

My Neighbor's Kitchen Group Heuristic Evaluation

Problem Statement

My Neighbor's Kitchen is a mobile app that facilitates sharing food leftovers locally to help reduce waste and to de-stigmatize the condition of food insecure people.

List of Violations

1. H2-8 Aesthetic & Minimalist Design / Severity: 1 / Found by: A

In the "challenges" task, the name/bar/image for each task is cluttered. Separate the name and progress bars into separate lines so they don't run into each other. Using push notifications may also allow the user to get quick updates on challenges without forcing them to navigate to the challenges screen.

2. H2-8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design / Severity: 1 / Found by: B

Centering of text and images is not consistent, and often gives the impression of being off-balance because of left-justified text. Adopting a standard grid pattern and taking advantage of left-justified alignment might help.

3. H2-4: Consistency and Standards / Severity: 3 / Found by: A, B, C

The "pickup > list page" and the "track" appear to serve different functions, despite containing mostly redundant information. Suggest removing unclaimed food items from "track" menu, restricting all searching functionality to the pickup menu for clarity. This could also be because the carrots were supposed to represent something from the "post" task - I would separate the page into two sections, something like "your orders" and "your posts", for clarity.

4. H2-3: User Control & Freedom / Severity: 2 / Found by: B, C

It's unclear when a picked-up item will be removed from the "track" menu. I am assuming the app automatically deletes claims from the menu after the 20 minute spoil deadline passes; a simple delete button would make it easier for user to remove clutter. Spoil time as an input field during the post task could be useful feature.

5. H2-9: Help Users with Errors / Severity: 4 / Found by: A, B, C

After making a post, there is no way for a user to delete or otherwise modify the post. Adding an "edit" or at least a delete button after making a post would allow the user to respond in case of a change in their situation. If posts are meant to be something users can't take back, there should be more protections before making a post.

6. H2-4 Consistency and Standards / Severity: 2 / Found by: A, B, C

When posting leftover food or a challenge, the option to share on social media comes up, accompanied by a cancel button. It is unclear whether pressing the cancel button will cancel the post, or simply not post to social media (the latter, I believe, is the intended purpose of the button). Use a more descriptive message to indicate to users what they are doing by pressing the button. It might even be better to allow users to completely bypass the prompt asking them to share on social media, and perhaps provide a share button elsewhere.

7. H2-10 Help and Documentation / Severity: 2 / Found by: A, B, C

On the initial post page, the user is asked for quantity, and then in parentheses it says "How many adults does it feed?". These two seem to be a bit contradictory, making it unclear whether the user is being asked for the number of servings there are (which I feel can be very arbitrary) or if they're just asking for a measurement of the amount of food. Use descriptive text to make it clear what the user is inputting. If this

is meant to describe the amount of food a drop down with numbers is probably not the best way to input that information, but rather a text box where the user can describe the amount.

8. H2-6 Recognition Rather than Recall / Severity: 1 / Found by: A, C

Splitting the form for posting food into two pages is misleading and slows down the user. Initially, I thought the first page was the entire form, only to realize that there is another page requiring more information. Condense the form onto one page where the user can clearly see all of the information they are being asked for.

9. H2-7 Flexibility and Efficiency of Use / Severity: 2 / Found by: A, B, C

Users are asked to input their location on the post form, but most of the time that will either be their current location or a set home location that they repeatedly post from. Make it so that this information is automatically filled in, or allow users to choose from a list of preset favorite locations. Making these changes makes it easier and faster for frequent users of the app to post food they want to share.

10. H2-2 Match Between System and the Real World / Severity: 1 / Found by: A, B, C

List view of food available has a person symbol next to the amount of food available for each post which is confusing. This makes it seem like the number is representative of the number of servings available (how many people it feeds) which is not necessarily the case. Replace the symbol with concise text that describes what that quantity represents (ex: “amount: 5 slices”).

11. H2-5 Error Prevention / Severity: 4 / Found by: A

Pressing the chat button when looking at an available food post takes you to the chat screen with a list of people you can chat with, rather than directly starting a chat with the person who made the post. Since information is not given about the poster, the user does not know who to even talk to. Pressing the chat button from a post should start a chat with the poster.

12. H2-2 Match Between System and the Real World / Severity: 1 / Found by: A

The challenges screens use a steaming-bowl-like symbol that is very unclear in its meaning. Through context and my background on the app I am able to understand that these are supposed to represent leftovers, but that is not made obvious by the symbol. Find a more intuitive symbol, or just use text to make it clear to the user what everything represents.

13. H2-10 Help and Documentation / Severity: 1 / Found by: A

Each challenge page has a short description, that is labeled with “Details”. The label is unnecessary as the smaller text makes it clear that it is a subtitle of sorts. Remove the “Details” label.

