

Case Study for a Mexican Recipe App

Angee Bell

Project overview



The product:

An app to find mexican recipes, create a schedule for cooking and connect in the community.



Project duration:

February – August 2023



Project overview



The problem:

Users need a place to find, save and share new recipe ideas that are easy to understand, accessible for disabilities, and include filter options because they don't have time to search out recipes that are clear or easy to view in the evening, have trouble getting organized around mealtimes, and sharing recipes online is challenging.



The goal:

The Mexican recipe organizer app will let users search, filter, organize, share and save Mexican recipes, which will affect individuals who cook for themselves, families and those w/ special needs by allowing them to identify Mexican recipes that meet their needs and save time in the planning process.

Project overview



My role:

My role was UX designer and UX Researcher



Responsibilities:

User research, wireframing, prototyping, usability study, iterative design, stakeholder presentations, case study

Understanding the user

- User research
- Personas
- Problem statements
- User journey maps

User research: summary



User research was conducted through interviews with a diverse set of five people. Age range was from mid 20's to mid 40's, with multiple ethnicities and 2 people with disabilities.

An assumption was that most people would use the app for basically the same need – to find and cook Mexican recipes. However, I found that different people had different needs (saving time, connecting with others, clear accessible instructions) and also different ways of wanting to access content (video, text, images). Different people had higher priorities for different features in the app, too, such as a scheduling tool, a sharing functionality, and a way to organize favorites.

User research: pain points

1

Time

All users were short on time and needed a way to better plan for their meals through one way – from what to buy to scheduling the recipe

2

Organization

Users needed a way to organize their favorite recipes and easily add recipes to their favorites

3

Recommendations / Filters

Users weren't sure what to cook when exploring and also had a need to filter for allergies and special diet needs

4

Accessibility

Users have different disabilities and needed the app to support their needs such as dyslexia and low vision

Persona: Dylan

Problem statement:

Dylan is a creative full-time programmer with a passion for cooking who also has dyslexia, and needs a place to find, save and share new recipe ideas that are easy to understand, because they don't have time to search out recipes that are clear or easy to view in the evening and sharing them online is challenging.



Dylan

Age: 22

Education: 4th yr. Bachelors in Computer Science

Hometown: Ruidoso, NM

Family: Partner and puppy

Occupation: Digital Content Manager

“I want to try everything at least once.”

GOALS

- Explore different cultural dishes
- Connect and learn from others who share a cooking passion
- Find harmony between work and personal time

FRUSTRATIONS

- “It’s hard to find a community that is also connected to the recipes.”
- “With dyslexia, I don’t read well. I wish more recipes were in video format and the sites were simpler.”
- “It takes a long time to find the right recipe. It would be nice to get recommendations, so I didn’t have to spend so much time searching.”

Dylan lives with their partner in a rural town and works from home as a Web Content Manager for a small company. They are finishing their BA in Computer Science. Dylan is passionate about trying new things and has just started a new painting class. With dyslexia, it is challenging for Dylan to read very fast and busy websites can make concentrating on the words distracting. On top of a love for food, Dylan prefers to cook with mostly fresh and organic foods. Having a way to rate the recipes and see ratings would be helpful when exploring.

Persona: Malayka

Problem statement:

Malayka is a busy working mom, wife and caregiver who needs quick ideas and ways to plan for dinner that include allergy and health-conscious options, because she has little time to cook, struggles planning in advance or having all the right foods and has issues finding the right recipes that will work for everyone's health.



Malayka

Age: 32

Education: Bachelors in Psychology

Hometown: Jacksonville, FL

Family: Husband, 2 Kids, live-in Mother

Occupation: Events Coordinator at Non-profit Org



"It's my job to keep everyone happy and healthy – and that usually revolves around food!"



Goals

- Getting dinner to the table quickly
- Planning meals a week in advance
- Healthy meals for diabetic mother and child with lactose allergy

Frustrations

- ☹ "It's hard to find a meal everyone likes."
- ☹ "I struggle to track what I need from the grocery store in order to cook the week's meals."
- ☹ "Often, I have little time to cook dinner and need something fast or that will be ready when I get home."

Malayka has a busy family and work life. Her sons are both in after-school sports and she volunteers twice weekly at a local food pantry. Her husband helps make breakfast and her mother helps pack lunches, but dinner is up to her. She collects recipes and ideas in order to plan shopping in advance, but it's not always easy to find recipes that meet their specific health requirements. It would be nice to sort recipes by time, health specifications and based on ingredients. If there was an easy way to plan meals, that would be a bonus, too!

