

 foodtale

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# INTRO TO PROBLEM

## Context - Culture Issue

The start point of my thesis is from culture collision and disappearance. What interested me most from my past experience is the dynamic between majority culture and minority culture. In the context of globalization and modernization, the minority culture is much harder than before to be maintained. Thus, what I discuss is about the a group of minority's lifestyle and their status. So, I began with talking about the ethnic group in China's village last year. Due to the long distance and the communication problem, I changed my target to American land, narrowing down to Chinese American.

## Target Audience

I started interviewing different groups of Chinese American, who lives in Chinatown and outside of this area, between age 20 to 80. Different groups have different experience towards the cultural issue.

### - **Chinese American in Chinatown**

I interviewed 6 people in Columbus park. All of them were born in China and immigrated to America after. They are all living in Chinatown, Flushing or 8th Ave in Brooklyn, they all chose the place they are comfort with from cultural aspects. They kept Chinese custom, they had a hard time to adapt to the life here, especially the food, like sandwiches, burger. The problems that they are caring most currently is the safety issues, bad

# INTRO TO PROBLEM

sanitation in Chinatown and unemployment problem. Thus, culture issue is not their priority.

## - Chinese American out of Chinatown

The second group I interviewed are still first-generation Chinese American, who moved to America several decades ago, but are living outside of Chinatown. Most of them had a strong feeling of nostalgia. They told me the cultural parts that they still kept at home, like Tai Ji, party with other Chinese American, during which they feel relaxed. By talking to them, one of the common problem for them is how to educate and communicate with their children. They talked about how hard is teaching their Children Chinese and how ambivalent they are during this process.

## - Second-generation of Chinese American

Since their parents mentioned the conflict

between them, this is the third group I interviewed. They are the group who grew up between Chinese culture and American culture. Compared with their parents, second-generation are more likely become lost in the two spaces, private and public. Most of them faced **identity crisis** sort of during their growing up process. They had a hard time to be comfortable with sharing their family's culture in public, and casually denied their heritage.

- **Jane Huang** said that *"being a child of immigrants means your life is one of ongoing confusion."*
- **Siying Chen** claims *"Being Asian American to me means that you're constantly straddling two worlds. Being Asian American means that you'll forever be caught in the middle, never being completely part of either world."*
- **Shan Kothari** calls *"the label 'Asian-American' carries nothing more than a recognition of the shared struggles that immigrants from places as varied as Syria, India, Japan, and Thailand have faced, along with their descendants."*
- **Monika Kothari** describes *"word 'bicultural' has been thrown around to describe these people, which is accurate, but not as simple as it sounds. Indian and American cultures don't come together neatly in every way, and even as someone that confronts both Indian and American culture in everyday life, I find that I, more or less subconsciously, try to compartmentalize those two parts of my identity rather than integrate them."*



## It's Not Easy Being Asian-American

By Justin Chan December 31, 2013

LIKE MIC ON FACEBOOK

Last week, in a [piece](#) for *Asian Fortune News*, advocates Sharon Choi, Francine Gorres and Tina Ngo argued that many young Asian-Americans constantly struggle with their bi-cultural identities, expected to adhere to multiple sets of norms, none of which quite fit.

\*Giving our young people opportunities to share their cultural backgrounds and learn about the

Source: <http://mic.com/articles/77859/it-s-not-easy-being-asian-american#.rV0Q0eJ88>



## Why Do Immigrant Children Struggle More Than Their Parents Did?

BY RICHARD WEISSBOURD | February 25, 2002

America's success has long depended on the success of immigrant families. Just this month the Census Bureau reported that one in five Americans were either born in a foreign country or have a parent who was. And some of these immigrant families are soaring as never before: Urban school honor rolls swell with immigrant children; immigrant adults wield unprecedented power in universities, government, and

Source: <https://newrepublic.com/article/120352/why-americanization-makes-immigrant-children-less-successful>



Theresa Yu

Public Health Associate at Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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## On Integration: The Struggles of the Second Generation

May 31, 2015 | 1,569 views 152 Likes 20 Comments

Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/integration-struggles-second-generation-theresa-yu>

## GROWING UP AMERICAN: The Challenge Confronting Immigrant Children and Children of Immigrants

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KEY WORDS: the second generation, immigrant children, race/ethnicity, adaptation/assimilation, intergenerational relations

### ABSTRACT

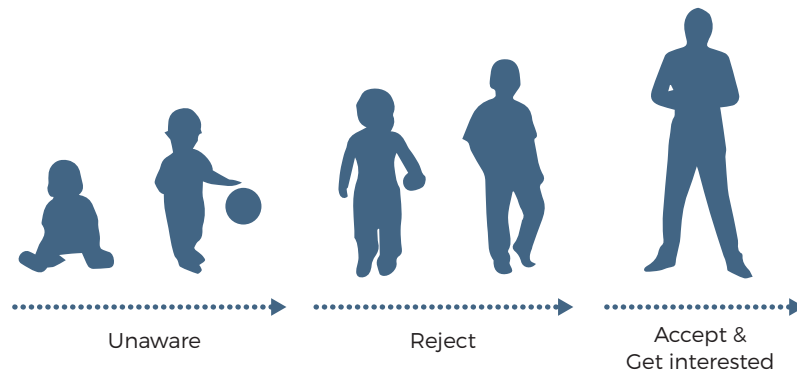
Since the 1980s, immigrant children and children of immigrant parentage have become the fastest growing and the most extraordinarily diverse segment of America's child population. Until the recent past, however, scholarly attention has focused on adult immigrants to the neglect of their offspring, creating a pro-

