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App ideation methods

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Introduction : ↙

Over the past few decades, the way we come up with dinner ideas has evolved significantly. In the 1970s and 1980s, my grandmother gathered culinary inspiration from a cherished recipe notebook filled with her traditions passed down through generations. Then, my mother turned to published cookbooks and morning TV shows to seek fresh meal ideas and tips for experimenting in the kitchen.

In today's fast-paced world, I navigate busy schedules while seeking inspiration in the kitchen. Countless apps and social media platforms show recipes from various cuisines and meal types. However, I often find it challenging to discover ideas that utilize the ingredients I already have on hand and fit within the time I can spare for cooking dinner.

The problem :



Currently, there are no resources available that offer personalized meal ideas based on the ingredients you have at home and the time you have for cooking. There is an increasing trend of dining in and dining out, relying on expensive restaurant food. This trend is associated with several problems:

1. **Cost:** dining in and out is more expensive than homemade meals.
2. **Health:** most outside food options include junk food with low nutritional value.
3. **Family meal time:** this valuable time of the day is sometimes lost with the lack of home made dinner.
4. **Nutrition control:** With home-cooked meals, you know exactly how many nutrients, minerals, and vitamins are in your food, which isn't the case when dining out.
5. **Navigating the recipe jungle on the internet:** It's often challenging to find the recipes you want based on your available time and ingredients.

Proposed Solution : ↙

An app that provides personalized recipe suggestions and meal ideas based on the groceries you already have at home. It would consider your available time, possible allergies, and preferred cuisine. The goal is to avoid dining in and out along with its associated costs and health consequences.

I envision this app as a solution for busy days when people return home feeling exhausted. By listing the ingredients in their fridge or pantry, the app can suggest a variety of meal options tailored to their family's cravings—whether they desire something fancy or a quick fix. This way, they can unwind and enjoy their free time without the stress of meal planning, and also save a lot of money.