User journey map

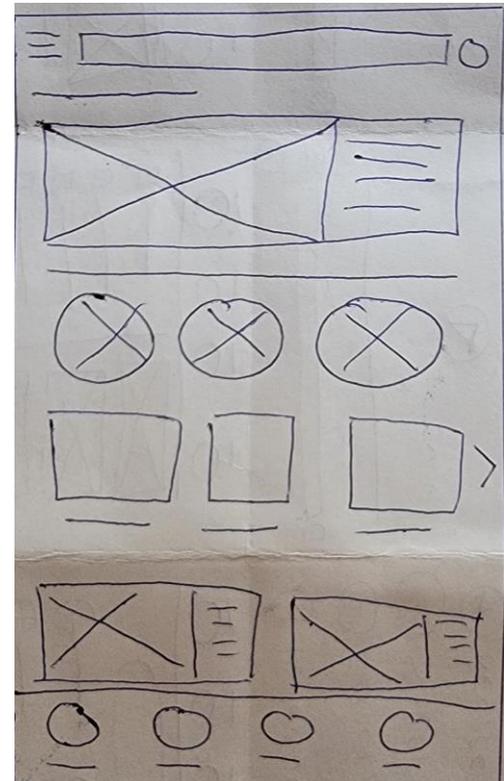
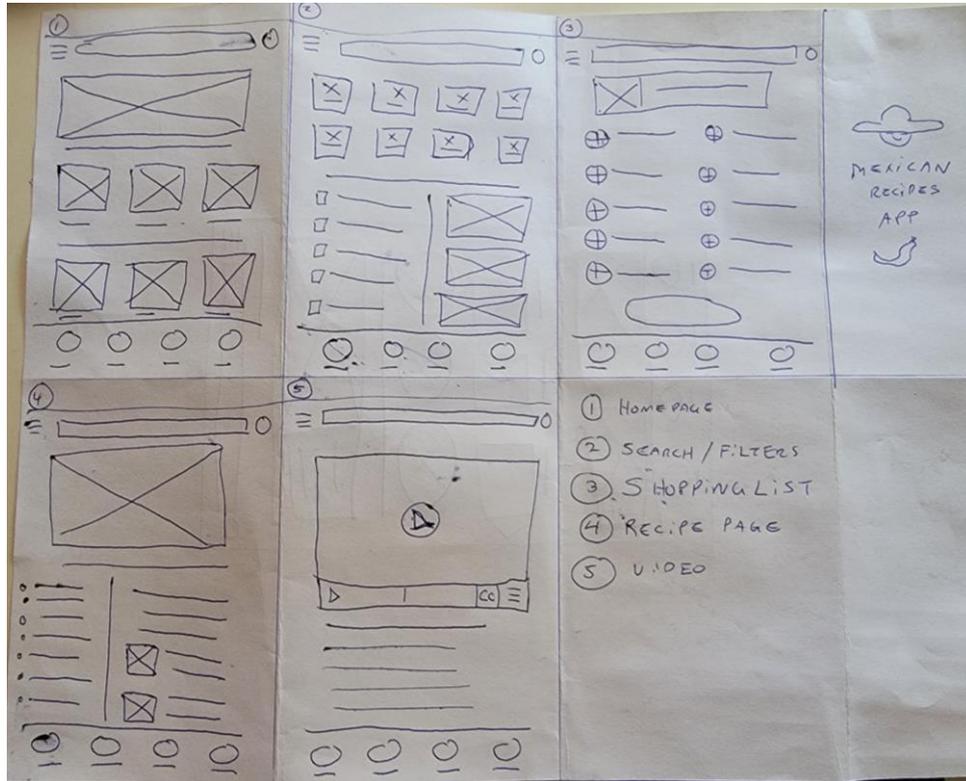
Goal: Easily find and cook new creative and easy-to-understand recipes while keep worklife balance

The user journey map allowed me to empathize with the user and identify functionality that would help meet the user's needs.

| ACTION | Find new recipes | Plan which recipe to cook | Cook the recipe | Share the experience | Build collection of recipes |
|----------------------------------|--|--|--|---|--|
| TASK LIST | <p>Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Spend time looking up recipes B. Find recipes that match interests and foods available in kitchen C. Use search feature in app | <p>Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Identify recipes that take 30 mins or less B. Track which recipes they would like to make C. Research the recipe online to see if others have enjoyed it | <p>Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Get all the ingredients and kitchen tools B. Try to understand the recipe that is available in text C. Research questions about recipe online | <p>Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Talk to friends about recipe B. Post in cooking forum discussion board about the recipe C. Post in social media about the recipe | <p>Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Take screen shot of recipe B. Write down recipe in notebook |
| FEELING ADJECTIVE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impatient • Happy with all the new recipe options • Glad there is a search • Annoyed at confusing search results | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy times are included in recipes • Annoyed you can't search by time • Annoyed there aren't any ratings • Frustrated they can't save recipes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wishful there could be an easier way to make a shopping list • Frustrated that with dyslexia it's hard to read recipe instructions • Annoyed at unclear information and no source of help | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy to share feedback with friends about great recipes • Annoyed there's no way to share links to the recipe or post about/rate the recipe w/in the app | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annoyed at lack of easy way to save recipe • Impatient • Frustrated there is no way to organize recipes within their phone |
| IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved search functionality with filter options for types of dish and types of food | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to filter by time in search or preset filters • Ability to have other user ratings and filter by ratings • Ability to save recipes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to create a shopping list w/in app based on recipe selected • Video option for recipe, text-to-speech option • Clear text recipe • FAQ, help section, and comments from other users w/ helpful info | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to share link to recipe from w/in app to multiple other apps • Ability to share on social media • Ability to rate recipe and leave comments • Ability to like other's comments and reply • Ability to connect w/ other users w/in app | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to save recipes • Ability to organize recipes in folders • Ability to mark recipes as favorites |

Paper wireframes

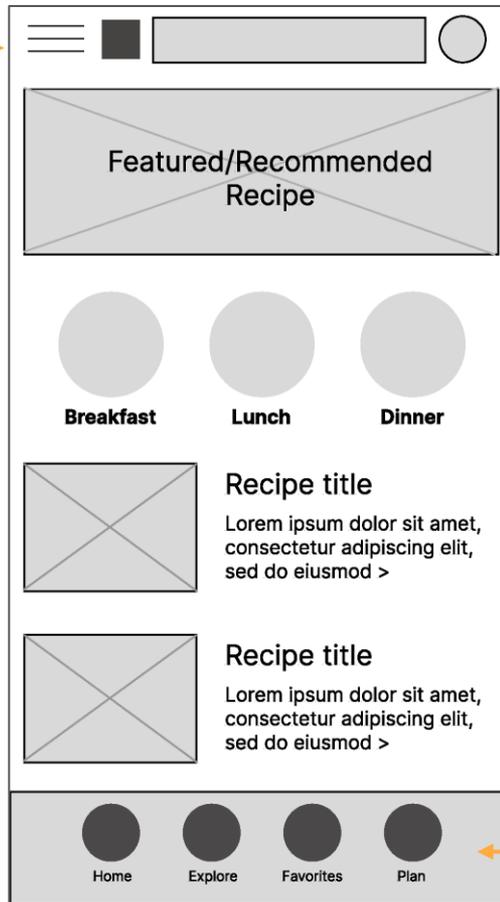
Drawing out the wireframes gave me a baseline for the key screens in the app and how I would lay them out. It allowed me to quickly iterate on different ideas.