Source: [https://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/zhou/pubs/Zhou\\_GrowingUpAmerican.pdf](https://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/zhou/pubs/Zhou_GrowingUpAmerican.pdf)

# INTRO TO PROBLEM

## Identity Crisis

Tse (1998) proposed “a four-stage model of ethnic identity development, which are unawareness, ethnic ambivalence or evasion, ethnic emergence, and ethnic Identity Incorporation. According to my interviews with second generation, all of them said they had this experience. When they were teenagers, under the pressure from their parents and the prejudice from their friends, they tried to remove themselves from Chineseness.



General Change of Attitude towards Chinese Culture in Growing Process

However, most of them tried to know more about their family and their heritage after they went through the tough time.

From interview:

*“Because you can be born in America with your entire life, so maybe I’m more qualified as an American to speak. But I still think that you can’t really disacknowledge that parts of you are Chinese and it’s good to be familiar with that.”*

*“And I mean I personally realized how important was to be identified as a Chinese person regardless of having American passport.”*

*“I didn’t understand why my parents forced me to learn Chinese. Because I’m more American. But right now, I get interested in it and I think I should learn it harder.”*

# INTRO TO PROBLEM

## Problem Framing

For second-generation Chinese American, due to the conflicts of two different cultures, they are facing the struggling of being different under different situation. If they have bad experiences of sharing their cultural backgrounds, sometimes it leads to identity crisis, that bicultural person wants to hide another part of their identity in favor of being American. However, **establishing a good connection with their heritage** is good for them and the society.

### Emotional Connection

They gradually realized how important their Chinese identity to them. People told me “Knowing where my parents are from, where the cultures from, is very important for me to understand

myself.”

### Intergenerational Communication

Secondly, research showed the more the children accept their ethnic identity, the better the communication is and less conflict exists between them and their parents .

### Self-esteem

Third, people who knows more and have better balance between two culture, can enjoy more about their bicultural identity and have less struggling. One girl told me that she thought, “it is a privilege to learn about two cultures.”

### Multiculturalism

For the whole society, holding up to their bicultural identity, instead of assimilating totally, can enrich the society, respect diversity, and make

# INTRO TO PROBLEM

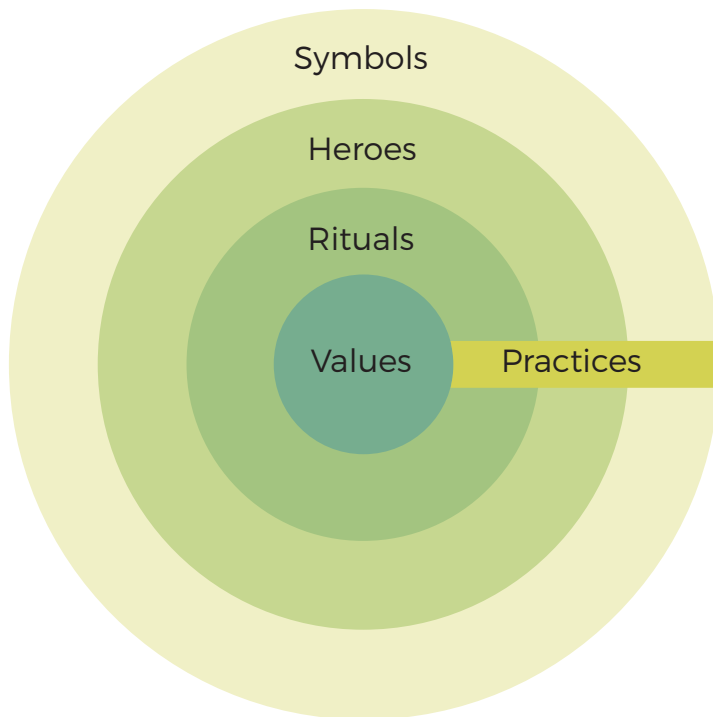
people believe the value of acceptance of the differences.



# Process

## Initial Approach

Since there are so many things under the simple word “culture”, it contains a lot of elements.



Source: Manifestation of Culture at Different Levels of Depth  
<https://www.tamu.edu/faculty/choudhury/culture.html>

Among the different dimensions of culture, I must choose one and to see how to make an intervention around it.

### -Language

Language was the first thing I was thinking about. Language is a key to a culture. From my interview, there is a trend that, people who are better in Chinese, have a better connection with their heritage.

*“I learnt a lot more about China just through the language. Because there are so much like “成语”(Chinese idiom), and has so much meaning, and if you just hear the words, and you know what each one means, you have no idea that there is a whole story behind it. So I think language is still a really important way.”*

Beside that language can help people to learn



# Process

more, it also provides a sense of close relationship.

