

Flavors of Love

# Flavors of Love

Food through an  
Asian American lense.

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Ranelle Santiago  
San José State University  
BFA Graphic Design  
Senior Thesis



# Flavors of Love

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The background is a textured, light brown surface. On the left, there is a dark brown desk. On the desk, there is a lamp with a dark brown base and a light brown shade, a book with a dark brown cover and light brown pages, and a heart-shaped note with a black outline. The right side of the image is a solid, light brown background.

# The Introduction

Abstract

Thesis Statement

Research Questions



## Abstract

The display of a meticulously crafted favorite dish sitting on top of the counter after coming home. The knock on the door that's greeted by a plate of an assortment of peeled fruits after a particular difficult study session. The pantry that was recently stocked up after a certain brand of cookies was mentioned to be delicious.

Communicated through unspoken words, presenting food in any form can relay a message from one person to another. Rather than it being only a resource for survival, the world has created beauty around it. The rich background of any dish can convey the emotions, identities, cultures, and traditions associated with the person creating it. Food is presented as a gift in some instances that could convey wishing good luck to the receiver, welcoming one to the family, or coming together to celebrate a traditional holiday. Though these gestures are seen as grand in the eyes of the culture being presented, they are often set forth as nonverbal ways of appreciation and affection.

Among Asian cultures, it's not common to be outspoken when it comes to emotions and hardships that someone faces. This is due to the communication patterns that stem from the common cultural structures that affect generation after generation. Especially with Asian Americans, communicating with their parents and older relatives is difficult because of the direct impact that comes from growing up in a predominantly western society.