Digital wireframes

The lo-fi homepage of the app allowed for quick access to recipes, the different functions of the app, and recommendations

Consistent search, menu, user bar at top



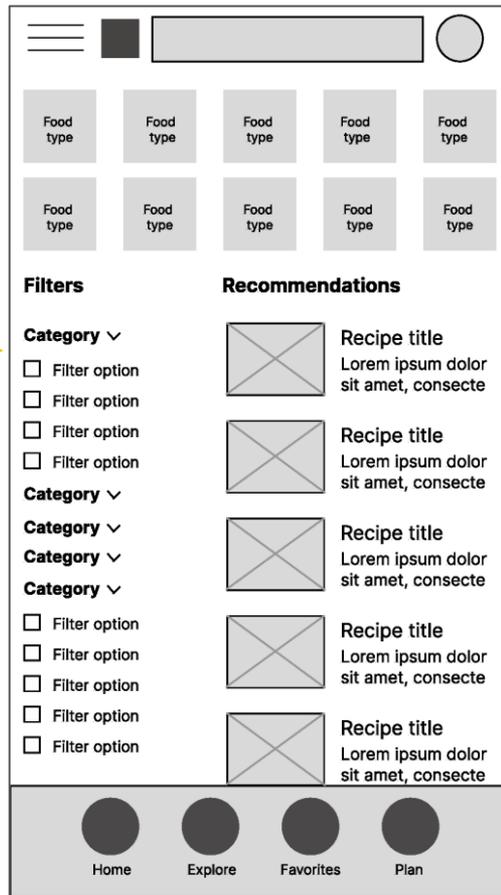
Consistent key features menu bar at bottom

Digital wireframes

The explore section allows users to filter by certain categories and food types and also gives recommendations.

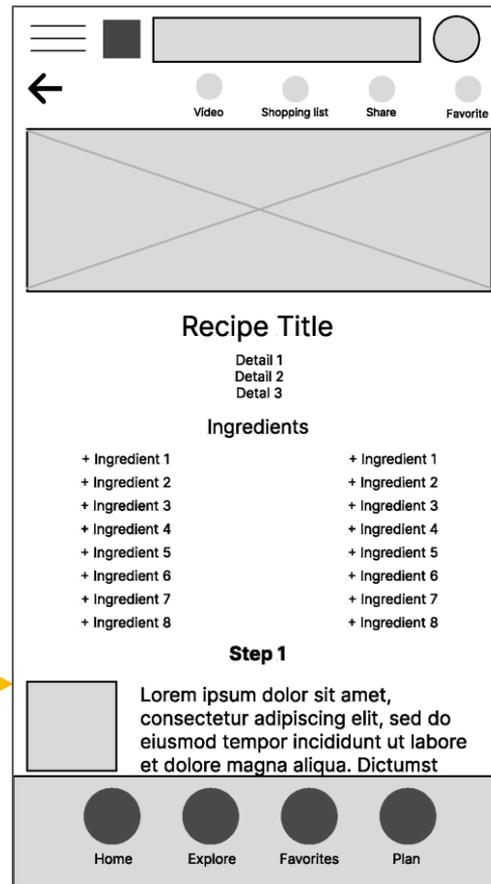
Ability to filter based on different categories

Ability to search by food types



Digital wireframes

The recipe page allows for different functions with the recipe and provides clear steps on the process.



Options to watch a video, add to shopping list, share and add to favorites

Clear photos of each step

Low-fidelity prototype

[View the prototype here >](#)

User flow was to select a recipe, schedule the recipe, save the recipe to favorites, leave a comment on the recipe and share the recipe.



Low-fidelity prototype Usability Study

Study Details

Research Questions

- How difficult is it for a user to find a recipe?
- What can we learn from the steps the user takes to schedule a recipe?
- Are there times in the app where the user is stuck or confused?
- How hard is it for a user to share a recipe?
- Are users easily able to access their favorites?

Participants

5 participants

2 males, 2 females, and 1 trans male, aged 18-47

Participants ethnicity: 2 Hispanic, 1 African American, and 2 Caucasian

1 male had a low vision impairment.