Ideation method # 1: Mind Map

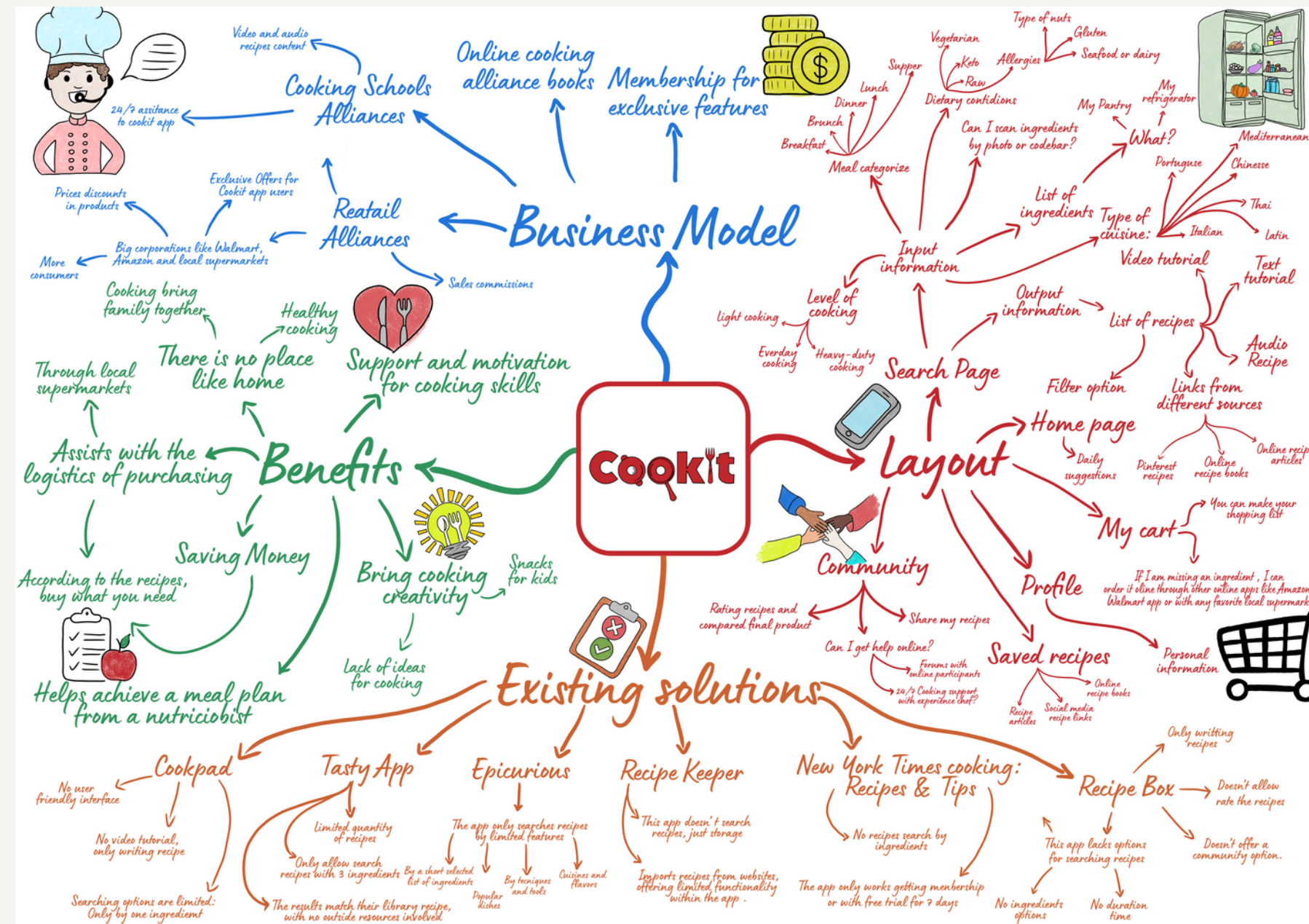


I started my ideation process for this app with a mind map, as it was my first choice among various methods to generate ideas. This technique helped me think broadly about the topic. I began by placing the logo at the center of the screen. Then, I branched into four main categories: layout, existing solutions, benefits, and the app's business model.

This structure enabled me to delve into each aspect thoroughly and gather various ideas. I documented every thought that crossed my mind and every benefit the app could offer. For instance, I devised different input designs for recipe searches, such as filtering by cooking skill level.

Furthermore, in the mind map, I evaluated the existing solutions I had used and highlighted how they fell short of my needs. In the end, I developed business model ideas for how this app could be created and sustained.