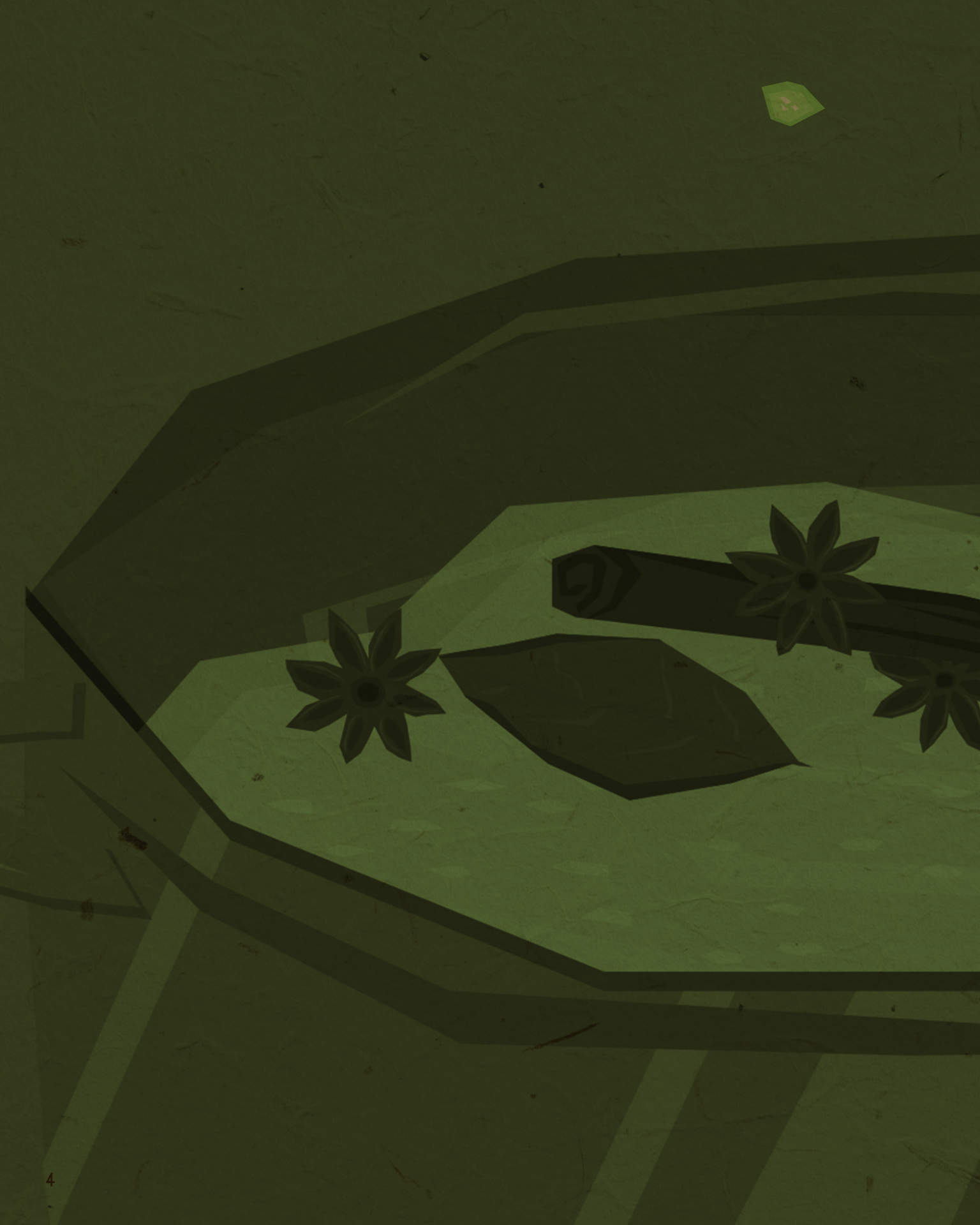
# Thesis Statement

How food is another method of communication will be explored through cultural identity and its influence someone's relationship with food and how food is used as a way of showing love and care in an Asian American household.

## Research Questions

1. What makes food such a significant part in Asian American culture?
2. How is food able to communicate a message without the use of words?
3. How does identity and culture play a part in how food is seen as a form of showing love?





# The Research

Locating Thesis Range  
People, Places, and Things  
Repository of Insight  
Frame of Reference  
Identity and Food  
Survey Findings



# Locating The Thesis Range

## PROMPT

Articulate your interests and concerns through writing and research in order to establish a stronger foundation for your work. Take note of subjects or topics that are of deep and abiding interest to you.

## PART 1 – Interests

**Food** I grew up watching The Food Network with my family and this was one of the main ways I connected with them.

**Comic Books** Seeing female superheroes and villains with strong and complex storylines in media fill me with joy.

**Self Identity** Growing up when you're part of the LGBTQ+ community has its unique experiences.

**Animation** Animated shows and movies have always been something that's been a part of my life that I indulge in.

## PART 2 – Feedback

After getting feedback from Professor Randall and Chang, their comments helped me think about other directions that I didn't initially think of. Because I want to show how food can be a language that you can communicate with, approaching the visuals in a way that can be interpreted in different ways could be really fitting. When Professor Randall mentioned how I can weave poetry into my storytelling, I think this approach would emphasize the indirect way of thinking about the topic. The communication that food has doesn't have to be solid, but it very well can be understood without being direct. Like the language of flowers, the message is written between the lines.

With Professor Chang's feedback, focusing on the different gestures of when preparing a traditional food and creating meanings behind the little things is a really interesting direction that I'd like to explore as well. Through my thesis, I want to emphasize the way that food is a way to communicate love through the subtle approach that would create a much more delicate way of thinking about it while also being artistically abstract. The documentation idea that they both mentioned is also something that will help me think about how I want to approach the audience with a storyline and what emotions I'd want them to feel.

Point of view is something that I need to think about because the perspective can be different from a young adult to maybe a much older person. With a perspective and storyline in mind, it'll help me find a way that best fits what narrative I'd like to present to the audience and how I want to emphasize and interpret culture, identity, and most definitely love in a way that's unique and visually engaging.



**3 Physical Places**

Bookstore, Kitchen, Restaurants

**3 Huge Objects**

Gas Stove, Banquet Hall, SUV Car

**3 Tiny Objects**

Cutlery, Spices, Sauce Bowl

**3 Abstract Qualities**

Reality, Patient, Gratitude

**People, Places,  
and Things**

**PROMPT**

Collect texts, images, and/or other visual representations to create the mise en scene of your thesis that are of interest.

