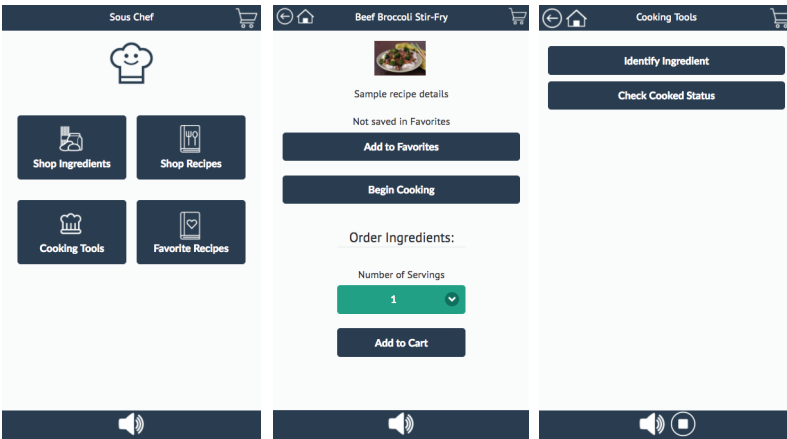


Sous Chef

Team FILA design: Zhibing Jocelyn Fu, Vinay Iyengar, Maria Emily Lovett, Tallulah Axinn

Informative Illustration



Insight

What is the problem? Individuals with visual impairments want to be able to cook for themselves but have trouble navigating an environment that is not built for them (e.g. grocery shopping, identifying/distinguishing ingredients, following written recipes, measuring ingredients, using certain kitchen tools, and detecting preparedness of food).

Who is the user? The users of our product are all those across the spectrum of visibility. This app is navigable for people who are fully blind, low-vision, or sighted.

Why is the problem valuable to the user? Being unable to cook for yourself is one factor that prevents individuals from being completely independent. For certain visually impaired individuals, they are required to spend more time at the grocery store identifying ingredients (if they are unable to get someone to join them), they must get help preparing food, and they often spend more money buying pre-prepared food.

How do you know? Through conducting several interviews, we learned two insights that evidenced the above conclusions. Firstly, individuals with visual impairments find that the most challenging part of cooking comes from identifying ingredients and preparing (cutting, measuring, etc) everything to be cooked. Secondly, these individuals expressed a desire to cook, but often a failure to do so in response to perceived difficulties and time required.

Benefit

What does your product do? Our product aims to improve the entire cooking experience for visually impaired (or sighted!) users. Users are able to shop for individual ingredients or entire meals. The user is given the option to pre-cup, pre-season, and pre-measure ingredients. The user can add their own recipes to be converted to our easily navigable recipe format and order the ingredients for the meal. During the cooking process, users are able to use our technology to scan ingredients and detect level of preparedness. Additionally, each ingredient delivered has a braille-identified QR code that, upon scanning, lists the item name, ingredients, nutritional facts, serving size, and expiration date.

What benefit does it bring to your users? Our product increases the efficiency in which visually impaired users can navigate the kitchen and cook for themselves and for friends. Our product turns an environment that was not initially created for the user, into something that provides them with full access to all the information and tools necessary to cook meals. By delivering ingredients and mealkits that are pre-portioned, pre-cut, pre-measured, and easily identifiable, Sous Chef empowers users by eliminating previous pain points from the cooking experience.

Lessons Learned

What have you learned from your users? We have learned that creating a product for visually impaired users can be beneficial to an even larger population. We have learned that addressing the smaller, perhaps unexciting, daily tasks (e.g. cooking) is just as important as focusing on more commonly discussed issues.

What are the strengths of the product? One strength of our product is the fact that we are addressing a specific problem (cooking for the visually impaired) and creating a top to bottom solution for people all along the spectrum of visibility. Our app is fully enabled with voice overs and voice commands, but is also accessible for low-vision users. The accessibility of our app for visually impaired users is the biggest strength of our app. We have designed it with a specific user in mind, but hope that it can be of help to anyone.

What are its limitations? Our greatest limitation is the fact that our app is not an educational app. Although we hope that this will empower more people in the kitchen and mostly does not require the user to handle dangerous utensils or items, we acknowledge that our technology is not supposed to replace the rehabilitation training that many visually impaired users go through. This is a limitation because we cannot say that our app will teach the users new skills, but only that it supplements the trainings that they already went through.

How do you know? After one of our interviews, the interviewee expressed concern about the potential for liabilities if people used our app as a way to learn to cook as visually impaired. This interviewee suggested that there should be a clear distinction between teaching and aiding.