*“Sometimes I use Chinese with my best friend, who is also a Chinese American. The way you speak and the way you communicate is very much depended on the language you use. You can use both Chinese and English to explain a thing clearly. But when you use Chinese, there is an intimacy thing in it.”*

Based on this, I came up with the first idea, language exchange between Chinese American and International Chinese Student. Because it naturally happens right now. For some Chinese American, they want to learn Chinese, but they don't have time. In school, this is an easy and convenient way for them to learn more. My friend in IxD gave Chinese class before and they'd love to join. Thus, I set up a Meetup group and tried to create interesting events for they to pair up and begin the conversa-

tion.

However, language is a really hard thing to learn. It takes long time and it couldn't provide positive feedback in a short time. They are lack of the motivation to do this.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	
1							
2	Event Name	Location	Time	Meetup Time	Chinese America (sigh in here)	Your Email	Native China
3	Chinese New Year Firecracker Ceremony and Cultural Festival	Chrystie St to Forsyth St New York	Feb. 7th, 11:00:00 AM				
4							
5							
6	Ocean of Images: New Photography 2015 (MOMA)	11 West 53 Street, New York, NY	Feb.13th, 01:00 PM				
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							

Screenshot for idea of language exchange

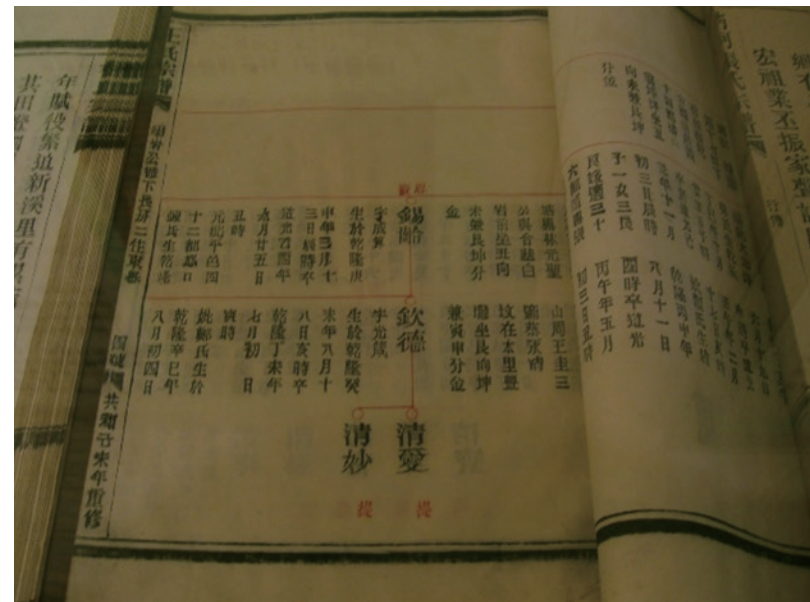
# Process

## -Family Tree

The second idea I tried is using the family tree to help them dig out the stories in their family. The story in each family is unique and many things passed away if we don't keep record of it. And for immigrants, each family has a lot of stories along the way. One of second generation told me that her mom told her the reason and the story of why she immigrated, it was all about her. She felt so touched in that moment. Thus, I saw the opportunity of using the family tree to open the conversation between the second generation with their parents and grandparents.

Family tree (家谱), in China, there was a long history. For the traditional family tree made long ago in ancient China, it requires much time and effort, which need several years to finish. There always had a powerful person in a family took charge of

this thing. And not every family did the family tree, only prominent family wanted to use it to keep a record. Since the family structure is getting smaller and smaller. The society based on blood relationship is gradually turning to one, which is based on region. It's not widely used in modern society.



Traditional family tree

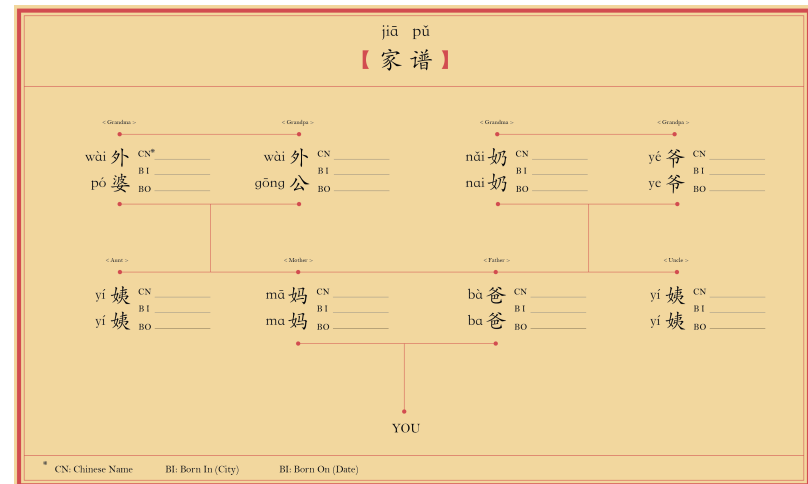
# Process

However, recently, there are some websites can help us build the family tree online, like, ancestry, myheritage. They can let users fill the names of their relatives. Ancestry also can help to look for people in their database. But they are emphasized on recording and building a complete tree. Since it's more like an individual work, if I don't know my grandparent's name, I still wouldn't finish it.



Graphic for idea of family tree

For Chinese American, Family tree is not just a recording tool, it can act as a communication tool to help the second generation to know more about their family, their relatives in China, bring their family relationship close and then become curious about Chinese culture and anything related.



