress(PancakeHouseMenu pancakeHouseMenu, DinerMenu dinerMenu) {
        this.pancakeHouseMenu = pancakeHouseMenu;
        this.dinerMenu = dinerMenu;
    }

    public void printMenu() {
        Iterator pancakeIterator = pancakeHouseMenu.createIterator();
        Iterator dinerIterator = dinerMenu.createIterator();
        System.out.println("MENU\n----\nBREAKFAST");
        printMenu(pancakeIterator);
        System.out.println("\nLUNCH");
        printMenu(dinerIterator);
    }

    private void printMenu(Iterator iterator) {
        while (iterator.hasNext()) {
            MenuItem menuItem = (MenuItem)iterator.next();
            System.out.print(menuItem.getName() + ", ");
            System.out.print(menuItem.getPrice() + " -- ");
            System.out.println(menuItem.getDescription());
        }
    }

    // other methods here
}
```

In the constructor the Waitress takes the two menus.

The printMenu() method now creates two iterators, one for each menu.

And then calls the overloaded printMenu() with each iterator.

Test if there are any more items.

Get the next item.

The overloaded printMenu() method uses the Iterator to step through the menu items and print them.

Use the item to get name, price and description and print them.

Note that we're down to one loop.

Testing our code

t's time to put everything to a test. Let's write some
est drive code and see how the Waitress works...

```
ublic class MenuTestDrive {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        PancakeHouseMenu pancakeHouseMenu = new PancakeHouseMenu();
        DinerMenu dinerMenu = new DinerMenu();

        Waitress waitress = new Waitress(pancakeHouseMenu, dinerMenu);

        waitress.printMenu();
    }
```

First we create the new menus.

Then we create a Waitress and pass her the menus.

Then we print them.

Here's the test run...

```
File Edit Window Help GreenEggs&Ham
% java DinerMenuTestDrive

MENU
----
BREAKFAST
K&B's Pancake Breakfast, 2.99 -- Pancakes with scrambled eggs, and toast
Regular Pancake Breakfast, 2.99 -- Pancakes with fried eggs, sausage
Blueberry Pancakes, 3.49 -- Pancakes made with fresh blueberries
Waffles, 3.59 -- Waffles, with your choice of blueberries or strawberries

LUNCH
Vegetarian BLT, 2.99 -- (Fakin') Bacon with lettuce & tomato on whole wheat
BLT, 2.99 -- Bacon with lettuce & tomato on whole wheat
Soup of the day, 3.29 -- Soup of the day, with a side of potato salad
Hotdog, 3.05 -- A hot dog, with saurkraut, relish, onions, topped with cheese
Steamed Veggies and Brown Rice, 3.99 -- Steamed vegetables over brown rice
Pasta, 3.89 -- Spaghetti with Marinara Sauce, and a slice of sourdough bread

