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My studio's design brief is about quantified self and the activity I observed is Eating. I want to learn about people's eating habits in their everyday life to see if they periodically or sometimes do self-tracking for what they eat and what are they supposed to eat to have healthier life. I asked three participants to have a conversation with me while they are having dinner and asked them lots of questions about their eating habits. I also observed their routine eating behavior for three meals the day after we had conversation without any disturb. All three participants did not aware that I was observing them so that there's less confound variables.

### **Observation One: Stephanie**

Stephanie is currently a second year college student major in Biology. Stephanie believes that eating is one of the most important thing in her life so she always tries to eat healthy. She thinks that the "food pyramid" is very significant for daily meals. She says that the best ratio for nutrition from the bottom to the top is carbohydrates (rice/noodles), vegetables, fat and protein.

So, every day after she wakes up, she always eats two eggs, some sweet potatoes or corns, a half avocado and some vegetables. Usually in weekend mornings, she will eat a piece of salmon, some pancake and fruits because there's no class in weekends so she has more time to cook.

During lunch time, Stephanie usually eat in college's restaurant. Since she is super hungry after class she does not care about healthy food and orders whatever tastes good.

For dinner, she chooses to have some vegetables, noodles, fruits and sometimes shrimps. She tends to eat less carbohydrates in the evening because carbohydrates make people get fat.

She also told me that she usually has some snacks such as cookies and yogurt between lunch and dinner because she gets hungry quickly. She doesn't eat after 9pm since it's very unhealthy. She likes to eat fruits.

Usually she keeps her "food pyramid" pretty well and eat very healthy. But I noticed her breakdown when she eats sweets. She enjoys eating super sweet food, including cream cakes, cookies with jam, vanilla pudding and extra syrups added caramel macchiato. These are pretty unhealthy food but she just cannot help eating them. When she eats sweets she never thinks about her "food pyramid".

In other times she keeps eating healthy, every weekend she goes to the market to buy eggs, fruits, vegetables, meat, corns, sweet potatoes according to how much she will eat in the following whole week.

### Photo One



**Caption One:** Stephanie has a cup of caramel macchiato after lunch. As usual, she adds two extra pumps of syrup. She also adds some white sugar later. She forgets to eat healthy and is unaware of how much sweet she already takes in. All she cares about is to have sweet coffee. She says that telling her actually how much sugar she takes per day will definitely terrify her and prompt her eat less sweets.

### Photo Two



**Caption Two:** Stephanie is cooking for her breakfast. Steamed sweet potatoes, broccolis, corns and some steak. This satisfies her “food pyramid”.

## **Observation Two: Nancy**

Nancy is a student major in aerospace engineering in college. Nancy has very busy courses and has a non-regular eating habit. Different from Stephanie and Hannah, Nancy hardly ever has breakfast but has lunch and dinner regularly. She usually stays up very late till 5 am and get up till noon so that she skips breakfast very often.

During lunch, she eats fast food in the college restaurant. At dinner, she cooks some noodles or curry chicken with rice (the simplest thing to cook for her). Sometimes she goes out to eat with friends in the restaurant. Nancy knows that she her eating habit is not healthy enough and she wants to eat healthy but her busy schedule cannot make it. Sometimes she goes into the kitchen and tries to cook some nutritious dinner but gives up because she forgets to buy enough ingredients. This is one of her breakdowns.

The second breakdown is that Nancy takes very few vegetables per day that she often has dental ulcer. So, she has to take Vitamin B pills daily.

Although Nancy has non-regular and unhealthy eating habits to some extent, she eats fruits every day. Every Sunday she goes to the market to buy lots of apples, strawberries and oranges and eat them in the following week. She eats fruits after dinner every day.

Nancy has some other good habits too. She asks herself to drink almond milk everyday because it contains lots of calcium. She need to get extra calcium since she is very tall. Knowing that she does not eat healthy, Nancy asks herself to not eat snacks, especially sweets or fried food, although sometimes she forget too.

### Photo Three



**Caption Three:** Nancy keeps her habits of eating fruits every day. She takes out an apple to eat after dinner but find there's too many apples stored in the refrigerator. She forgets that she has three apples left from last week and buys four more apples yesterday.



**Caption Four:**

Nancy is cooking her dinner. Today she does not have class in the afternoon and she is pretty relaxed. Thus, she cooked a simple bowl of tomato noodles for herself, which is healthier than her normal days.

**Observation Three: Hannah**

Hannah is also a second year student in college. She keeps a very good living habits, going to bed before 10 pm and getting up at 6 am every day. Of course, she has pretty good eating habits.