Test prototype for idea of family tree

# Process

By using a physical object, family tree bring child and parents together to one table, start the conversation about their family and old stories. Instead of being a stop, the second generation can also be the connection link to pass on what was going on in the family to generation and generation.

I prototyped my target users with it. The result is not successful. First, they don't know what they can do with this piece of paper after they write down everything. Instead of filling the blanks on this paper, she'd rather write things down on her notebook. Secondly, this is not good enough for them to open the conversation. One person said, if she wants to talk to her grandma, she can call her and talked to her for hours. Thirdly, the design is very Chinese traditional style, they don't like it very much. And for the story in the conversation, I didn't have a good solution about how to keep a

record of it.

## **-Food**

After the two prototypes above, I tried to find something which have more motivation for my targets to do. I looked back on my interviews and found out food might be the opportunity. Then, I quickly asked my target users about their thought of two ideas, keeping record of your mom's recipe or keeping record of your family story. They felt excited about the food and recipe one. Then, I did an online survey about second-generation Chinese American's cooking and eating habits (link is here <https://yinman.typeform.com/to/BFIjb8>).

Twelve second Chinese American, 100% of them agree that Chinese food is their comfort food and they all ate Chinese food growing up. However, less than half of them said they are confident in cook-

# Process

ing Chinese dishes. After they moved out, their eating and cooking habit changed. They didn't eat Chinese food a lot anymore. They would like to choose western food, which are easier, faster and more accessible. Beside the convenience factor, another reason they don't like to bring Chinese food to public because they don't want to be judged. They don't want to be different from their white friends. The choice of food is one episode of

their struggling between American culture and ethnic cultural practices.

Ingredients, Time, Complexity, and Language Barrier are the four main difficulties. Among them, the ingredients part is the biggest barrier for them. About the ingredients, they have problems in these aspects:

1. Unfamiliar with the ingredients.

1 Hello! I'm Yinman from School of Visual Arts. I'm doing a research about second-generation Chinese American's eat...

1 \*What's your name?

2 \*How old are you?

3 \*Where do you live?

4 \*Do you live with your parents now?

5 \*What kinds of foods did your parents usually cook when you live with them at home?

6 \*What are the three favorite Chinese dishes for you?

7 \*Do you know how to cook them?

8 \*If you said "Yes", where did you learn it from? If you said "No", what's the reason that prevented you from learn...

Screenshot of the survey

22- What do you cook...	23- How confident ar...	24- Do you think Chi...	25- Why?	26- Have you ever as...	27- Could you reme...
Anything fast and simple, sometimes rice and chinese food	4	Strongly agree.	I ate it growing up	✗	Somewht
Braised pork, steamed fish, soup noodles	2	Strongly agree.	Ate it growing up	✓	On occasio
.	1	Strongly agree.	it reminds me of my family	✓	yes
Mince pork with vege	3	Strongly agree.	Habit	✓	Nope
rice and vegetable/meat	4	Strongly agree.	Because I come from China	✓	Yes
Fish, stir-fried vegetables, dumplings	3	Strongly agree.	To me, comfort food is home-cooked food that you grew up eating with your family. I grew up eating my father's and grandmother's Cantonese Chinese food.	✓	Probably
Fish	5	Strongly agree.	It taste good	✓	Yes

1 - 12 to 12 total results

The result of the survey

# Process

2. Don't know the translation.
3. Difficult to get all authentic materials nearby .
4. Materials are too large or too much.

Based on the result, I started to think about idea to encourage them to cook, and at the same time, I began doing the desk research about the relationship between food and identity.

# Intervention

## Food & Immigration

Food has also been regarded as a stabilizing cultural element, one of the most easily translated and preserved across geographical divides.

From my research, In some situations of migration or of minority cultures, it has been observed that certain features of cuisine are sometimes retained even when the language itself has been forgotten (Calvo, 1982). Jennifer Berg, director of graduate food studies at New York University, said "It (food) is the last vestige of culture that people shed". Research by Calvo (1982) documents how immigrant ethnic minorities tried to keep their own food eating tradition alive as long as possible even in the face of strong opposition.