14. H2-4 Consistency and Standards / Severity: 1 / Found by: A

Forms that ask users to input information are inconsistent in their layout. For instance on the post form, title simply shows a blank line, whereas location and pickup details are in text boxes. The post form for a new challenge uses a symbol to make the same indication. Despite the difference in appearance, all are asking for an input of text. Pick one indication and stick to it. I think the text box is the most intuitive way to show that there is an input of text.

15. H2-4 Consistency and Standards / Severity: 1 / Found by: A

On the post form the set options for allergens are shown in gray boxes, like the text boxes for location and input, making it seem like the user can type these in, when really the only interaction available is the checking of a box. Remove the gray box surrounding the text for allergens to make this less confusing.

16. H2-8 Aesthetic and Minimalist Design / Severity: 1 / Found by: A

The posts for available food show the quantity, time posted, and location in very large text, and the details of the food in smaller text, although the details box contains information the user is probably most

concerned about when browsing through such posts. Make the quantity, time posted, and location smaller - the post time and location could even be removed from this screen - allowing the users to easily find the information they are interested in.

17. H2-6 Recognition Rather than Recall / Severity: 3 / Found by: A, C

On the track page, I believe the carrots post is supposed to be a post made by the user but there is no indication of this, there is only the picture, post time, and text saying that it has not been claimed yet. Add a title for the posts to show who made the post/its nature.

18. H2-3 User Control And Freedom / Severity: 2 / Found by: A, B, C

Although the navigation bar at the bottom of the page makes it relatively easy to go back to a main page, some screens are missing back buttons. For example, when browsing posts of leftovers in the list view, if you click on a post to look at details, you can't directly get back to the list page. Instead, you have to press pickup on the navigation bar, which takes you to the map where you have to toggle to the list view. Add back buttons to make it easier for users to navigate.

19. H2-1 Visibility of System Status / Severity: 4 / Found by: A

The challenges page is currently lacking an indication of the time (start and end date) for each challenge, which is crucial information. Each challenge should clearly state the start and end date.

20. H2-3 User control and freedom / Severity: 4 / Found by: C

Once a food item is claimed on the Pickup screen, there is no way of un-claiming it. Thus, if the user claims an item and then changes his/her mind, there is no way of indicating that preference change through the app to the food provider and of freeing the item for some other user's consumption. An un-claim button should be included on the track page.

21. H2-2 Match between system and the real world / Severity: 2 / Found by: C

The naming of the Pickup and Track screens is not intuitive and could lead to ambiguity and misinterpretation. It seems like their purpose is different, for Pickup has the purpose of being an overview of all the food available locally, while Track is meant to store a list of food the user has the possibility of engaging with. However, the words "pickup" and "track" in no way indicate those functions to the user. I think perhaps using "local kitchens" and "my meals", for example, could lead to less ambiguity.

22. H2-8 Aesthetic and minimalist design / Severity: 1 / Found by: A, C

The demo version of the map is still relatively uncluttered because there are only two food options available, but once the app is in full use the map could quickly become cluttered by too many food options, reducing the visibility. The bubbles indicating the food options could be smaller. There also could be a way of filtering the food options one sees by selecting only certain cuisines, or indicating dietary restrictions, etc.

23. H2-1 Visibility of Status / Severity: 3 / Found by: A, C

After posting a meal, there is no acknowledgement of whether the meal was posted successfully and whether there are any next steps required of the user who posted it. It would also be helpful to be notified once the meal is picked up. Instead, there is a screen inviting the user to share on social media that they use this app, which is somewhat of a nuisance. Overall, the user posting a meal should receive encouragement to continue promoting good behavior (sharing leftovers) rather than prompted to do something different. There could be a pop-up which says "Congratulations! Your meal was posted".

24. H2-8 Aesthetic and minimalist design / Severity: 2 / Found by: C

In the Track screen the user has the option of pressing a heart to thank the food poster. However, this unnecessary feature takes up prime screen real-estate without providing much functionality. The user has

every ability of thanking the poster through the chat feature, which would be more personal and thoughtful since it would be expressed in their own words. Perhaps if there were a way in which the app could tally the number of hearts to show which meals are particularly delicious and use that information to encourage the posters to make more of that food, or to indicate to other users which meals are most popular, then the heart would have a more valuable function.

25. H2-7 Flexibility and efficiency of use / Severity: 0 / Found by: C

It would be convenient for the user to create a profile where he/she stores his/her preferences. For example, the user could favorite the food posters they enjoy the most so they can follow their activity more closely, and permanently filter the food results they see by location, cuisine type, or dietary restrictions.