**3 Physical Qualities**

Multilayered, Warm, Tactile

**3 Supermarket Items**

Vinegar, Coconut Milk, Rice

**3 Films of a thesis film series**

Turning Red, The Half of It, Crazy Rich Asians

**3 Designers**

Sophia Chang, John See, Satsuki Shibuya

**3 Blue Collar Jobs**

Restaurant Cooks, Farmers, Food Processing

**3 Foundations and Organizations**

Heart of Dinner, Asian American Foundation,  
Good Food Foundationn

**3 Historical Events**

Immigration and Nationality Act - October 3, 1965  
“Asian American” is coined by Yuji Ichioka - 1968  
“Fresh Off the Boat” TV Premiere - 2015



# Repository of Insight

As well as constituting our own identities, we use food as a means of identifying with others. Food connects people, both physically and symbolically, when we sit down to dine together.

Even within our daily experiences, the ways that we eat and dine with others can be categorized as ritualistic because they involve repetition, expected behaviors, and roles for both the participants and the food

Besides our individual connections to food, we also use it as a means of communicating our identities to others through our processes of preparation and eating.

Margaret Visser

Still, few things say “home” like passing through a doorway to the smell of fresh ingredients in an ancient dish. The meats that fall off the bone after stewing for eight hours. The sour soups of tomato and tamarind, bubbling up to the surface of the pot to meet your nose. It is an aroma so closely associated with my family—with safety and with affection—that I sometimes feel it moving me backwards in time to the first house that my parents bought together.

Food is a strong language for the children of immigrants; symbolizes a home that was never our home.

Angeli Pineda

Food is a product and mirror of the organization of society...a prism that absorbs and reflects a host of cultural phenomenon.. Food functions symbolically as a communicative practice by which we create, manage, and share meanings with others.

Carlнита P. Greene and Janet M. Cramer

Food is an Asian love language. It's the cut fruit, sharing dishes, and sending you off with containers of leftovers. It's making you your favorite dish, stuffing you and offering you seconds and thirds and fourths, and asking whether you've eaten yet or worrying if you're not eating well.

Ivy Kwong

Shared experiences of discrimination, regardless of ethnicity, are core to the formation of Asian American pan-ethnicity.

Derek Kenji Iwamoto and William Ming Liu

This is why you can have strong emotional reactions when you eat a food that arouses those deep unconscious memories. You can't put those memories into words, but you know there is 'something' that the food triggers deep within your past. The memory goes beyond the food itself to the associations you have to that long-ago memory, whether with a place or a person.

Susan Krauss Whitebourne

These misaligned expectations for giving and receiving love can arise from Asian immigrant parents' tendency not to verbalize their emotions. The love is being expressed more in context than in content.

Angelica Sun

I don't think it's just about how delicious the food is. It's more about the memory of family members getting together and sharing this moment which cannot be replicated.

Alice McCoy-Bae

Food is not just nutrition that goes in your mouth or even pleasant sensations that go with it. It connects to your whole life, and it's really a very important part of performing your culture and experiencing your culture.

Paul Rozin

Food memories feel so nostalgic because there's all this context of when you were preparing or eating this food, so the food becomes almost symbolic of other meaning. A lot of our memories as children, it's not so much the apple pie, for example, but the whole experience of being a family, being nourished, and that acquires a lot of symbolism apart from the sensory quality.

Julia R. Thomson



# Frame of Reference

## PROMPT

Conduct a well-prepared, focused, and thoughtful interview with an expert in your field of interest, whose experience, knowledge, and expertise can offer insight into your project.

**Professional** Rachael Miyung Joo

**Expertise** PhD Social Anthropology

With my initial research mainly focusing around how food is able to communicate and how it can be important to Asian culture, this interview’s questions were more for a better understanding as to why why Asian Americans have a certain perspective on food. I wanted to know more about how Asian American’s relationship with food and look into the deeper sense that brings up past experiences that create the social environment today. Because of this, the questions I asked leaned more toward the discussion of the topic and the history that influenced what’s happening in modern times.