%
```

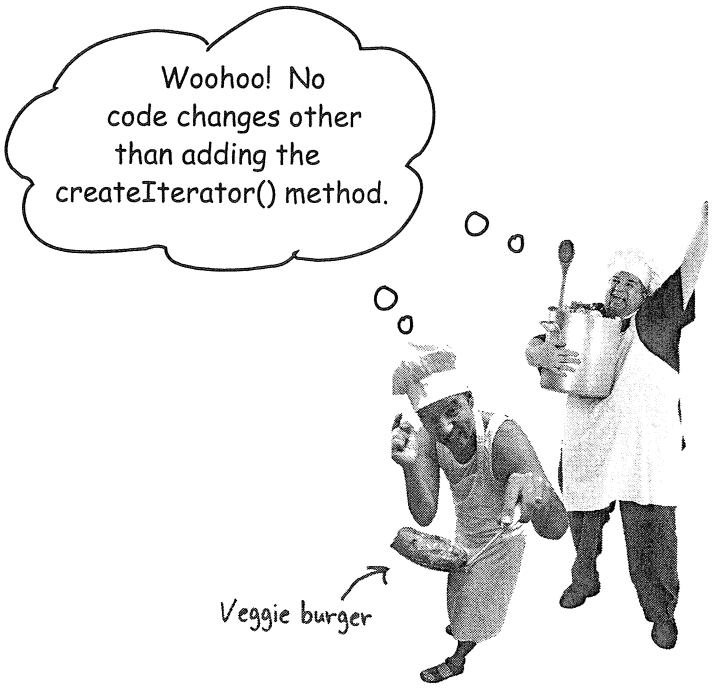
First we iterate through the pancake menu.

And then the lunch menu, all with the same iteration code.

What have we done so far?

For starters, we've made our Objectville cooks very happy. They settled their differences and kept their own implementations. Once we gave them a PancakeHouseMenuIterator and a DinerMenuIterator, all they had to do was add a createIterator() method and they were finished.

We've also helped ourselves in the process. The Waitress will be much easier to maintain and extend down the road. Let's go through exactly what we did and think about the consequences:



Hard to Maintain Waitress Implementation	New, Hip Waitress Powered by Iterator
The Menus are not well encapsulated; we can see the Diner is using an ArrayList and the Pancake House an Array.	The Menu implementations are now encapsulated. The Waitress has no idea how the Menus hold their collection of menu items.
We need two loops to iterate through the MenuItems.	All we need is a loop that polymorphically handles any collection of items as long as it implements Iterator.
The Waitress is bound to concrete classes (MenuItem[] and ArrayList).	The Waitress now uses an interface (Iterator).
The Waitress is bound to two different concrete Menu classes, despite their interfaces being almost identical.	The Menu interfaces are now exactly the same and, uh oh, we still don't have a common interface, which means the Waitress is still bound to two concrete Menu classes. We'd better fix that.

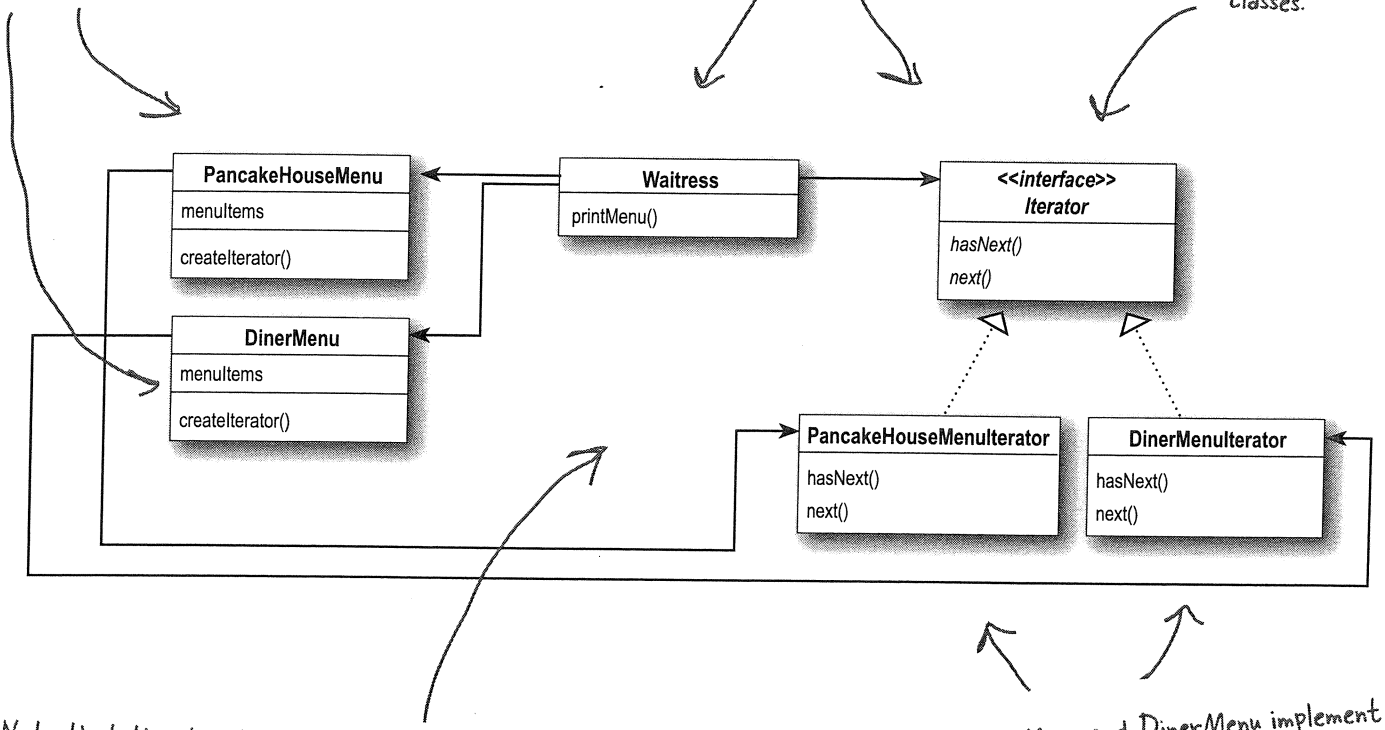
What we have so far...

Before we clean things up, let's get a bird's eye view of our current design.

These two menus implement the same exact set of methods, but they aren't implementing the same Interface. We're going to fix this and free the Waitress from any dependencies on concrete Menus.

The Iterator allows the Waitress to be decoupled from the actual implementation of the concrete classes. She doesn't need to know if a Menu is implemented with an Array, an ArrayList, or with PostIt™ notes. All she cares is that she can get an Iterator to do her iterating.

We're now using a common Iterator interface and we've implemented two concrete classes.



Note that the iterator give us a way to step through the elements of an aggregate without forcing the aggregate to clutter its own interface with a bunch of methods to support traversal of its elements. It also allows the implementation of the iterator to live outside of the aggregate; in other words, we've encapsulated the interation.

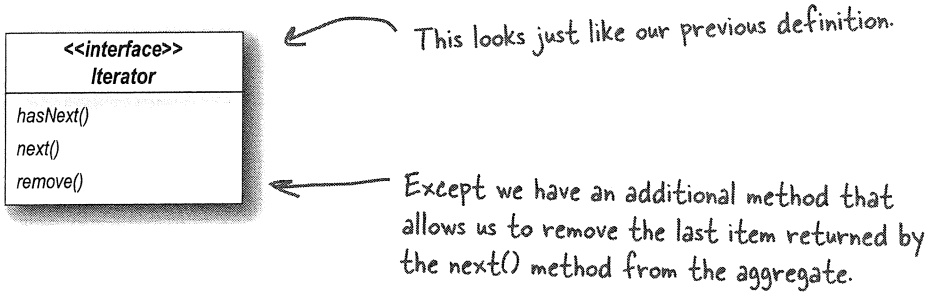