Methodology

10-15 minutes per participant

United States, remote through Zoom

Unmoderated usability study

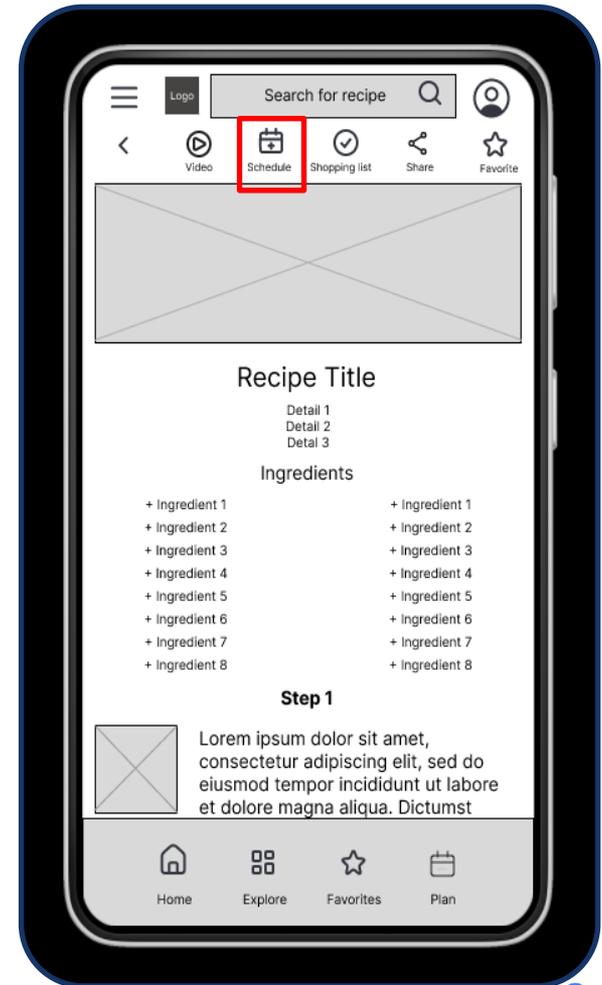
Users were provided prompts for tasks to perform and questions to answer on the experience of a low-fidelity prototype

Low-fidelity prototype Usability Study

All users had difficulty finding the scheduling tool for a recipe.

- 5 out of 5 participants had difficulty finding the scheduling option.
- The placement of the scheduling tool was particularly obscure.
- Users did not think to look above the recipe image for the scheduling option and immediately scrolled down.

"I would have [the schedule option] ...at the bottom of the recipe with a clear button to schedule." (P1)

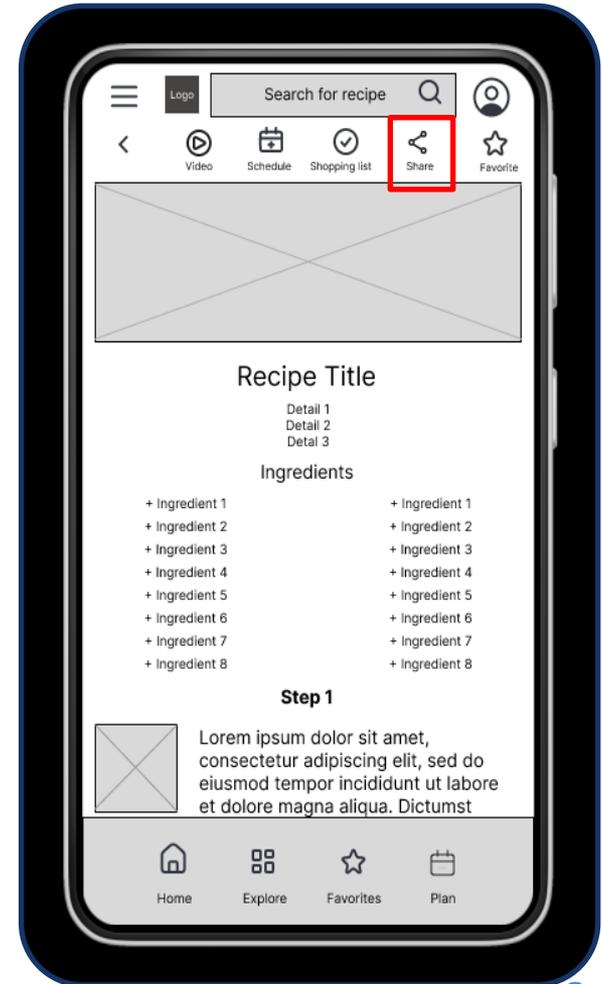
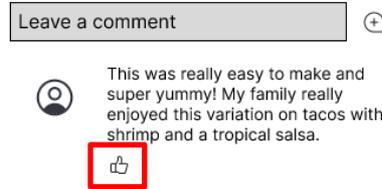


Low-fidelity prototype Usability Study

Most users found some interface elements confusing.

- 4 out of 5 participants had confusion on some user interface elements.
- 3 out of 5 were confused on the share button.
- Thumbs up button on user's own comment was confusing

“There's different ways for sharing something; I wouldn't have thought that icon was for sharing;.” (P2)



Low-fidelity prototype Usability Study

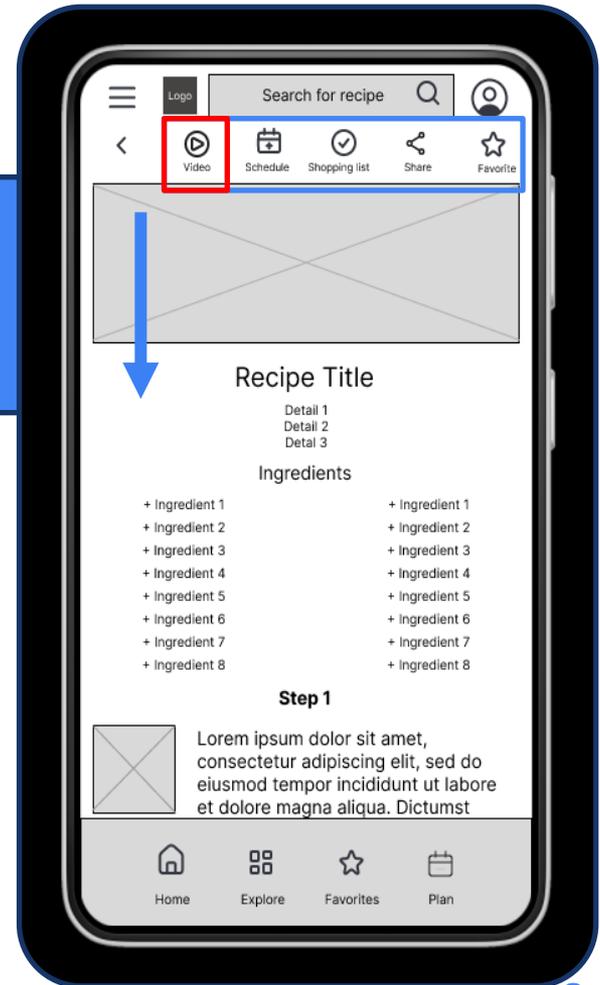
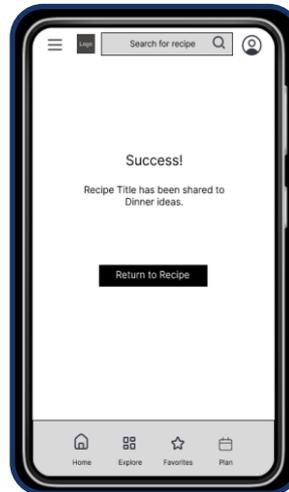
Some users wanted improved functionality for certain options.