## Interview Questions

- How can food bring a sense of belonging for Asian Americans even with the context of discrimination and criticism that they could have encountered?
- How are outside forces able to affect how Asian Americans see food and how could someone navigate that through their own experiences and upbringings?
- Why have Asian Americans defined themselves through food and how does historical context play a role in this sense of identity that’s so popular among the new generation?
- What kind of context has created this sense of identity and feeling of belonging within Asian Americans in which food is one of the top ways that people are able to connect with their culture?
- Is the discussion of Asian Americans being seen as separate identity completely from just Asian or not an effective way to analyze the experience of the younger generation? How long has this discussion been going on for and what nuances does it have to the modern day discussion?



# Identity and Food

## Cultural Context

Influenced by a series of historical events, like the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which opened the doors to many more Asian immigrants in the Vietnam War, which led to waves of refugees from Southeast Asia, the diversity of Asian cultures in America brought with it more types of cuisine.

In this time period, Chinese immigrants specifically were the catalyst in starting the Asian food wave that existed afterward. Since the Exclusion Act blocked them from any labor jobs, they had to be entrepreneurs out of necessity and began to open restaurants that catered to the Western palette.

Observed in the past as well, it was common to shorten the reference to Chinese food by just saying Chinese and people would still be able to know what you'd be referring to. Though this seems dehumanizing, people were able to connect to the culture. For better or for worse, the Asian identity was always connected to the food that they make.

## Family Dynamic

With the new generations of Asian Americans growing up, there's been conflict between the older generation as they hold different values and traditions that are more common in the Western society that they live in. Expressing love is especially different as it is not common to verbally express what you're feeling in Asian culture. Because of this, it's hard to communicate just exactly what you want to say to relatives as well as what relatives want to tell you.

The language barrier exists in more ways than one as it's hard to communicate intentions correctly as well as the right feelings you'd want to convey. When words aren't enough, the next common way to express appreciation and gratitude is by preparing food. The experience of sharing the same flavors within a shared pot and in the same space can create a bond like no other.

## Individual Identity

Food and identity are embedded in the way that people talk about Asian Americans. The influence from past experiences has created a mentality in the newer generation which has individuals working for themselves, like opening their own restaurants, rather than working for someone else.

The "Lunchbox Moment" is a term used among Asian Americans in which a child would bring lunch from home that contains a dish from their culture. This is dubbed as a moment because of a common shared experience of peers making fun of them for having nonconventional food with them.

## Growing Niche

Among the new generation of Asian Americans, they've influenced the cooking and restaurant scene by sharing their own unique stories. Within modern cookbooks, a new approach was created where they now focus more on storytelling rather than just a recipe for a dish.

Food is one of the main ways the new generation is able to connect back to their cultural background. With their own unique perspective of how they see themselves and their traditions, they are able to curate an experience through what they prepare themselves and share with others.





# Survey Findings

To gain a better understanding of what I want to say with my thesis, I conducted two surveys and asked for people's personal experience and stories with food and, if applied, being Asian American in this day and age.

## Food and Conversations

### Total Respondents: 17

With these questions focused more on asking about feelings, connotations, and connections, this survey was used to understand the nuances in the preparation, setting, and company associated with someone's relationship with food.

#### Questions:

- 1 Do you prefer eating alone or with people?
- 2 When would be an instance when you would enjoy eating with a group of people? What would you usually be eating?
- 3 When you do gather, do you focus on the food or the people around you more? Why?
- 4 What feelings do you associate with food?
- 5 What feelings do you associate with sharing a meal with a group of people?
- 6 What about food makes it so universal to enjoy and share?
- 7 How do you think food is able to communicate with people?  
Do you think food could be considered a form of showing
- 8 love? Why or why not?  
Do you have a certain dish that you hold dear to you? What's
- 9 the story behind it and what makes it so special?