Ideation method # 1: Mind Map ↘



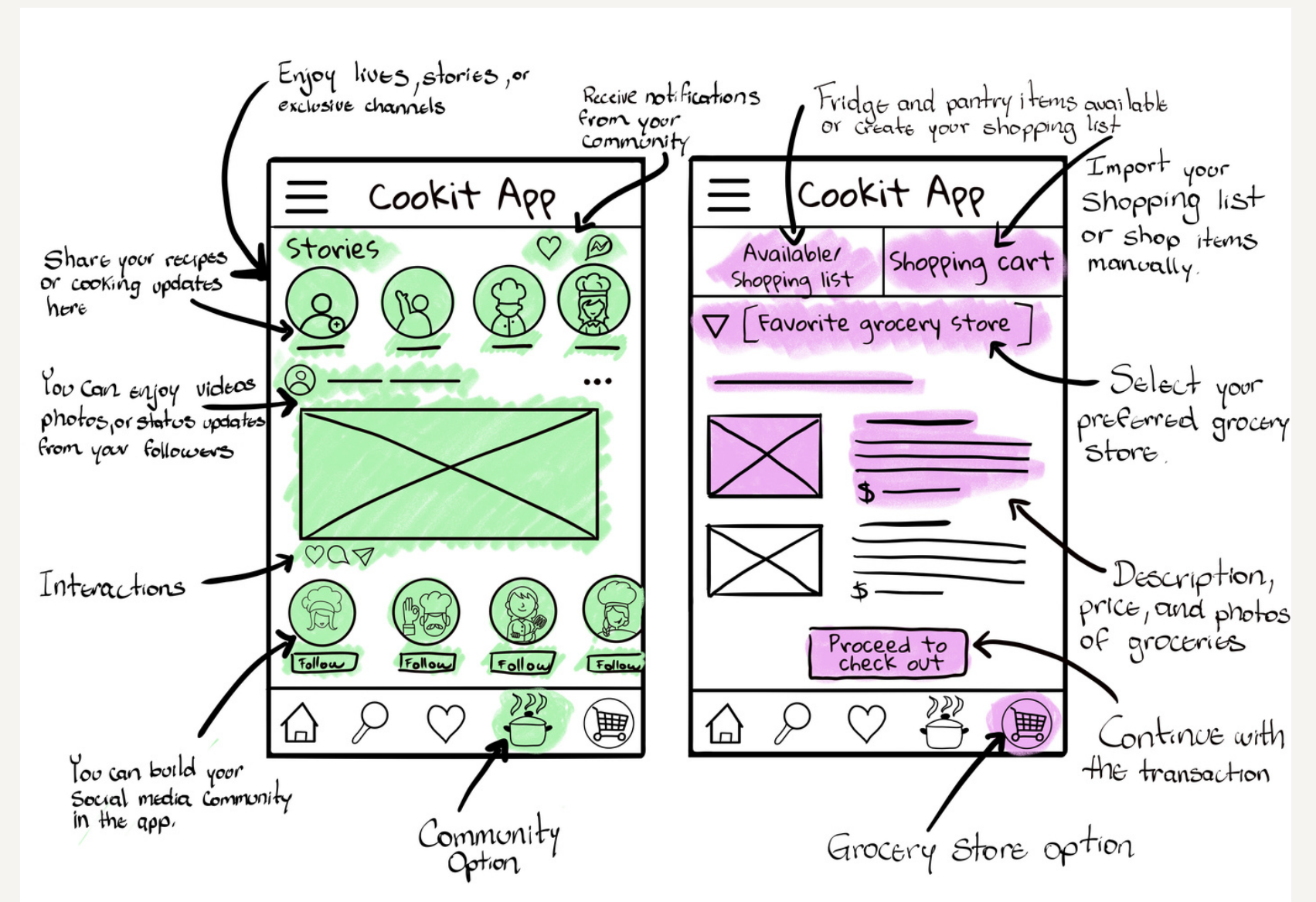
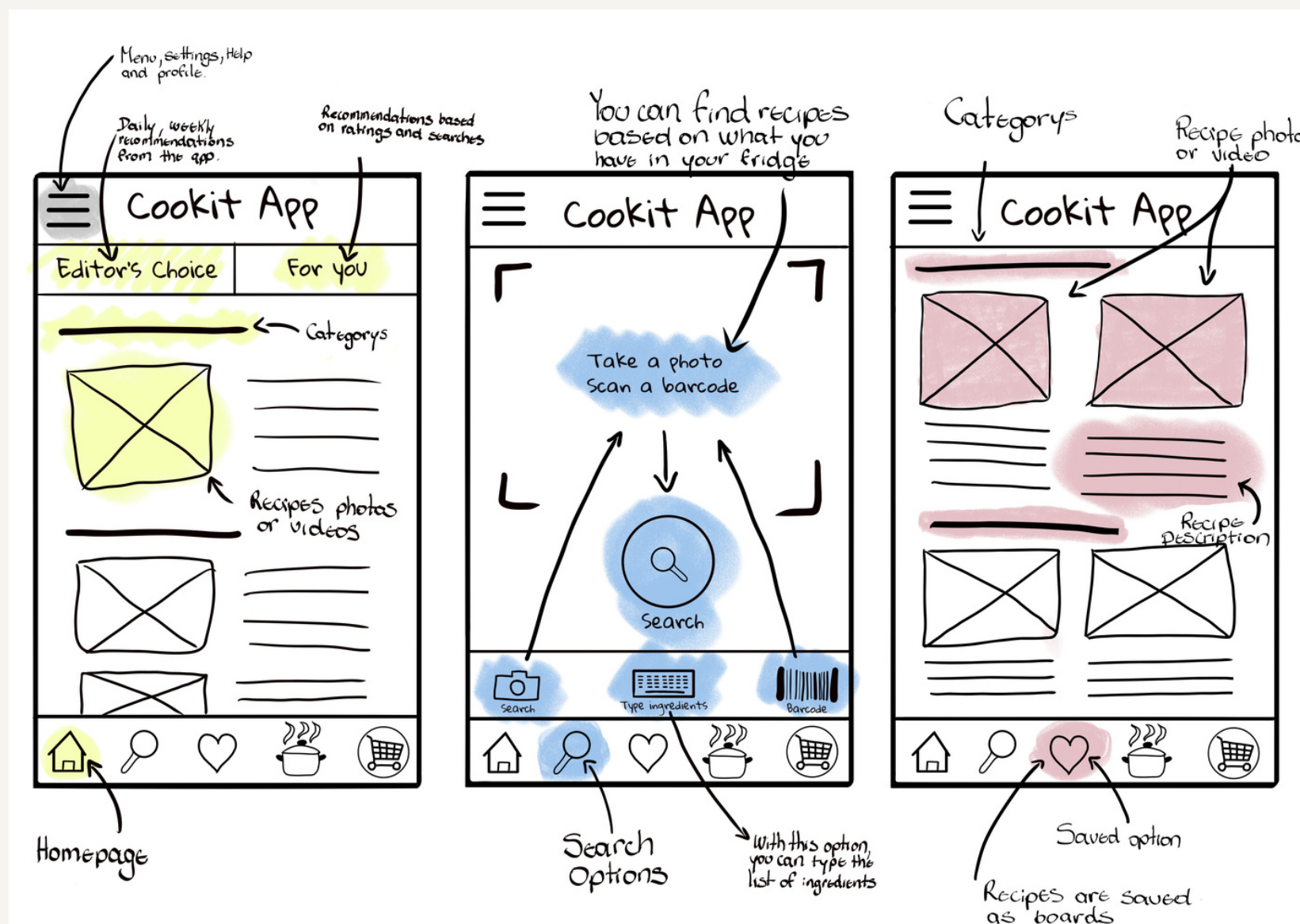
Ideation method # 2: Sketchstorm



After completing my mind map, I chose Sketchstorm as my second ideation process. This is my favorite method because it allows me to visualize how the app would look. When I began this process, I focused on the layout branch of my mind map, integrating additional features to enhance functionality according to my analysis of the existing solutions. For example, I added a feature that scans food items in the fridge instead of manually listing them.