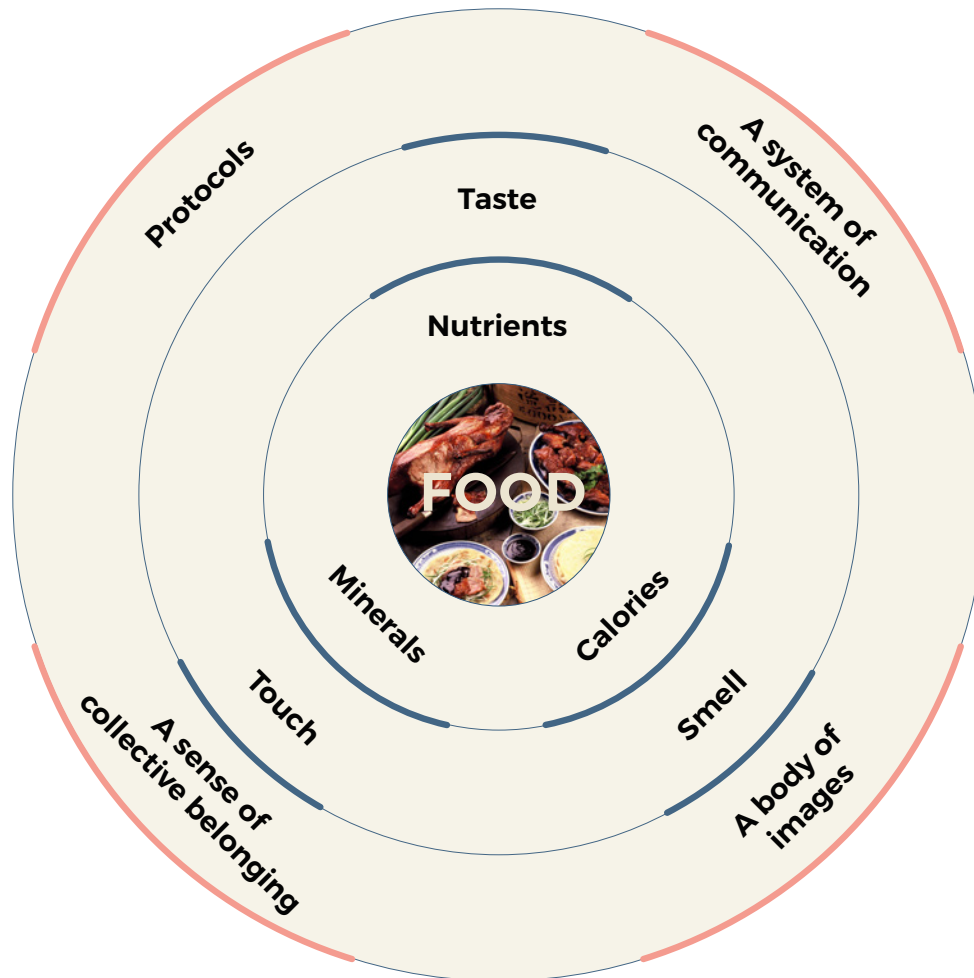
Food does not only provide the energy for us to sustain. Cooking foods can also generate familiar smells and tastes. What's more important, it stirs our emotion with culture meanings. With the protocols, it provides us the system of communication, build our body of images, and give us the sense of collective belonging.

Based on the research result, food has a strong potential to be the media to connect my target users to their heritage.



# Intervention

## Food & Immigration



# Intervention

## Story of Food

In each culture's cuisine, the food choice sometimes seems so commonplace. However, the ingredients people chose to use is dependent on a lot of factors, like the land, the climate, religious or social sanction. You can tell which cuisine you see the staple ingredients combination. It always contains a long story about ancestors and history.



From: <http://whatfoodlooklike.com/#>

In Chinese dishes, there is one always cooked in Lunar New Year - **Stir-fry with Rice Cake and Cabbage.**

Rice cake in Chinese is "Nian Gao". Nian = YEAR. Gao = BETTER. People always eat rice cake in New Year, because it means getting better in the New Year, which conveys a really good wish.

And also, Napa Cabbage is beloved in Chinese dishes, and it contains very interesting stories.

The earliest seed of Napa Cabbage was found in a pottery in Bàn pō archaeological site (near Xi'an) in China, which was nearly 6,000 years ago.

In the tough time, Napa cabbage was the only

# Intervention

## Story of Food

vegetable that Chinese people had. And it's also good for long-term storage. One family usually stored hundreds of pounds cabbage to go through the winter.

In Ming Dynasty, Napa cabbage was spread to Korea, it became the main raw material for kimchi later.

Since cabbage has a large production in harvest time and requires large storage area, it was sold at a low price. Other businesses love to use as cheap as cabbage to promote their products.

*“ Our comfort foods map who are, where we come from, and what happened to us along the way. ”*

-Amy S. Choi

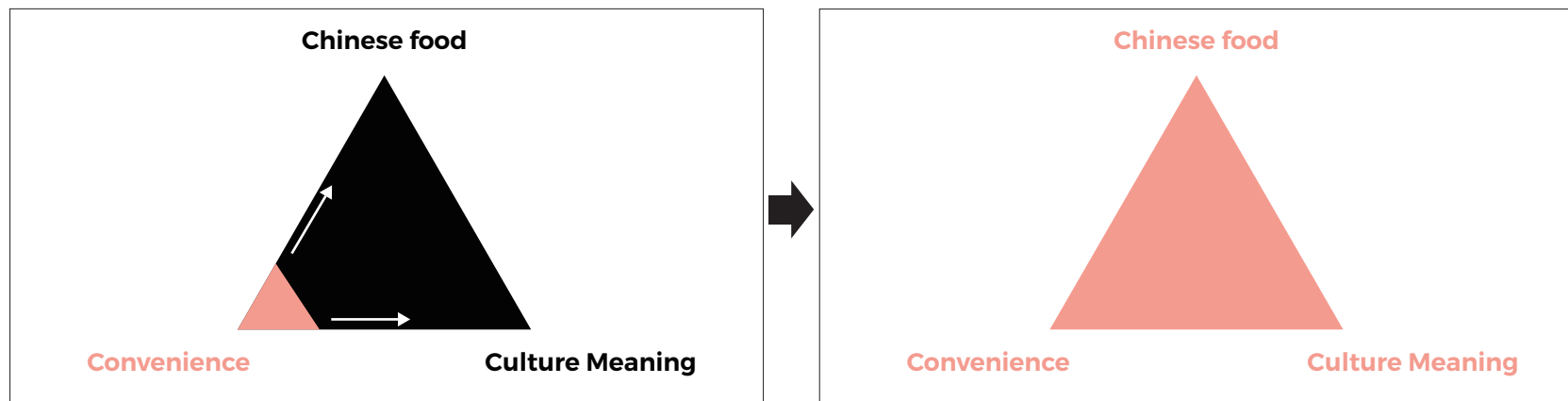
Co-founder and Editorial Director at The Mash-Up Americans

