

CASE STUDY



APPS USED
Sketch, InVision, InVision Studio, Illustrator, Miro, Photoshop, and InDesign

DURATION
4 months

MY ROLE
ideation, research, UX/UI

THE CHALLENGE

I wanted to find out how a recipe app could make cooking more frugal, fast and fun.

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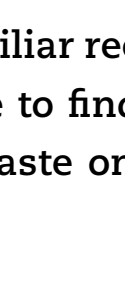
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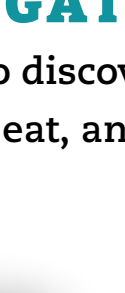
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THE BRIEF

What's for Dinner?

My capstone project for Springboard is an on-the-spot recipe application for home chefs who want to find new recipes with ingredients that are already in their kitchen. By inputting ingredients, time and/or servings, they can search for new recipes that will help them save time and money.



THE PROBLEM

Research has found that Americans are in food ruts, we are short on time and throwing away hundreds of dollars a year in unused food.

WHY?

People make the same familiar dishes over and over again, and shopping for the ingredients to make familiar recipes is easy. We want to try new recipes but don't have the time to find new dishes to experiment and we don't have the money to waste on exotic ingredients that we will never use again.

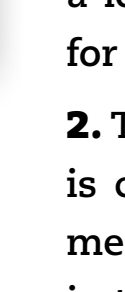
STRATEGY

By studying how people plan for everyday meals and their grocery shopping habits, I wanted to discover how people handle everyday meal making, find new recipes and how they deal with food waste.



THE TARGET USER

I defined my target users as home chefs of all ages, who grocery shop on a regular basis, make meals more than 3 times a week and who currently use (or have used) a recipe application.



DATA GATHERING

What's in the fridge? I needed to discover how people shop for food, how they decide what they eat, and what they throw away.



From those 25 people, I remotely interviewed 5 people who regularly grocery shop, use the internet or recipe applications to find new recipes, and who regularly throw away unused food.

AFFINITY MAPS

From those interviews I was able to identify the **key pain points** of everyday meal making:

- Time is an issue, both cooking and recipe hunting.
- No one wants to waste money on food they "might" eat or unsure of how to prepare.
- Food ruts- people are tired of making the same meals everyday.
- People end up throwing away leftovers and unused ingredients that go bad before they can use them.

And **wish lists** in a recipe finder:

- Flexibility on servings sizes for recipes and ingredients.
- Many people want to eat healthier and want a faster way to find healthy recipes.
- Easier to follow recipes, ingredient lists and instructions at a glance.

SURVEYS & INTERVIEWS

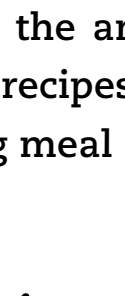
After defining the problem and target users, I surveyed over 25 people I found through school and social media food groups. I wanted to learn how people planned and managed everyday meal making. I also wanted to know how often they throw away food and how often they grocery shop. By analyzing their food gathering and preparing habits, I looked for patterns and pain points in their every day meal making.



EMPATHY MAPS

I was able to create maps for a deeper understanding of who two typical home chefs are and this is what I learned:

- The first is an inexperienced cook who is impatient with recipe finders, doesn't have a lot of money and is usually just looking for themselves.
- The second is a busy working parent who is concerned about saving money, healthy meals their family will eat and is confident in the kitchen.