I designed the screens for each icon in the tab bar to highlight the features that users can find on each option. I frequently moved the icons around the screen to determine the best placement based on functionality. Additionally, during this ideation process, I developed numerous details for each screen that were not included in the mind map.

Ideation method # 2: Sketchstorm



Ideation method # 3:

Storyboards



This ideation method helped me immerse myself in the user experience—understanding what users encounter both without and with the product. This approach allowed me to illustrate how this product could impact the user's life.

First, I visually described the user's pain points and challenges, expressing his emotions without the product. Then, I illustrated the user's experience with the product: how he feels while interacting with the app and the positive impact this product could have on his life.

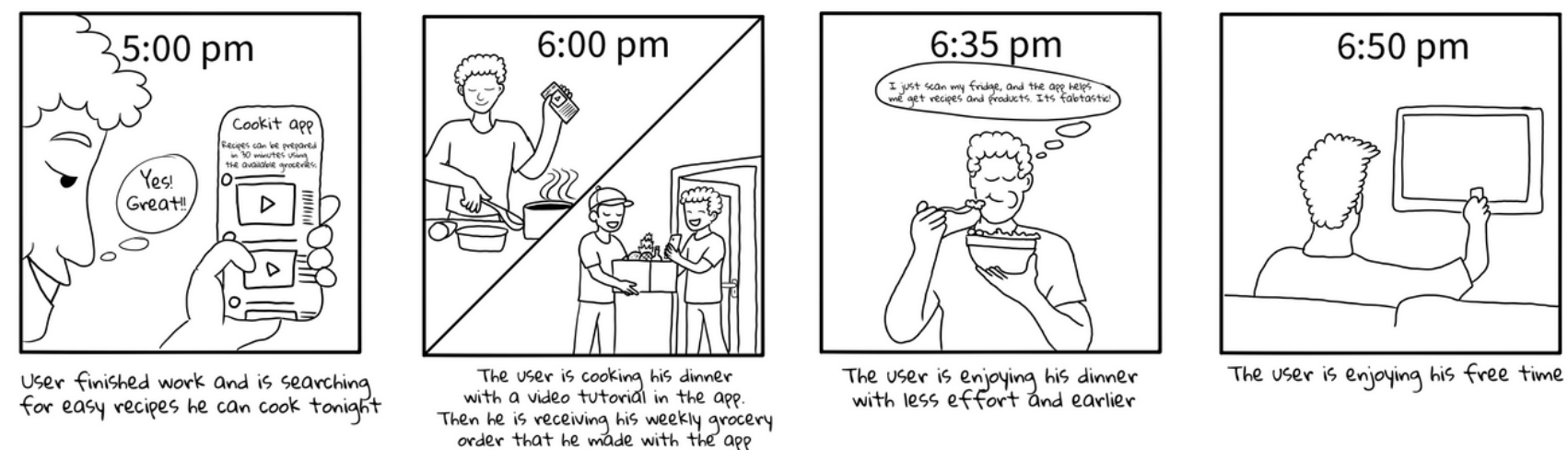
Using visuals to tell a story is much more impactful than relying solely on words. It allows me to express the user's emotions and personal experiences effectively.

Ideation method # 3: Storyboards

User experience without the app



User experience with the app



Conclusion :



Overall, I enjoyed using these three ideation methods to develop my dream app. Each one provided me with unique insights for generating ideas.

This project is like entering a very dark room and standing in the middle. Even though you can't see anything, you can roughly imagine what is there. Then, each ideation method directs your flashlight in a different direction, and in the end, you have a clear view of your surroundings.

The mind map method outlined the existing problems and the app's strategies for addressing them. The Sketchstorm introduced several visual concepts and advanced user interactions, such as scanning features. The storyboard illustrated the user's experience with the app in real life. Overall, each method has its own value and purpose.

It seems that if I had used more ideation methods, I would capture more app properties and expand its scope. In the future, I aim to master each ideation method and gain a better understanding of its individual value and application properties.