PancakeHouseMenu and DinerMenu implement the new createIterator() method; they are responsible for creating the iterator for their respective menu items implementations.

Making some improvements...

Okay, we know the interfaces of PancakeHouseMenu and DinerMenu are exactly the same and yet we haven't defined a common interface for them. So, we're going to do that and clean up the Waitress a little more.

You may be wondering why we're not using the Java Iterator interface – we did that so you could see how to build an iterator from scratch. Now that we've done that, we're going to switch to using the Java Iterator interface, because we'll get a lot of leverage by implementing that instead of our home grown Iterator interface. What kind of leverage? You'll soon see.

First, let's check out the java.util.Iterator interface:



This is going to be a piece of cake: We just need to change the interface that both PancakeHouseMenuIterator and DinerMenuIterator extend, right? Almost... actually, it's even easier than that. Not only does java.util have its own Iterator interface, but ArrayList has an iterator() method that returns an iterator. In other words, we never needed to implement our own iterator for ArrayList. However, we'll still need our implementation for the DinerMenu because it relies on an Array, which doesn't support the iterator() method (or any other way to create an array iterator).

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there are no Dumb Questions

Q: What if I don't want to provide the ability to remove something from the underlying collection of objects?

A: The remove() method is considered optional. You don't have to provide remove functionality. But, obviously you do need to provide the method because it's part of the Iterator interface. If you're not going to allow remove() in your iterator you'llwant to throw the runtime exception java.lang.UnsupportedOperationException. The Iterator API documentation specifies that this exception may be thrown from remove() and any client that is a good citizen will check for this exception when calling the remove() method.

Q: How does remove() behave under multiple threads that may be using different iterators over the same collection of objects?

A: The behavior of the remove() is unspecified if the collection changes whil you are iterating over it. So you should b careful in designing your own multithread code when accessing a collection concurrently.

Cleaning things up with java.util.Iterator

Let's start with the PancakeHouseMenu, changing it over to java.util.Iterator is going to be easy. We just delete the PancakeHouseMenuIterator class, add an import java.util.Iterator to the top of PancakeHouseMenu and change one line of the PancakeHouseMenu:

```
public Iterator createIterator() {
    return menuItems.iterator();
}
```

Instead of creating our own iterator now, we just call the iterator() method on the menuItems ArrayList.

And that's it, PancakeHouseMenu is done.

Now we need to make the changes to allow the DinerMenu to work with java.util.Iterator.

```
import java.util.Iterator;

public class DinerMenuIterator implements Iterator {
    MenuItem[] list;
    int position = 0;

    public DinerMenuIterator(MenuItem[] list) {
        this.list = list;
    }

    public Object next() {
        //implementation here
    }

    public boolean hasNext() {
        //implementation here
    }

    public void remove() {
        if (position <= 0) {
            throw new IllegalStateException
                ("You can't remove an item until you've done at least one next()");
        }
        if (list[position-1] != null) {
            for (int i = position-1; i < (list.length-1); i++) {
                list[i] = list[i+1];
            }
            list[list.length-1] = null;
        }
    }
}
```

First we import java.util.Iterator, the interface we're going to implement.

None of our current implementation changes...

...but we do need to implement remove(). Here, because the chef is using a fixed sized Array, we just shift all the elements up one when remove() is called.

We are almost there...

We just need to give the Menus a common interface and rework the Waitress a little. The Menu interface is quite simple: we might want to add a few more methods to it eventually, like addItem(), but for now we will let the chefs control their menus by keeping that method out of the public interface:

```
public interface Menu {
    public Iterator createIterator();
}
```

This is a simple interface that just lets clients get an iterator for the items in the menu.

Now we need to add an `implements Menu` to both the PancakeHouseMenu and the DinerMenu class definitions and update the Waitress:

```
import java.util.Iterator;

public class Waitress {
    Menu pancakeHouseMenu;
    Menu dinerMenu;

    public Waitress(Menu pancakeHouseMenu, Menu dinerMenu) {
        this.pancakeHouseMenu = pancakeHouseMenu;
        this.dinerMenu = dinerMenu;
    }

    public void printMenu() {
        Iterator pancakeIterator = pancakeHouseMenu.createIterator();
        Iterator dinerIterator = dinerMenu.createIterator();
        System.out.println("MENU\n----\nBREAKFAST");
        printMenu(pancakeIterator);
        System.out.println("\nLUNCH");
        printMenu(dinerIterator);
    }

    private void printMenu(Iterator iterator) {
        while (iterator.hasNext()) {
            MenuItem menuItem = (MenuItem)iterator.next();
            System.out.print(menuItem.getName() + ", ");
            System.out.print(menuItem.getPrice() + " -- ");
            System.out.println(menuItem.getDescription());
        }
    }