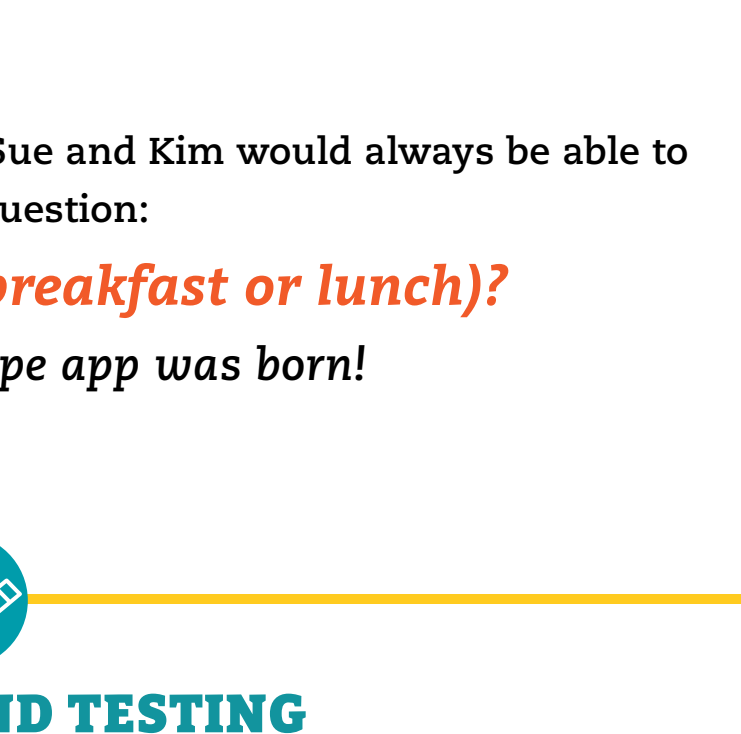
PERSONAS

Meet Kim and Sue, the two home chef personas I identified through my data gathering.



Kim...

- is not a confident cook
- thinks recipe videos are "too long"
- wants single serving recipes
- can't afford to eat out and hates leftovers



Sue...

- is a busy working mom
- would like her family to eat healthier
- wants to save money
- her kids can be "picky eaters"

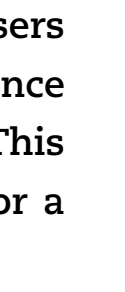
What do Kim and Sue have in common?

Both Kim and Sue do not want to deal with unused leftovers or wasted food. They want to save money. Neither of them has much time to spend in the kitchen. Both personas **look at cooking as a chore** something they **have to do** to save money and eat healthier, not something they **want to do**. This lead me to 3 questions that I took to the ideation process:

How could I make a recipe app more flexible?

How could a recipe app save money?

How can we make everyday meal making more fun?



IDEATION

What does a flexible, frugal and fun experience look like?

How can we make everyday meal making more fun?

Games are fun.

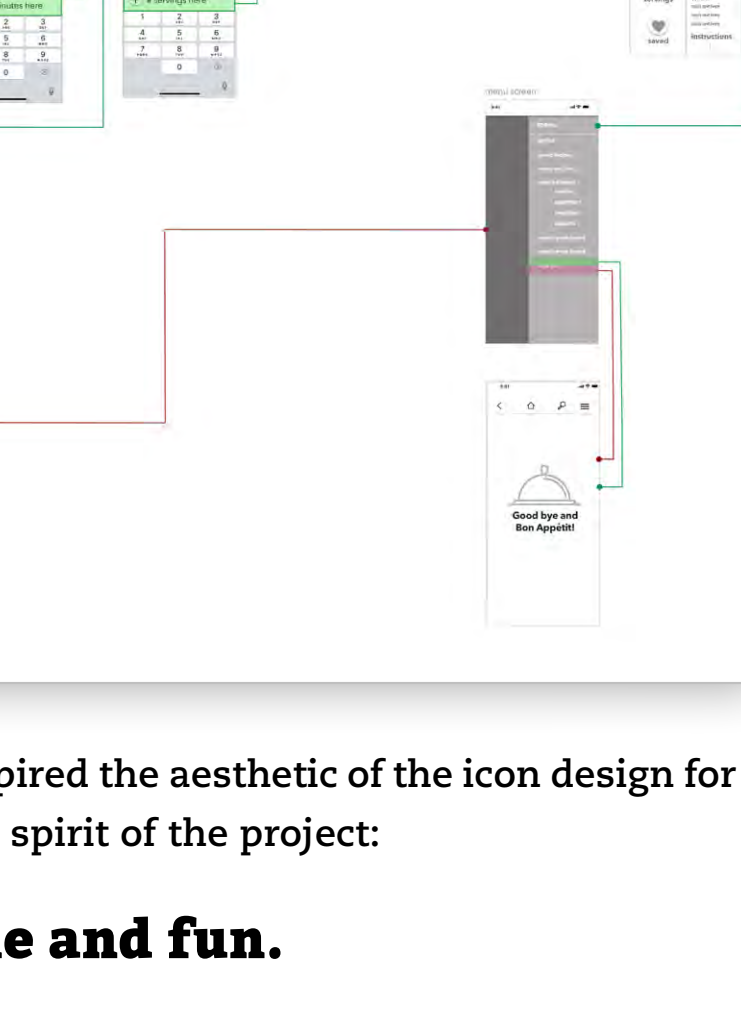
Give users the feeling they are playing a game.