26. H2-7 Flexibility and efficiency of use / Severity: 2 / Found by: A, B, C

When posting a meal, it would be efficient for the user to be able to set the location once and then have it stored in the app for future use, since presumably the user will mostly be sharing their leftovers from their home, a fixed location. There could be a screen prompting the user to save the address they entered under a name like “my kitchen”.

27. H2-1 Visibility of Status / Severity: 2 / Found by: C

This might be because the prototype is not fully fleshed out, but the Challenges screen should be particularly interactive with the user, inviting them to participate in challenges to reach the target, thanking them for their contribution, and coaxing them to create new fun challenges. At the moment the app does not engage with the user and it was difficult to understand how to register and record participation in an existing challenge on the app. There should be more interactive pop up screens and a more intuitive way of joining or leaving existing challenges.

28. H2-4 Consistency and standards / Severity: 2 / Found by: A, B, C

I mentioned above that the naming of Pickup and Track is ambiguous, but upon further exploration, also their functionality is confusing, especially when Pickup is in List view. They seem to have overlapping functionality, which makes them redundant. The user has a confusing time trying to figure out whether they mean the same thing. Their purpose should be redefined, Pickup should be for browsing available options, while Track should be for keeping tabs on food the user has expressed interest in.

29. H2-6 Recognition rather than recall / Severity: 2 / Found by: C

The Chat screen features conversations with various food posters, but their profiles are not linked to the food they are providing. Thus, the user needs to remember which food is associated with which conversation. Important information might be shared in the chat feature (eg: allergens) and it is crucial that this is linked to the food it concerns. The food item should be linked to in the conversation thumbnail.

30. H2-4 Consistency and standards / Severity: 2 / Found by: A, C

The chat feature can be accessed either from the Track screen, or through the Chat button at the bottom ribbon, leading to redundancy. Thus, both violations could be fixed by removing all together the chat button from the ribbon and having the user access chats only by going through the food they are connected to.

Summary of Evaluations

Category	# Viol. (sev 0)	# Viol. (sev 1)	# Viol. (sev 2)	# Viol. (sev 3)	# Viol. (sev 4)	# Viol. (total)
H2-1: Visibility of Status	0	0	1	1	1	3
H2-2: Match Sys & World	0	2	1	0	0	3
H2-3: User Control	0	0	2	0	1	3
H2-4: Consistency	0	2	3	1	0	6
H2-5: Error Prevention	0	0	0	0	1	1
H2-6: Recognition not Recall	0	1	1	1	0	3
H2-7: Efficiency of Use	1	0	2	0	0	3
H2-8: Minimalist Design	0	4	1	0	0	5
H2-9: Help Users with Errors	0	0	0	0	1	1
H2-10: Documentation	0	1	1	0	0	2
Total Violations by Severity	1	10	12	3	4	30

Evaluation Statistics

Severity / Evaluator	Evaluator A	Evaluator B	Evaluator C
sev. 0	0	4	1
sev. 1	9	2	3
sev. 2	7	7	12
sev. 3	3	1	3
sev. 4	3	1	2
total (sev. 3 & 4)	6	2	5
total (all severity levels)	22	15	21

***Note:** 4 Sev. 0's removed from final List of Violations for being inconsistent/contradictory with the others

Severity / Evaluator	Evaluator A	Evaluator B	Evaluator C
sev. 0	0%	80%	20%
sev. 1	90%	20%	30%
sev. 2	58.3%	58.3%	100%
sev. 3	100%	33.3%	100%
sev. 4	75%	25%	50%
total (sev. 3 & 4)	85.7%	28.6%	71.4%

total (all severity levels)	64.7%	44.1%	61.8%
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Summary Recommendations

Throughout our heuristic evaluation process we focused mostly on the task of finding and picking up food (the most developed task in the UI), with slightly less attention to the tasks of posting food and creating challenges. We look forward to see how the other two tasks develop and are refined in the high-fi prototype!

The main user interface issues were focused around User control and freedom, and also, to a slightly lesser extent, Visibility of status and Consistency and standards. The areas to work on for further improvement are flexibility, interactiveness, and removing redundancy within the app. Definitely a user profile would make some of the usability more efficient and smooth by having a slightly longer onboarding process, but which then would store main preferences during day to day use. More broadly, we think the app was quite easy to use and did not cause many errors, but could definitely be refined for users to customize their experience more. Some information and navigational guidance was missing, which may confuse the user. The team can extend features like those mentioned earlier to make navigation intuitive and give the user more control over their screen.

We liked that the app did not distinguish between people receiving and donating food, in the hope that users engage in a collaborative manner without power dynamics. We think that overall the app's aesthetic is clean and the color scheme and font is soothing. This app has lots of potential and with some work we think it could be really great.