### Positive feelings are associated.

When it comes to thinking of food, the majority associated it with positive feelings along with comfort being mentioned the most. Nothing can beat the warmth of a dish that was just prepared or the feeling of relief after being greeted by a meal after a long day.

### Comfort in shared experiences.

Being around food creates an atmosphere that makes it easy for conversations and memories to happen that people can fondly look back at. Without even knowing, any dish can hold a story that people can tell others, letting our guard down and experiencing intimate moments shared among others.

### Memories spark conversation.

With it also being a big part of family traditions, it also creates a cultural connection with people. Just knowing what dishes are called can help them feel they're connected with something. The little things like knowing where something is, how to prepare a certain ingredient, or where to find it can help people discover their identity and be comfortable with who they are.

### It's a love language.

The community is incredibly diverse and rich with different cultures, which could be intimidating when it comes to trying to connect with your culture, but it should not be meant to deviate you from learning more about your background if you wanted to. The experience seems niche, but it also creates a space for people who share similarities with one another no matter their background or upbringing.

### Understanding the past.

Sometimes it's hard for people to express their emotions verbally, especially with parents and older relatives. So instead, they use food as a vessel to communicate how much they care. No matter the dish, the careful preparation of cut fruit or a homecooked meal can leave a lasting mark when the words can't come out.

It's an apology, love, trust... The ingredients can communicate the land where it came from... It can provide a experience that's close to storytelling... It can help with getting in touch with their heritage... The emotions you feel when you eat it. It brings back memories... It's a catalyst for conversation...

can be ourselves around it. The little gestures show you



## The Asian American Experience

Total Respondents: 15

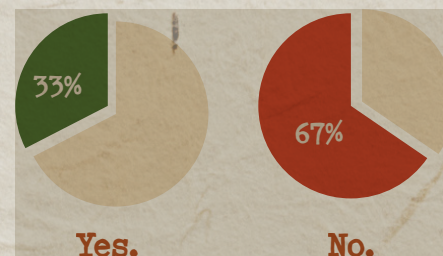
This survey was created to understand and get to know about someone's cultural upbringing and how it could affect how they are now. It focuses on determining what kind of identity someone would give themselves when considering their cultural background.

### Questions:

- 1 What is your cultural background?
- 2 What are ways you connect to your culture? (food, traditions, family, etc)
- 3 How close do you feel to your cultural background? What are your thoughts as to why it is the way it is?
- 4 Have there been instances where you feel like there's a disconnect between you and your cultural background? If so, when and why?
- 5 Why do you think it could be hard to connect to one's cultural background?
- 6 What might you think would be the reason why people don't want to connect to their cultural backgrounds more as an Asian-American?
- 7 What do you think is the most significant reason why there is conflict between older generations and the younger generation born in America?
- 8 Do you think being Asian-American is a separate identity? why or why not?
- 9 What does it mean to be Asian-American?
- 10 As an Asian-American, what cultural dish do you think connects you the most to your culture? is it the same as your favorite dish? Why or why not?
- 11 What are things that you associate with your culture? (objects, patterns, food ingredients, smells, words, etc)



## Do you feel close to your cultural background?



### Food is a vessel for connection.

Though dishes can hold the history of a culture, they can also hold a family's memories as they can be passed down through generations and have it be shared for years. A favorite dish now can be what a relative grew up eating and is now preparing their own way.

### "I'm not Asian enough."

Being Asian American, it can be hard to find the balance between the cultures that you grew up around. Witnessing people who can speak the language better than you can or knowing more about the traditions, it's hard not to compare yourself and wonder if you even want to consider yourself as your cultural background. It can feel uncomfortable when you can't connect.

### Gaps in values.

The older generation came to America to find a better life for themselves and their family. To live a life of freedom and choice, they base their values on what's best for their loved ones. In comparison, the newer and younger generation was born with the freedom of choice. The difference between the two upbringings creates a conflict as the traditions and perspectives are different.