After collecting my HMWs, I used a mash-up technique between a recipe app and a cell phone game. I learned that combining and synchronizing the attributes of each could make cooking more fun by making it more of a game and less of a chore.

I asked myself: "What would a recipe app look like?" I asked this question based on many of the mobile game apps people play on their phones everyday. But what are the game rules?

In order to play the game (make the recipe) a player would need to be able to input the ingredients, time and servings.

And if I wanted a recipe app to feel like a game app, it would need to look like one too. What game elements would you need? Big buttons, bright colors and big pictures.



How could I make a recipe app more flexible?

Control is power.

Giving users the ability to adjust servings, ingredients, and time, they can craft a recipe to fit meal size, taste and schedule.

Users like Kim would have the ability to make a meal for one person, and users like Sue would be able to adjust ingredients in a recipe for her family's picky eaters. Kim and Sue wouldn't have to deal with unwanted leftovers ever again.

By giving users the option to input the amount of time in their recipe search, users wouldn't have to sift through recipes that take more time to prepare then they can spend on cooking... making meal making less stressful.

How could a recipe app save money?

Wasted food is wasted money.

Giving users the ability to search for recipes by inputting ingredients first, they can use up unused food in their fridge... and not toss spoiled food, wasting money.

Users like Kim would be able to use up all that extra spinach in her fridge. Users like Sue would be able to also come up with new chicken recipe ideas that would take her out of her family's food rut.

In answering these questions, users like Sue and Kim would always be able to answer the question:

What's for Dinner (or breakfast or lunch)?

the name for new recipe app was born!



UX DESIGN AND TESTING

What worked, what didn't work and why.

USER FLOWS & RED ROUTES

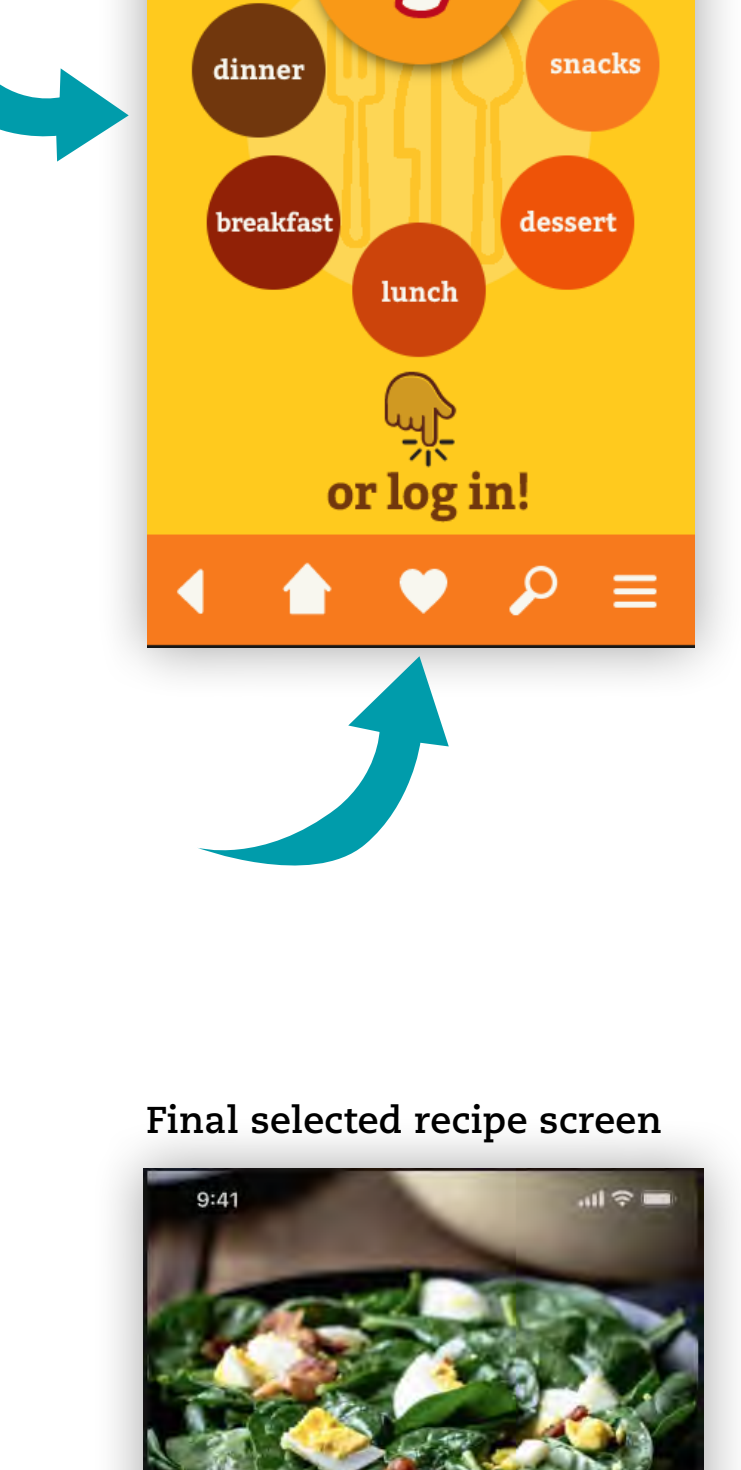
In the early **key user flows** of the What's For Dinner app, new users were asked to either sign up during onboarding.