- 3 out of 5 participants wished for better functionality options, such as menu placement, success screen behavior and video options.
- Issues identified were the recipe menu placement, the success screen behavior and the video placement.

“I thought the menu above the recipe image should be bigger and more well-defined. You shouldn't be able to scroll past it.” (P1)

“I don't think the Success screen is necessary and wish it would fade away.” (P2)

Visually,
users looked
down, not up

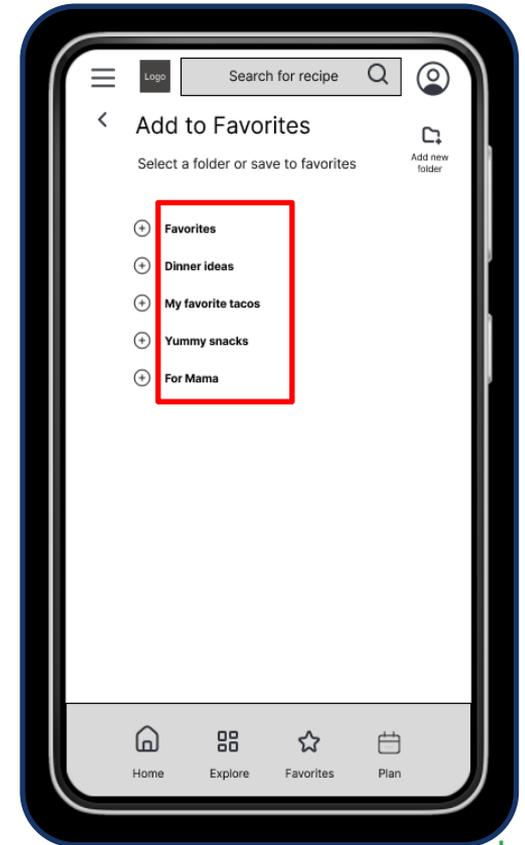
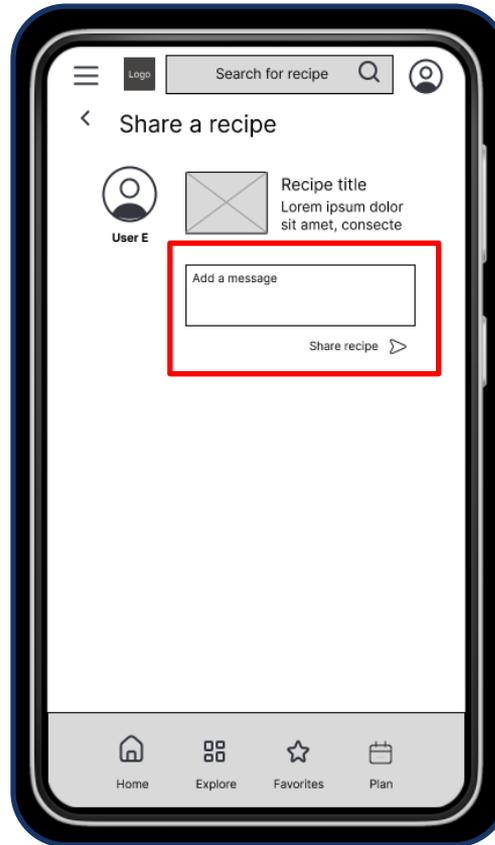


Low-fidelity prototype Usability Study

A few users had issues with visually accessing the content.

- 2 out of 5 participants had trouble reading the text.
- Issues with font being too small on the Favorites folders and Share a recipe screen.

“Expand more on the space you already have. You could make the folders like folder icons and put the text underneath - at the very least make the text bigger.” (P0)



Research insights

Hard to find
scheduling tool

The scheduling button should be very clear and easy to find.

Unclear icons,
options, and menu
placement

According to [this blog](#)¹, usage of industry standard icons and menu placement will help improve navigation.

Opportunity to
refine functionality

Ability to cut down on user pages by combining pages or having pop ups that can quickly close out would improve the user experience.

Some text was
hard to read

All font sizes should be at an appropriate size for all users, including those with low visibility. Using empty space or larger icons can help make options clearer and more accessible.