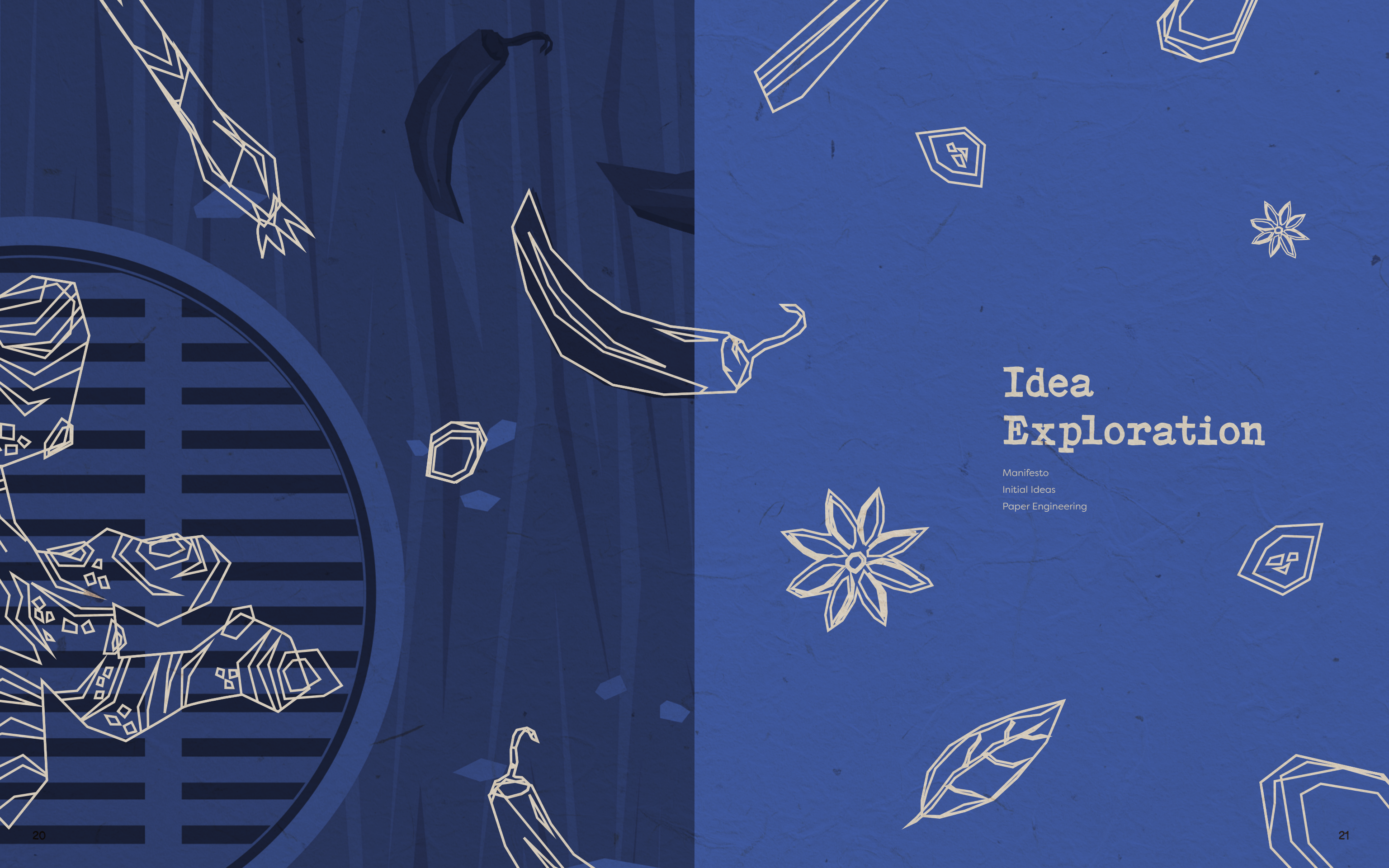
### "We're a niche experience."