This didn't work.

The spirit of the app is to help the home cook to thumb through was the antithesis of that.

What did work:

Letting the user dive into the app, without signing in as a "dinner" and get to the search section right away tested out later to be a success. Many people commented that they hated signing up for an app they want to use immediately.



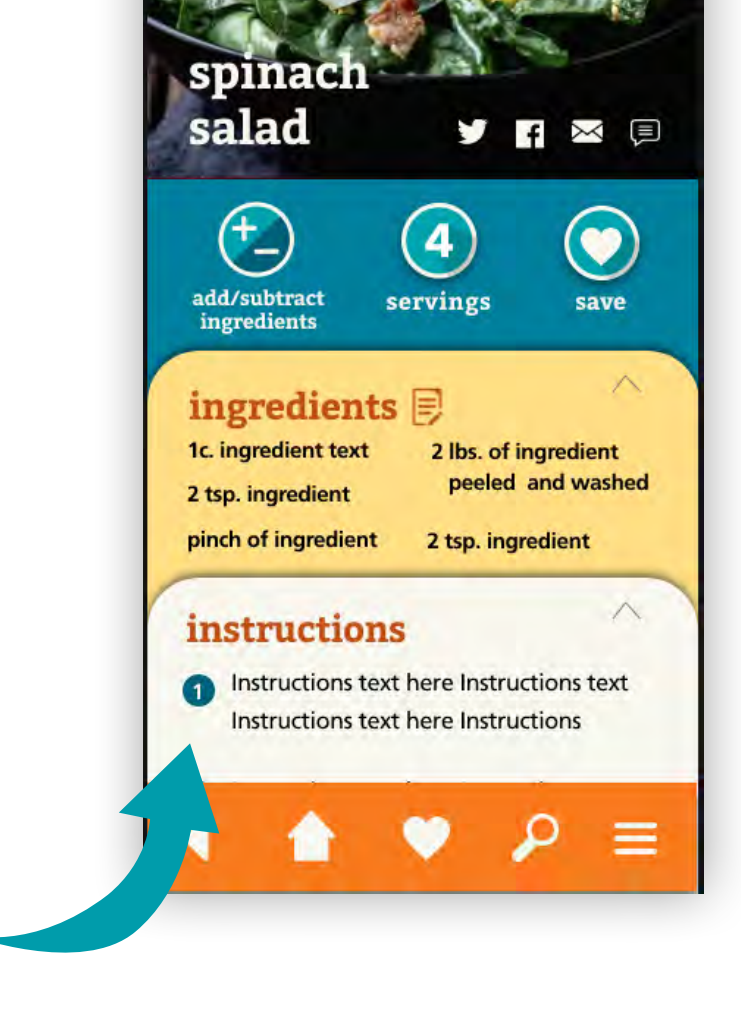
My **red routes** included a screen where onboarding prompted the user to choose between plant based meals or meat based meals.