In the morning at six o'clock, Hannah eats an egg, a steamed roll, yogurt and fruits because she thinks it is important to have both protein and carbohydrates during breakfast. During her breakfast, Hannah uses the app on her smartphone called "Xia Kitchen" to search cooking menus. She uses the filter on the app called "healthy food" to select her menu. She also does this sometimes on the bus on the way back home. After breakfast, Hannah cooks for her lunch (she brings lunch to school). She always cooks one meat and one vegetable with some white rice.

At dinner, Hannah doesn't want to cook anymore since she is lazy and pretty tired. Thus, she chooses to eat food that are easy to warm. She usually has steamed corn and steamed potatoes or some steamed dumplings. Very few times, she eats vegetables during dinner. And this is her first breakdown that although she knows the importance of eating vegetables, she does not eat enough in most of the times because of laziness.

Hannah likes to eat fruits too, and usually eats apples and bananas because they have the most nutrition content of all fruits and are easy to open.

As a young girl, Hannah told me that she cares about her weight. She says keeping fit is her impetus to eat healthy. If she eats too much meat today, she will ask herself not to eat meat tomorrow. She will also choose to not eat sweets although she wants to eat sometimes. Sometimes after dinner, Hannah uses another app on her smartphone to calculate calories she takes per day after having dinner and plans her eating menu base on this app. Unfortunately, Hannah gives up using this app because it is not convenient to use and lots of data are inaccurate for different types of people.

The second breakdown I observed is that she drinks very few water. Hannah knows this bad habit but cannot do anything. It seems that she never feels thirsty so she always forgets to drink water. But drinking enough water is also super important for everyone.

### Photo Five



**Caption Five:** Hannah tries to find out calories she eats after dinner, but she struggles with finding a typical type of rice (brown rice) rather than just simply “rice”. She believes that brown rice should be more nutritious than normal rice and provides less calories. She also has trouble finding a good size to quantify the amount of rice she eats. The term “half bowl” varies depending on different size of the bowl.

### User Needs:

1. Busy students don't have time to think much about cooking. They need a way to learn how to eat healthy by cooking in the simplest way.
2. Busy students/officers don't aware of how much food ingredient/ materials are left in their refrigerator. They need a way to check how much food left and what else need to buy.
3. Some people don't like drinking water, they need a way to remind them drinking enough amount of water at appropriate time per day base on different types of people.
4. Girls want to keep fit through eating, they need a way to calculate whether they eat too much or too less in order to lose weight and keep healthy at the same time.

5. Busy student don't have time to go to the market very often and they don't want to specifically go to market to buy one stuff. They need to know the most efficient pathway to buy everything they need on the way back home.
6. Busy people don't aware if they eat enough protein or carbohydrate or fat. They need a way to know how if they eat in a correct way and how can they improve.
7. Old people care a lot about preserving health in daily life, but they get too much information from various pathways, they need to be able to filter and select the one that fits them best.
8. Students want to buy stuffs with high performance cost ratio because they don't have much money and hope to save money as much as they can. They need a way to compare prices of stuffs they want to buy and help them decide when and where to buy.
9. When people go to the coffee shop to order a drink during busy hours, they have to wait in a very long line and that waste a lot of time. Students who need to run for next class need a way to not spend too much time on waiting in line.
10. Student are usually not good at buying meat, vegetables or fruits when cooking. They are unaware of which types of vegetables are fresh or which kind of watermelon tastes sweet. They need a way to help them select vegetables, meat and fruit base on their outlooks or other factors.
11. Some people have trouble making decisions, especially what to eat. They spent a lot of time making decisions but don't feel satisfied. These people need a way to make quick decision about what to eat for the whole following week combining health factors and personal preferences.
12. Busy students don't want to cook themselves but the restaurants they find usually are not healthy at all. They offer unhealthy food, such as food with high fat, too much salt adding... These students need a way to find restaurants that offer healthy food.
13. People who have diabetes and people who like eat sweets need a way to know accurate sugar content of every sweet they want to take. They need a more quantified way to know this kind of data in a more visualized way.
14. Busy students hardly take enough vegetables per day, so they need a way to know what else they should take that work as vegetable substitutes. And they also need to be reminded to take vegetables when they are free.
15. When shopping in the market, some people find some food with high nutrition for the first time. But these foods are usually rare and not widely known so that people don't know whether they should take these foods and how to cook these foods in a correct way. People need a way to learn instructions about food with high nutrition.

**Point of view:**

Busy study contradicts with student's healthy eating habits.