¹ Suleiman, A. (2023, January 23). *8 App UX design mistakes in navigation you should avoid*. UX 4Sight. <https://ux4sight.com/blog/8-app-navigation-design-mistakes-to-avoid>

Low-fidelity prototype Usability Study Updates

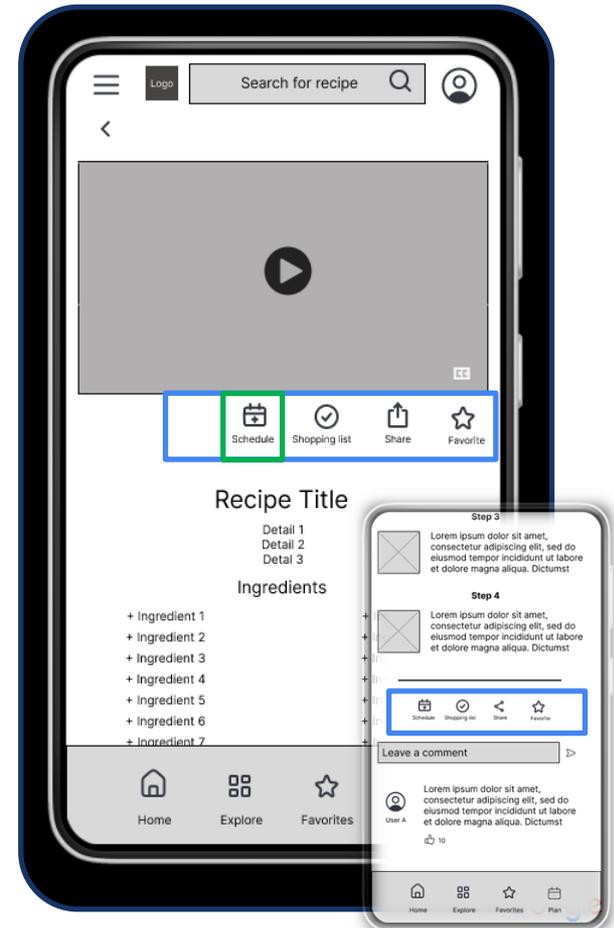
Improved location for the Scheduling tool and Recipe menu

- 5 out of 5 participants had difficulty finding the scheduling option.
 - Users did not think to look above the recipe image for the scheduling option and immediately scrolled down.
- Menu was moved below the recipe image and also at the end of the recipe.

Before



After



Low-fidelity prototype Usability Study Updates

Improved user interface elements

- 4 out of 5 participants had confusion on some user interface elements.
- 3 out of 5 were confused on the share button.
- Thumbs up button on user's own comment was confusing

→ Updated Share icon

→ Removed Thumbs up on user's own comment

→ Added calendar pop up

Before

Previous Share icon



Previous Thumbs up on own comment

Leave a comment 



This was really easy to make and super yummy! My family really enjoyed this variation on tacos with shrimp and a tropical salsa.



Previous no calendar pop up for date

Date 

Time 

Category 

Schedule

Cancel >

After

New Share icon



Updated – no Thumbs up on own comment

Leave a comment 



You

This was really easy to make and super yummy! My family really enjoyed this variation on tacos with shrimp and a tropical salsa.

Updated – calendar pop up for date

September 2023 < >

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | | 01 | 02 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |

Low-fidelity prototype Usability Study Updates

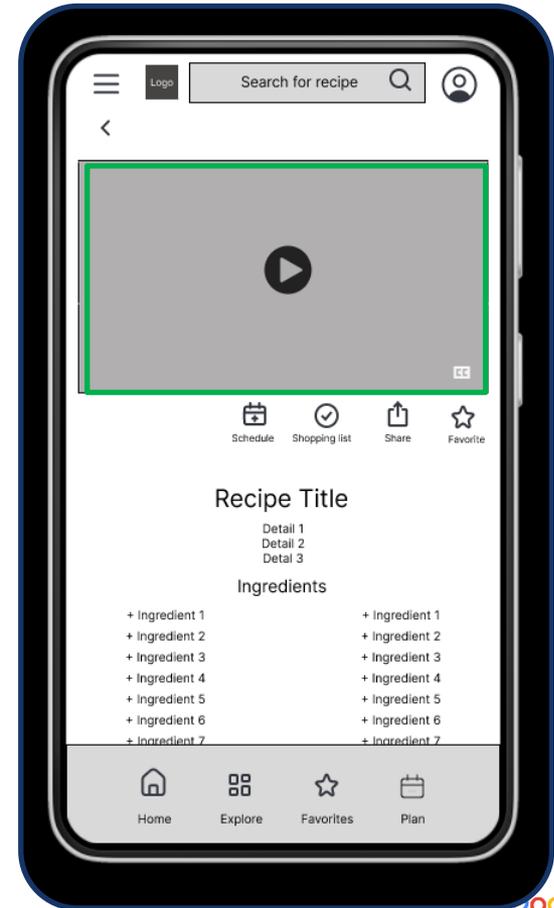
Improved functionality

- 3 out of 5 participants wished for better functionality with less screens, such as not having the video on a separate screen.
- Video page was removed and integrated into the recipe page