This didn't work.

During testing, I watched people fumble through this screen transition. I could feel a real world user needing to get to the recipe results faster. Although early iterations did include a "surprise me" choice, by forcing the user to make a choice at this stage just adds extra work for the user.

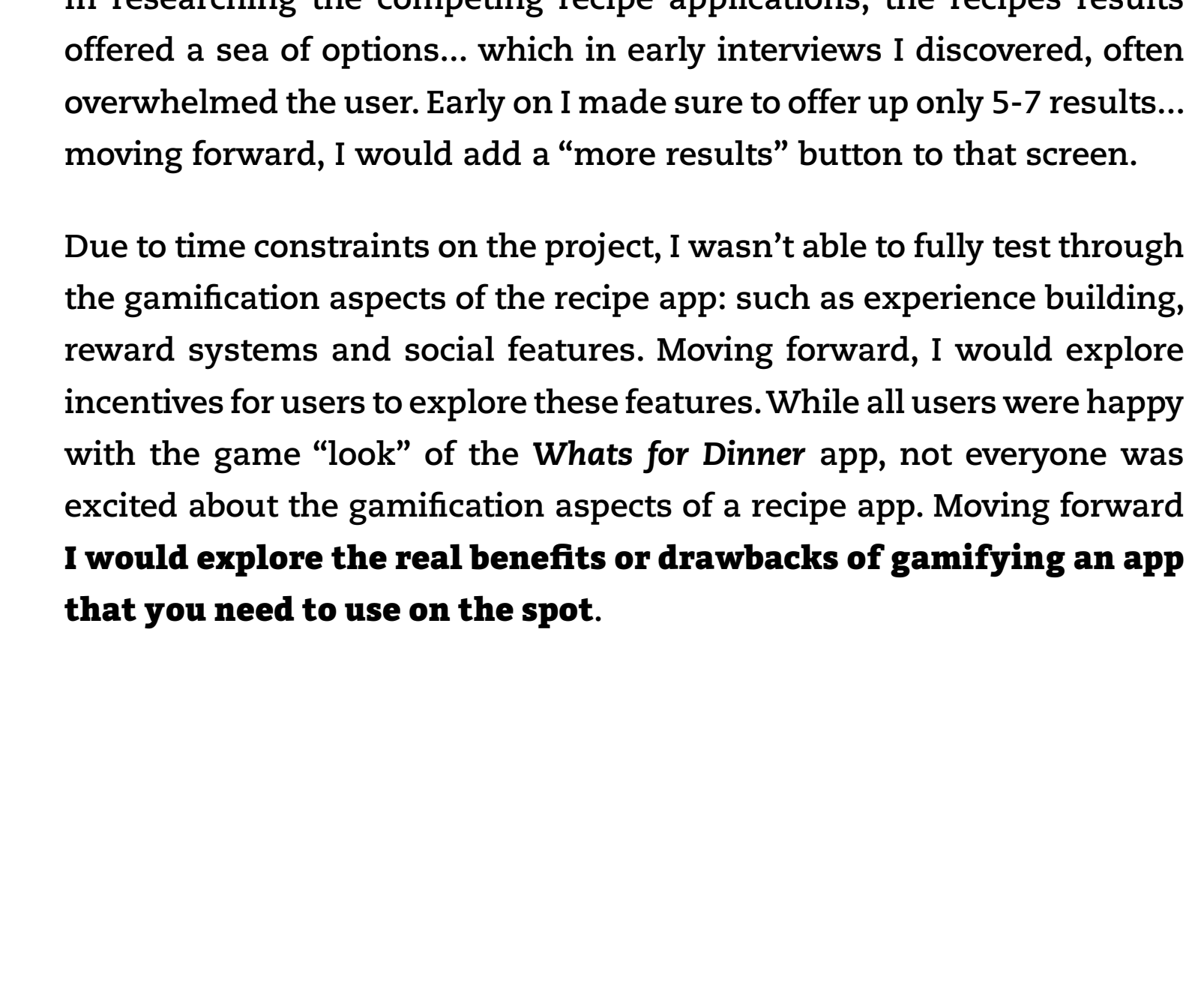
What did work:

By moving the meat or plant based choice to the preferences section of the users profile, a meat or plant based preference will always be in their recipe results. This incentivizes a new user to sign up for a more personalized experience.