# Intervention

## My Intention

My project want to see how to solve this big barrier-ingredient, and to help second-generation Chinese American to keep their Chinese food eating habit, encourage them to cook Chinese dishes more and get more interests and confidence, and further influence their connection with their cultural identity.

Based on all the research, I came up with the idea - **foodtale** - which is a delivery service of prepared Chinese dish's ingredient, using storytelling way to introduce the story behind.



# Intervention

## User Testing

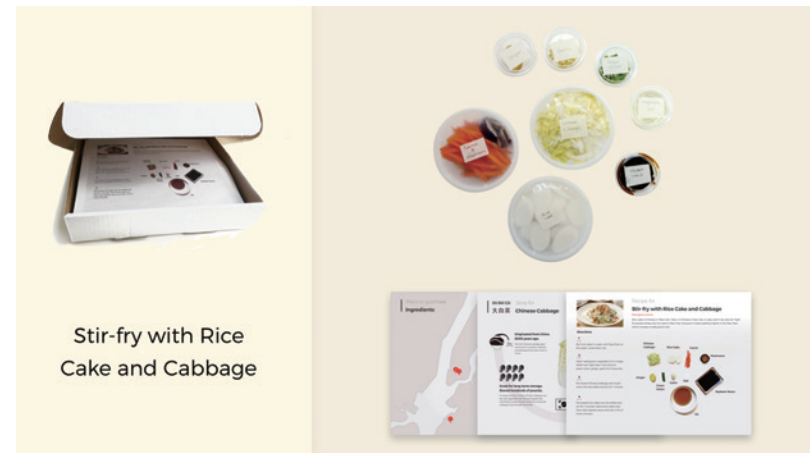
I prototyped with my targets by delivering a box with ingredients, recipe, story of the ingredients and a map for them to buy Chinese foodstuffs in the future. After my users received the box, I began shadowing the whole process.

From my prototype, the questions I want to know have two.

1. Is it convenient and useful for them to cook Chinese food?
2. Can the information inside of it make an impact on my user?

### 1st Prototype

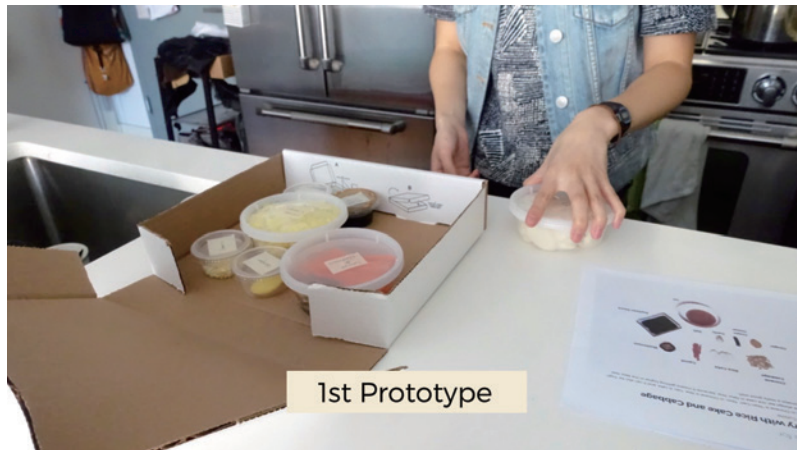
The whole process is good, the user didn't have much problem of following the recipe and cooking it. But for the second question I concerned, it totally failed because she even didn't notice the story at all. The information she read is just the



Prototype box

# Intervention

## User Testing



recipe.

### 2nd Prototype

I redesigned the information card into a booklet. I put the story in the front. This time, this user read the story and cooked it successfully.

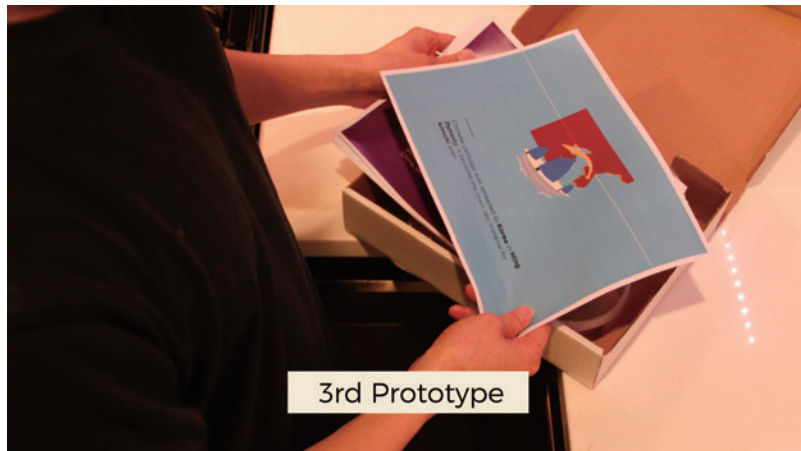
In the end, she began to talk about her experience as a second-generation to me, she said she felt sad, "I'm American born Chinese, but I feel I'm not that connected. Especially when I'm away from home." And she said food is really a good way to help her connect.