Before



After



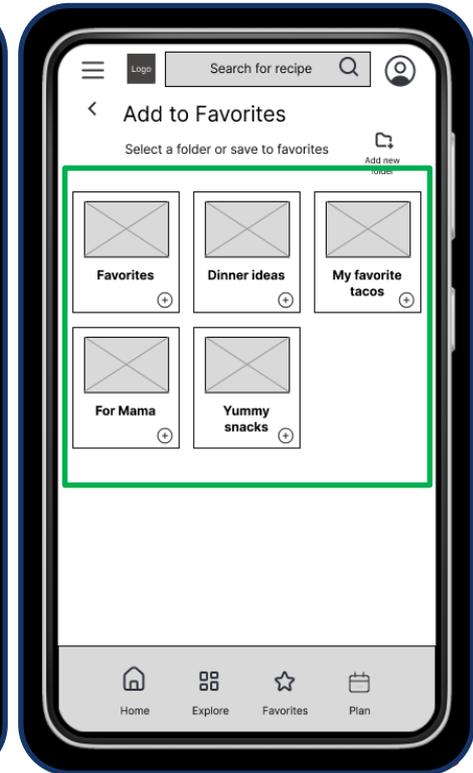
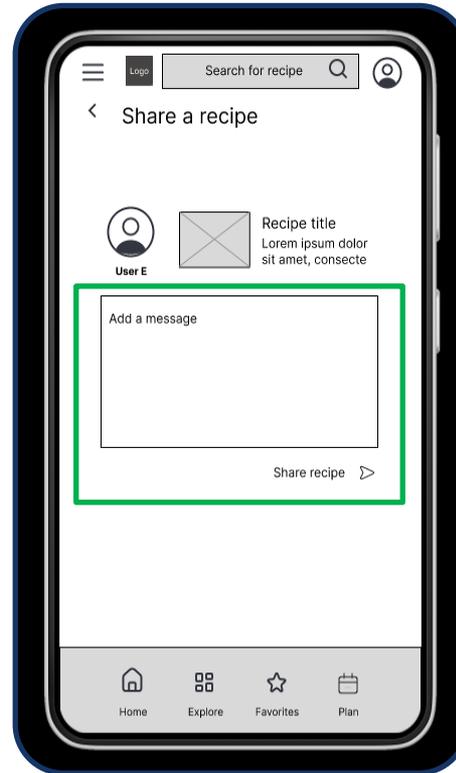
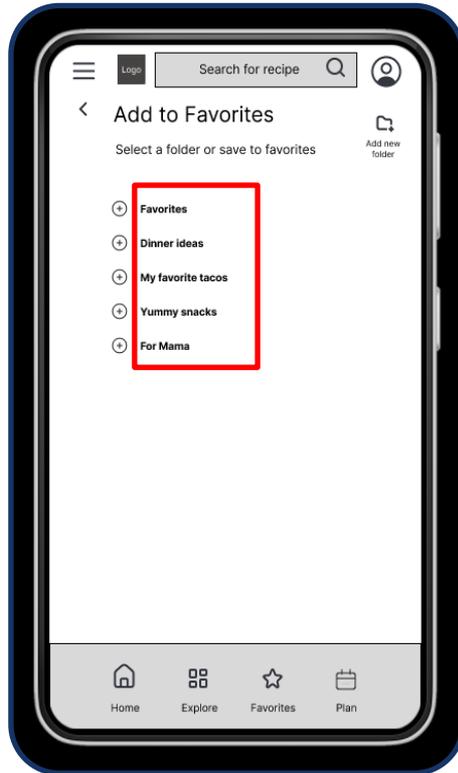
Low-fidelity prototype Usability Study Updates

Improved visual accessibility

- 2 out of 5 participants had trouble reading the text.
- Increased font on the Favorites folders and Share a recipe screen.

Before

After



Refining the design

- Mockups
- High-fidelity prototype
- Accessibility

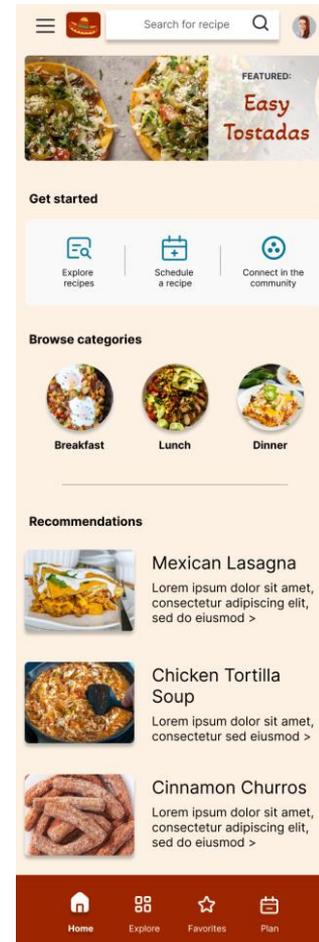
Mockups

After the 2nd usability study, a user stated that there didn't seem to be a prompt on the homepage to get started. I added a clear section at the top to explore, schedule and connect – the 3 key features of the app. I also used the color wheel to identify a blue color that aligned w/ the deep red to make the visuals more aesthetically pleasing.

Before 2nd usability study



After 2nd usability study



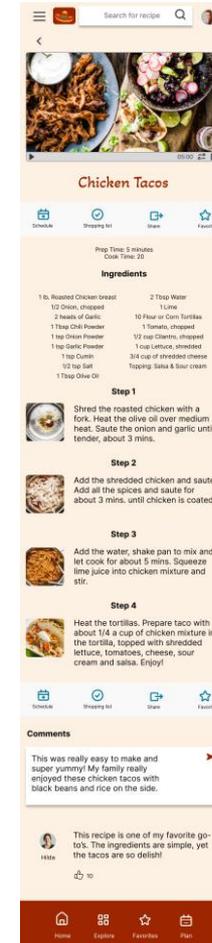
Before 2nd usability study

Mockups

In the 2nd usability study, one user was confused on where the schedule button was and couldn't complete that task. To make it clearer, I put the recipe tasks icons underneath the recipe title in a white band for the background to pop them out a bit more. There was also confusion on the recipe steps being in filler text, so I added images for the steps and spelled them out. I added color to the comment send button.