WIREFRAMES

With these early road blocks hammered out, I was able to create the wireframes for two user red routes. One a first time user looking for a recipe inputting ingredients, servings and time... and the second, a return user looking for a saved recipe.



The simplicity of these early wireframes inspired the aesthetic of the icon design for my app and spoke to the spirit of the project:

Keep it simple and fun.

UI DESIGN AND MORE TESTING

Again, what worked, what didn't work and why.

UI DESIGN

Keeping the spirit of simple and fun in mind, I wanted the app to feel like walking into your favorite diner. But the experience should feel fresh everytime. The colors had to be energizing and stimulating to your appetite. And finally, I wanted the app to have the feel of your favorite phone app game- think Candy Crush!

EARLY HI-FI DESIGN

Onboarding screen, recipe search results, and selected recipe screen.

HI-FI TESTING

For the Hi-Fi testing I used a remote, moderated and unmoderated usability test with 5 participants doing 2 tasks; all recruited through social media and Springboard.

The first task involved having the participant act as a new user in order to observe how they interact with onboarding and button use. The new user needed to find a recipe using 2 ingredients, take 30 minutes to prepare and make it for 4 servings. At that point the new user was directed to save the recipe.

The second task involved having the participant act as a return user who needs to find a saved recipe and change the number of servings.

FEEDBACK & IMPLEMENTED CHANGES

All users immediately commented on the look of the app saying it felt "fresh and fun"- everyone felt the app was immediately easy to understand and navigate. Here are the major pain points we discovered:

ISSUE #1

Half of the users found the animation "spinning" wheel of choices cumbersome to use. Some users felt like they had to "chase down" their selection.

Summary:

The spinning wheel moves too quickly and is hard to read.

Implemented design change:

I slowed down the animation speed of the spinning wheel and enlarged the text.

ISSUE #2

Users were confused on how to find a saved recipe from the onboarding screen. Many wished out loud there was a "saved" recipe icon on the tab bar.

Summary:

There's needs to be a clear way for a return user to log in and/or find a saved recipe from the onboarding screen.

Implemented design change:

- Created a log-in option.
- Replaced the "Help" icon on the tool bar with the familiar "saved" heart icon.

ISSUE #3

All of the users looked for a way to share the recipe or "send it" to their partner quickly. I also observed all of the users fumbling to find the recipe instructions on the selected recipe screen.

Summary:

Need to add social media and message option on the selected recipe screen. Ingredients and instructions need to be immediately accessible.

Implemented design change:

- I added social media icons next to the recipe title
- Completely redesigned the screen from a vertical split screen to a easier to navigate horizontal layout. I created ingredient and instructions "recipe cards" that are found at a glance, with subtle arrow icons that instruct the user to expand on touch.

Final onboarding screen

Final selected recipe screen

Here is the final working animation of the What's for Dinner? prototype!

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Americans are definitely **very concerned about wasting food**. The overwhelming feedback of this project found that people **LOVED** the idea of finding recipes by inputting ingredients already on hand in their kitchen. Although a few recipe apps offer this as a function, the sought after feature is usually buried deep in the user experience.

I also learned that sometimes **too much choice is not a great thing**. In researching the competing recipe applications, the recipes results offered a sea of options... which in early interviews I discovered, often overwhelmed the user. Early on I made sure to offer up only 5-7 results... moving forward, I would add a "more results" button to that screen.

Due to time constraints on the project, I wasn't able to fully test through the gamification aspects of the recipe app: such as experience building, reward systems and social features. Moving forward, I would explore incentives for users to explore these features. While all users were happy with the game "look" of the *Whats for Dinner* app, not everyone was excited about the gamification aspects of a recipe app. Moving forward **I would explore the real benefits or drawbacks of gamifying an app that you need to use on the spot**.