    // other methods here
}
```

Now the Waitress uses the java.util.Iterator as well.

We need to replace the concrete Menu classes with the Menu Interface.

Nothing changes here.

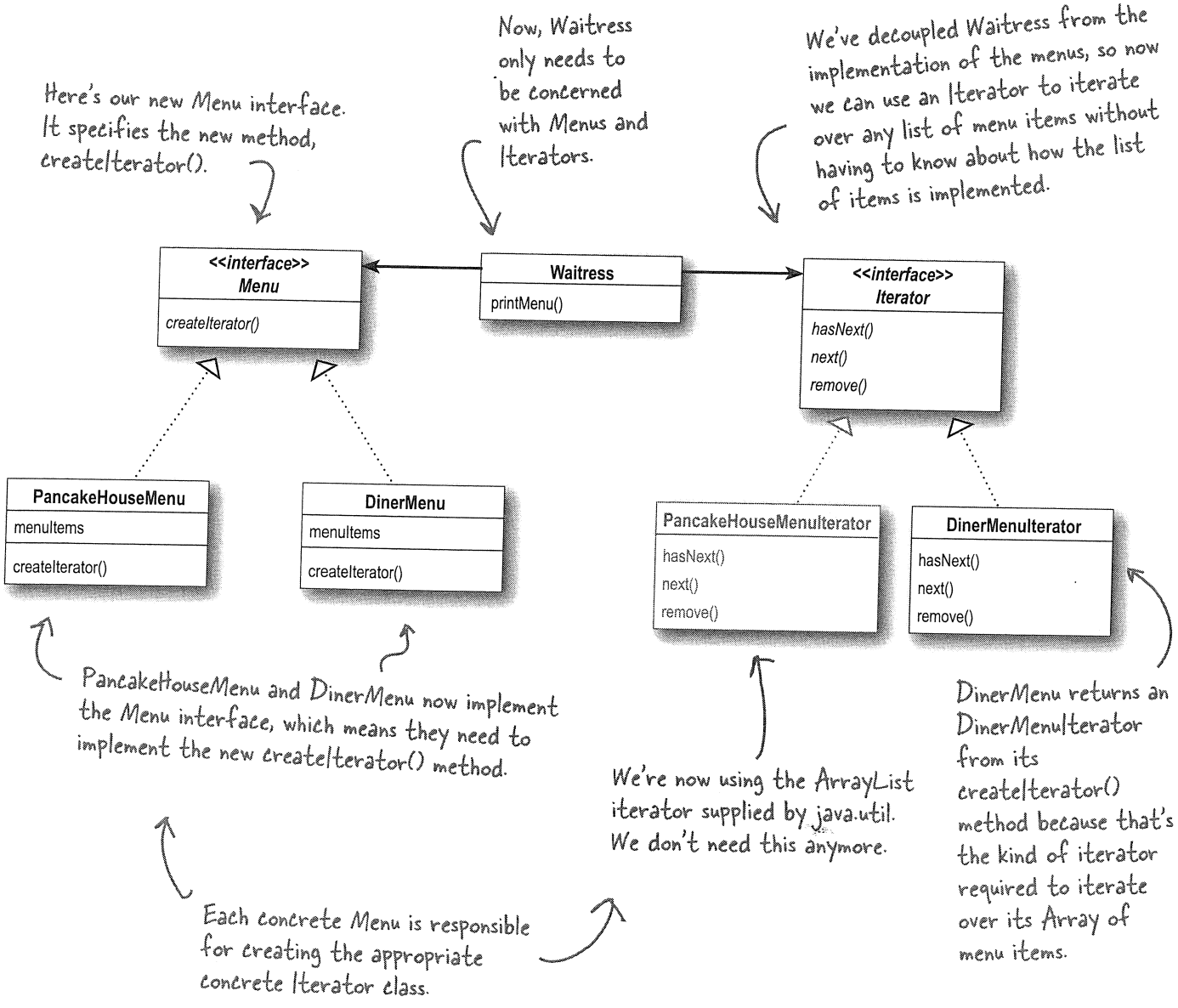
What does this get us?

The PancakeHouseMenu and DinerMenu classes implement an interface, Menu. Waitress can refer to each menu object using the interface rather than the concrete class. So, we're reducing the dependency between the Waitress and the concrete classes by "programming to an interface, not an implementation."

This solves the problem of the Waitress depending on the concrete Menus.

The new Menu interface has one method, createIterator(), that is implemented by PancakeHouseMenu and DinerMenu. Each menu class assumes the responsibility of creating a concrete Iterator that is appropriate for its internal implementation of the menu items.

This solves the problem of the Waitress depending on the implementation of the MenuItems.



Iterator Pattern defined

You've already seen how to implement the Iterator Pattern with your very own iterator. You've also seen how Java supports iterators in some of its collection oriented classes (the ArrayList). Now it's time to check out the official definition of the pattern:

> **The Iterator Pattern** provides a way to access the elements of an aggregate object sequentially without exposing its underlying representation.

This makes a lot of sense: the pattern gives you a way to step through the elements of an aggregate without having to know how things are represented under the covers. You've seen that with the two implementations of Menus. But the effect of using iterators in your design is just as important: once you have a uniform way of accessing the elements of all your aggregate objects, you can write polymorphic code that works with *any* of these aggregates – just like the printMenu() method, which doesn't care if the menu items are held in an Array or ArrayList (or anything else that can create an Iterator), as long as it can get hold of an Iterator.