### 3rd Prototype

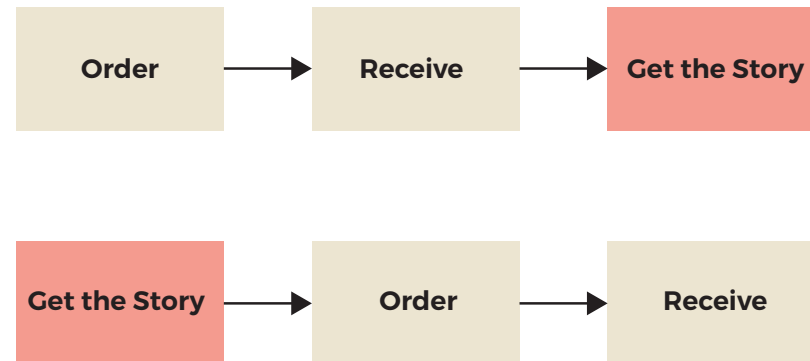
# Intervention

## User Testing

At this time, I redesign the illustration about the story. This user grew up without eating Chinese food. He told me that Chinese food is not comfort food for him. But he said the whole experience make him to learn more about Chinese food. He can learn more about his heritage. He said the next time he went to grocery store, he would keep a look out for some of these ingredients. And he would love to try more.



After all the prototypes, I was thinking how to build the whole system and make the story more attractive in the whole experience. Based on the sequence in the prototype, I put the story ahead and make it be the first thing my target user will see.





# Intervention

## User Testing

Then, I built up the website **foodtale.us**, as a platform for my target users to read stories and order ingredients' box.

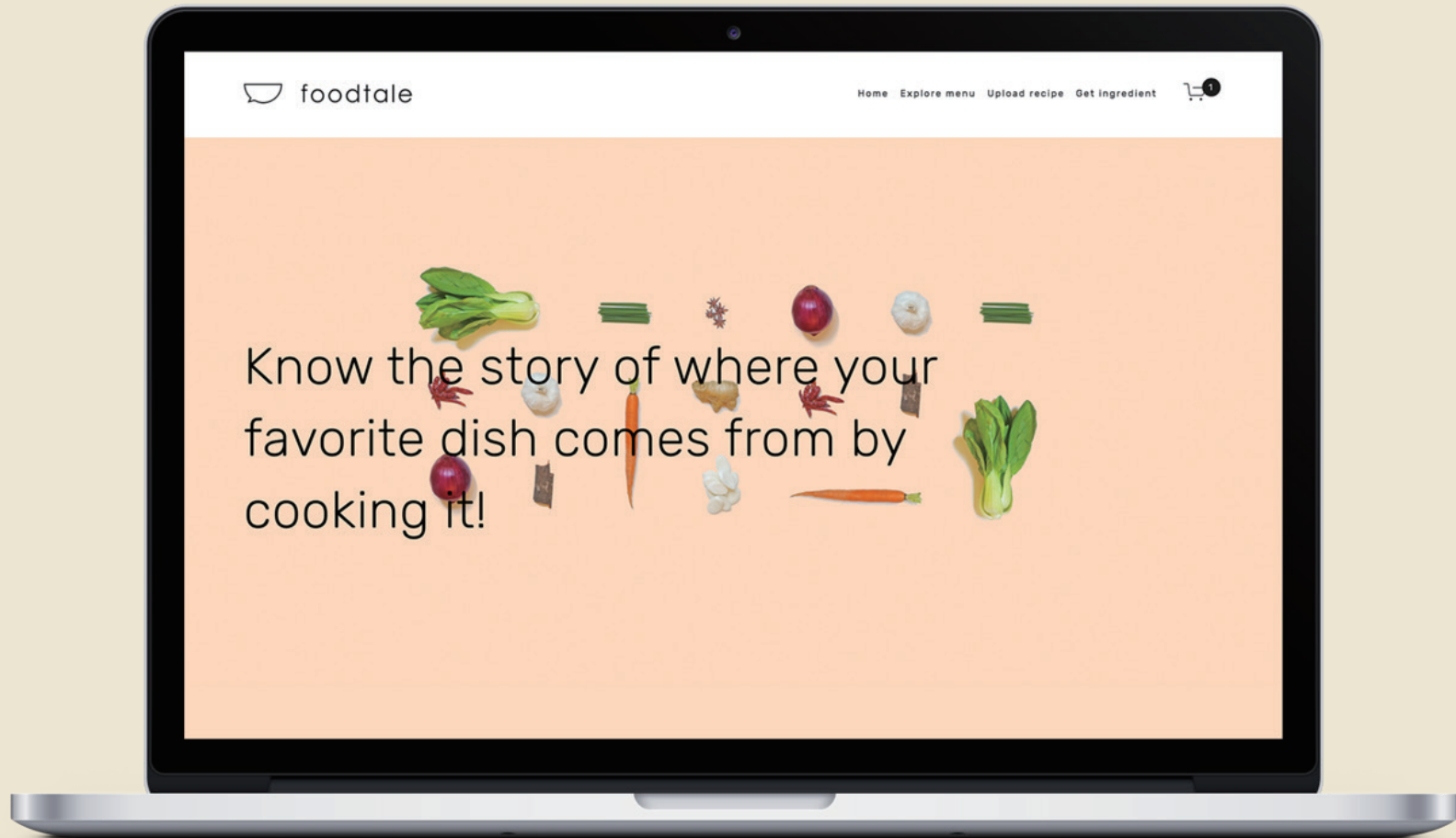
According to the feedback, there are three main functions, explore the menu, upload recipe and map for getting ingredients.