There is no such thing as being only Asian or only American when being an Asian American and this perspective alone creates a unique space that people are able to share. When being Asian American, there's a shared experience even among the different demographics that creates a specific niche. It's within similar upbringings that people are able to relate to each other no matter the differences that can occur.

### Influence in everything.

Two cultures will always exist within being an Asian American and with this perspective, the things that they create and the things that they do are influenced by what they've gone through and how they experience the world. The mix of cultures is what the perspective unique.





# Idea Exploration

Manifesto  
Initial Ideas  
Paper Engineering



# Manifesto

To keep myself grounded in the chaos of constant ideas and the evermoving moments of life, I made a manifesto that describes how I approach design and the world around me.

## **Ideas don't always have an end.**

Sometimes you don't always have to finish what you start, just having the idea down will create more avenues for you to explore.

## **You aren't a machine.**

There's only so much you can do in the moment. Slow down and be patient with yourself. You've already grown so much.

## **Enjoy the mundane.**

Romanticize your life. It can help give you more opportunities with how you get inspired. The mundane can be special in its own way.

## **Find your found family.**

Surround yourself with people who inspire new out of the box thinking. Their perspective alone can bring a new mindset.

## **Be all that you enjoy.**

Absorb anything and all you enjoy. Though you shouldn't identity yourself with just one piece of media, something unique can come out of another, intertwining and creating something special to you.

## **You are someone's representation.**

No detail goes unnoticed to the people you want to send a message to. No matter how small, your significant details can create a domino effect that can inspire people.

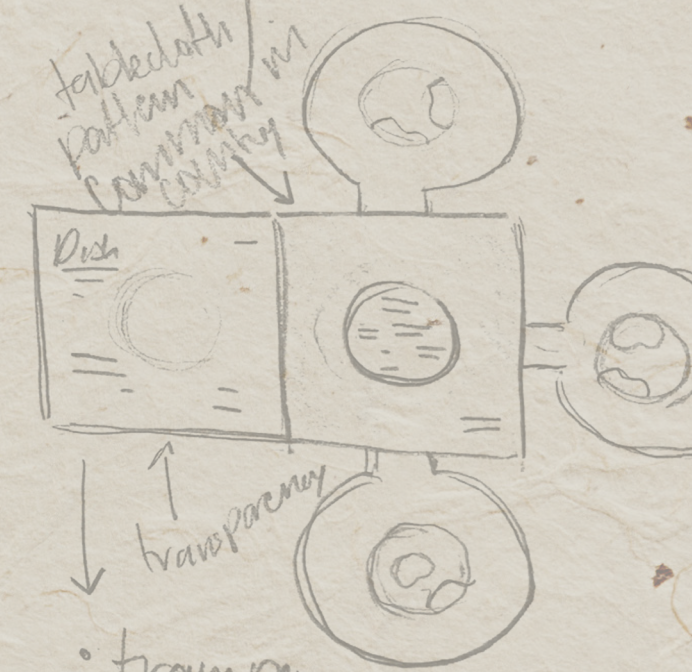


# Initial Ideas

## DRAFT 1

The only thing I knew for sure about my outcome was that gestures would be the focus, but I didn't know the best way to incorporate storytelling with it. At this point, I only had one dish in mind so far as I didn't know how much content I'd be designing. I went through a few concepts with different formats for each to figure out the best way to communicate the outcome.

Take set / list / infrastructure / presentation / experiences  
 how do I communicate a story through physical objects?  
 - means throughout the day  
 - different moods with  
 - different cultural foods, settings?  
 - the most popular 5/4 cultures among open-american  
 Monochrome  
 dialogue