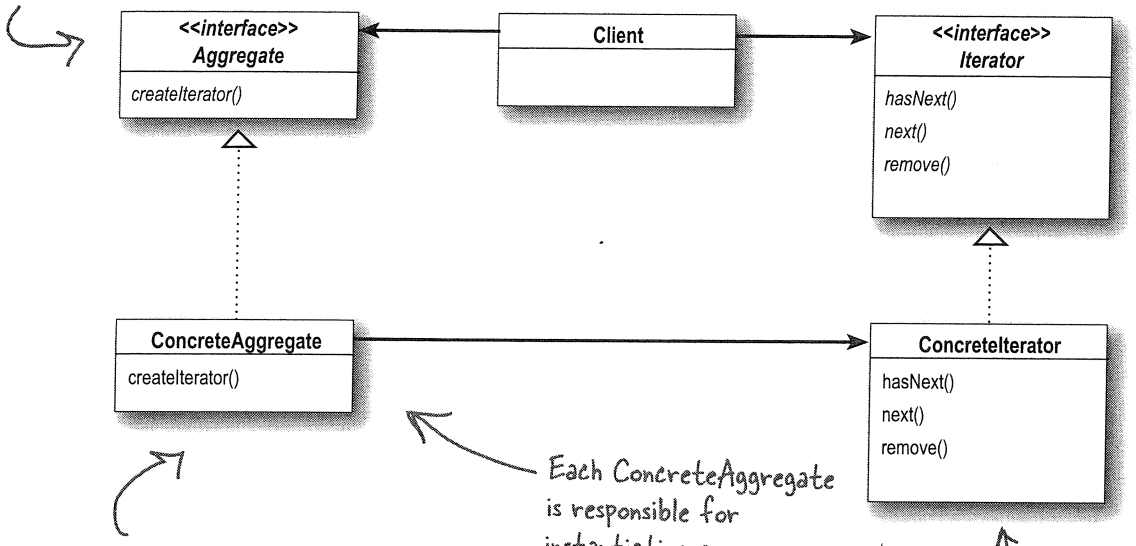
The other important impact on your design is that the Iterator Pattern takes the responsibility of traversing elements and gives that responsibility to the iterator object, not the aggregate object. This not only keeps the aggregate interface and implementation simpler, it removes the responsibility for iteration from the aggregate and keeps the aggregate focused on the things it should be focused on (managing a collection of objects), not on iteration.

Let's check out the class diagram to put all the pieces in context...

The Iterator Pattern allows traversal of the elements of an aggregate without exposing the underlying implementation.

It also places the task of traversal on the iterator object, not on the aggregate, which simplifies the aggregate interface and implementation, and places the responsibility where it should be.

Having a common interface for your aggregates is handy for your client; it decouples your client from the implementation of your collection of objects.



The Iterator interface provides the interface that all iterators must implement, and a set of methods for traversing over elements of a collection. Here we're using the java.util.Iterator. If you don't want to use Java's Iterator interface, you can always create your own.

The ConcreteAggregate has a collection of objects and implements the method that returns an Iterator for its collection.

Each ConcreteAggregate is responsible for instantiating a ConcreteIterator that can iterate over its collection of objects.

The ConcreteIterator is responsible for managing the current position of the iteration.

The class diagram for the Iterator Pattern looks very similar to another Pattern you've studied; can you think of what it is? Hint: A subclass decides which object to create.