When user is scrolling down, the introduction will be seen. Then user can click the button and explore the story. When click on the napa cabbage, it will show the story and what are in this dish, then order.

Since I want to create a place for people to share their favourite thing, from the home page, you can

also see the place to join the conversation of sharing recipes and ask for recipes. User can also check the map to see where to buy Chinese ingredients, which is one information which was verified useful in user testing.

# Intervention



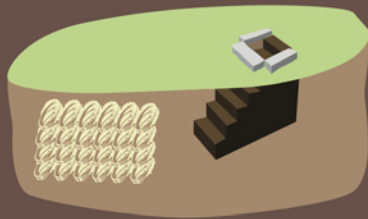
foodtale.us

# Intervention



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The **earliest seed** of Napa Cabbage was found in a pottery in Bàn pō archaeological site (near Xi'an) in China, which was nearly **6,000 years ago**.



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In tough time, Napa cabbage was the **only vegetable** that Chinese people had. And it's also good for **long-term storage**. One family usually stored **hundreds of pounds** cabbage to go through the winter.



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Chinese cabbage was spreaded to **Korea** in **Ming Dynasty**, it became the main raw material for **kimchi** later.



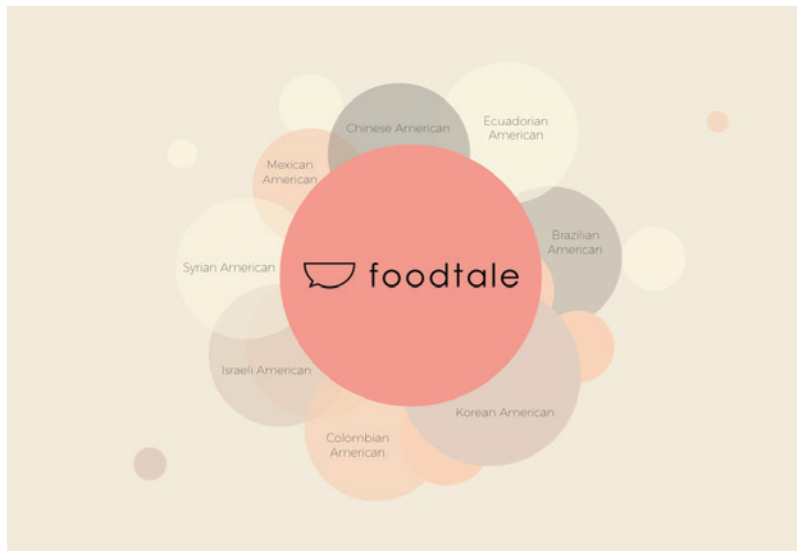
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Since cabbage has a large production in harvest time and requires large storage area, sellers sold them at a low price. Other businesses love to use **as cheap as cabbage** to promote.

# Intervention

Foodtale, it's not only a place second-generation Chinese American easily enjoy cooking Chinese food, in the future, it can be scaling to all second generation, become a place they feel free to talk and discuss the food, their family and their identity. For a minority, beyond assimilating to the majority, knowing more about who they are and where they come from can help them to be confident in their bicultural identity.

In the 21 century, since billions of people are moving around everyday, different cultures come across everywhere. I believe that when people have a more open mind to accepting themselves and others, we will be more appreciating the beauty of the differences and cultural diversity on the earth.



# Learnings

LEARNED A LOT!!!

## **Be curious, be brave.**

Sometime, the answer is there if you ask one more question. No matter how many times we receive rejection from people, there always some people are willing to talk to us.

## **Make decision carefully, but it needs to be quick.**

I wasted a lot of time on hesitation. When I didn't know which is right to do, I should do it and test it to see which one works better.

## **Be more confident.**

I gradually realized that not everybody would like what you promote. Especially when I associated with some humanities topics which nobody can say what's absolutely right or wrong. We couldn't

please everyone. If one person likes it, there will be a group of people like him/her like it.

## **Present your thing with storytelling.**


I learnt a lot about how to tell your thing interesting and engaging to your audience.

# Next Steps

- 1.Add more Chinese dishes online.
- 2.Find cooperation with local organization.
- 3.Explore more cuisine, beyond Chinese dishes.





 foodtale