After 2nd usability study



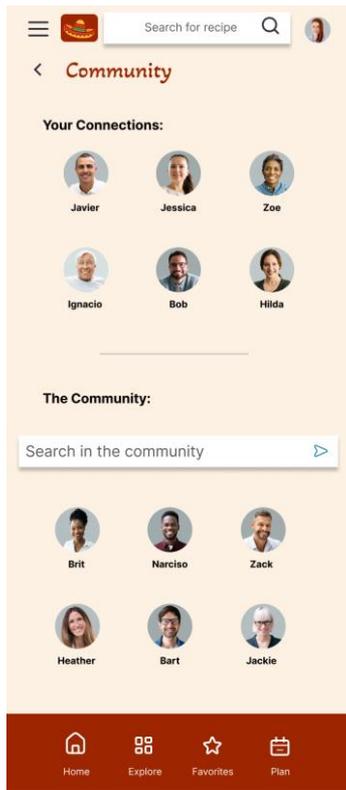
Mockups

< Mexican Recipe App

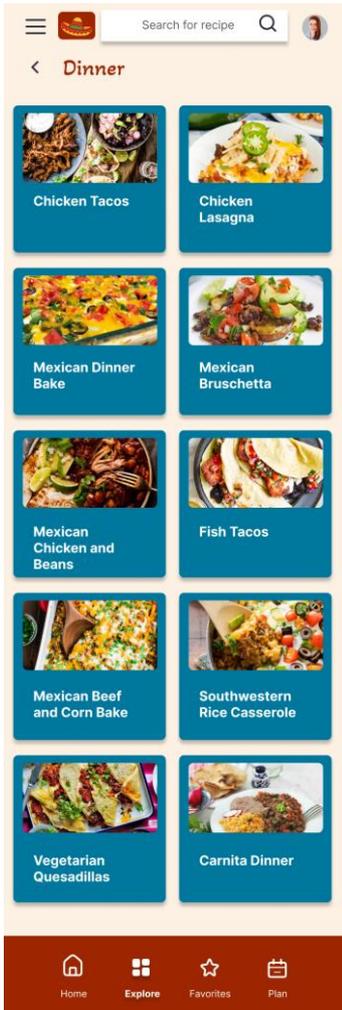
- ▶ Breakfast
- ▶ Lunch
- ▶ Dinner
- ▶ Appetizers & Sides
- ▶ Deserts
- ▶ Healthy
- ▶ Holidays & Entertaining
- ▶ Community



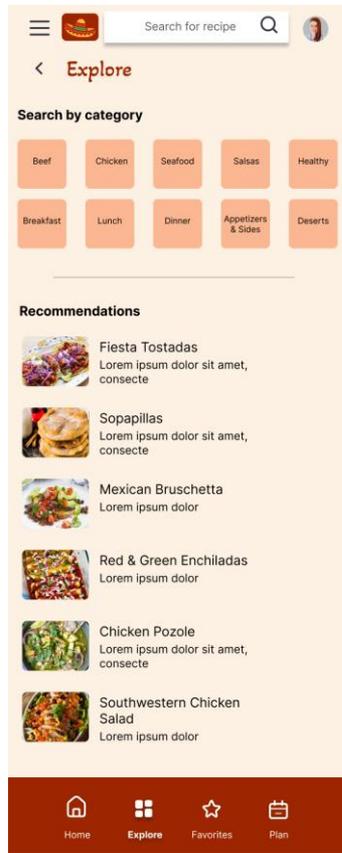
Top slide in menu



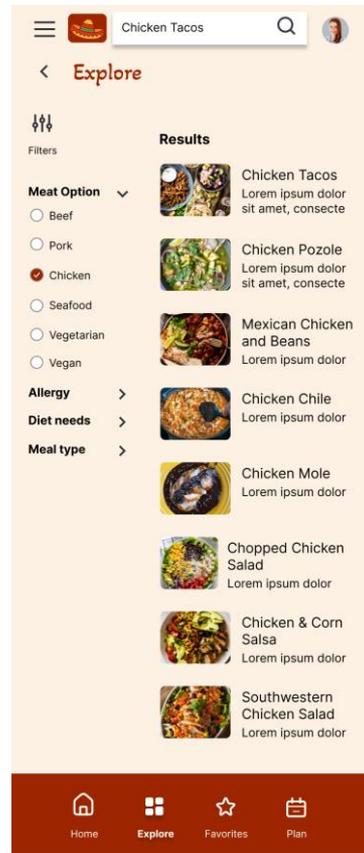
Community



Category pages



Explore



Search results



High-fidelity prototype

[View the hi-fi prototype here >](#)



Accessibility considerations

1

Video with closed captioning was added for recipe instruction. Additionally, step by step instructions were available in text with photos for each step to allow for multiple ways to consume the recipe information.

2

All icons had text descriptions included for clarity. Space was used to make options like text boxes when you share, or favorites folders larger with instructions in a clearer layout for those with low visibility.

3

A color wheel was used and webaim.org to identify that all background and text font colors were WCAG AA or AAA 2.1 compliant for accessibility.

Going forward

- Takeaways
- Next steps

Takeaways



Impact:

Multiple users stated that they would use this app regularly. One user asked, "Is this a real app coming? I'd love to start using it!". Another user stated the scheduling feature would be very handy especially because right now they plan out meals in advance on paper, but it would be great to have it all in the app.



What I learned:

I learned the value of the user feedback and to put the user at the center of what is being designed. I realized that you have to remove yourself as a user from the product when designing and think from all different user's perspectives to truly create a successful and useful app.

Next steps

1

Work with copywriters to finalize copy within the prototype. Review all feedback to ensure all updates have been made before handing off to development.

2

Share the prototype with developers to begin creating the app and work closely with developers to review and finalize the app.

3

Conduct a post usability study to get additional feedback on the final product. Review feedback and consider updates for future releases.

Let's connect!



Thank you for reviewing my app!

My current role is focused on member engagement. I direct the design, communications and digital direction for our members. I am passionate about enhancing our member experience and helping members reach an optimal state of mental well-being.

You can connect with me on LinkedIn at [Angee Bell](#).