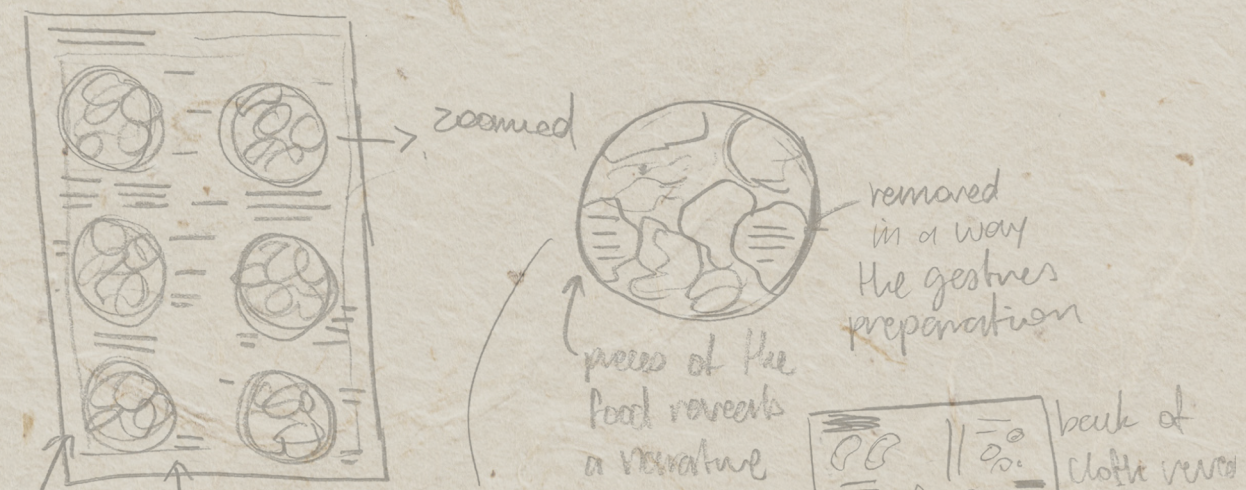
transparency paper will overlap with the dishes displays

My first idea was to design a cook book while including the stories that I'd get from my personal interviews. The next was a photography book with quotes that were associated with each pictured gesture of a dish. I began to think of things associated with food and explored what else I could work with that wasn't so conventional.

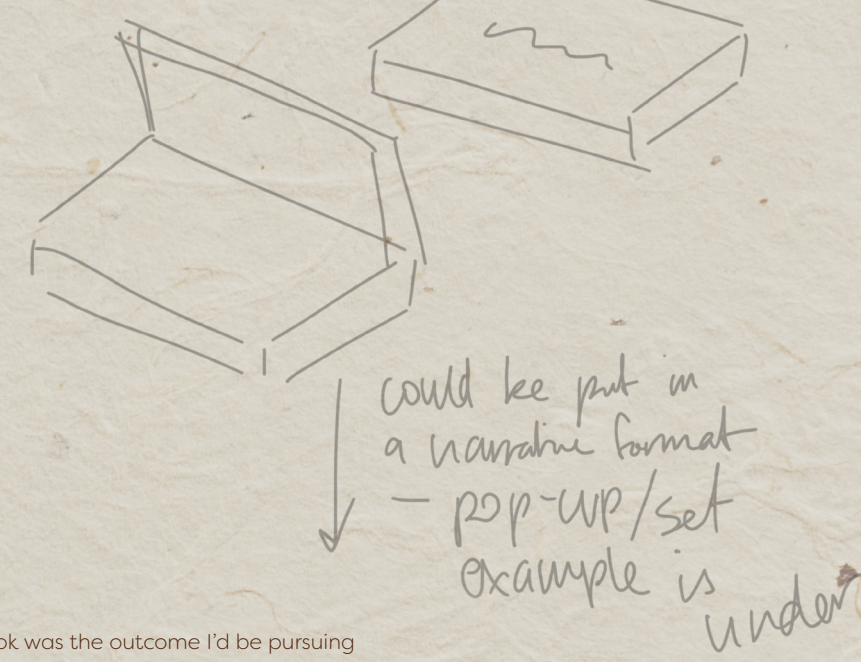
Printing on table cloth was an idea that my professor brought up and I thought was really interesting. The design would include six different dishes that would be placed on each seat and all of them would be interactable. It seemed too large to do as I started to focus on it.



table cloth storytelling



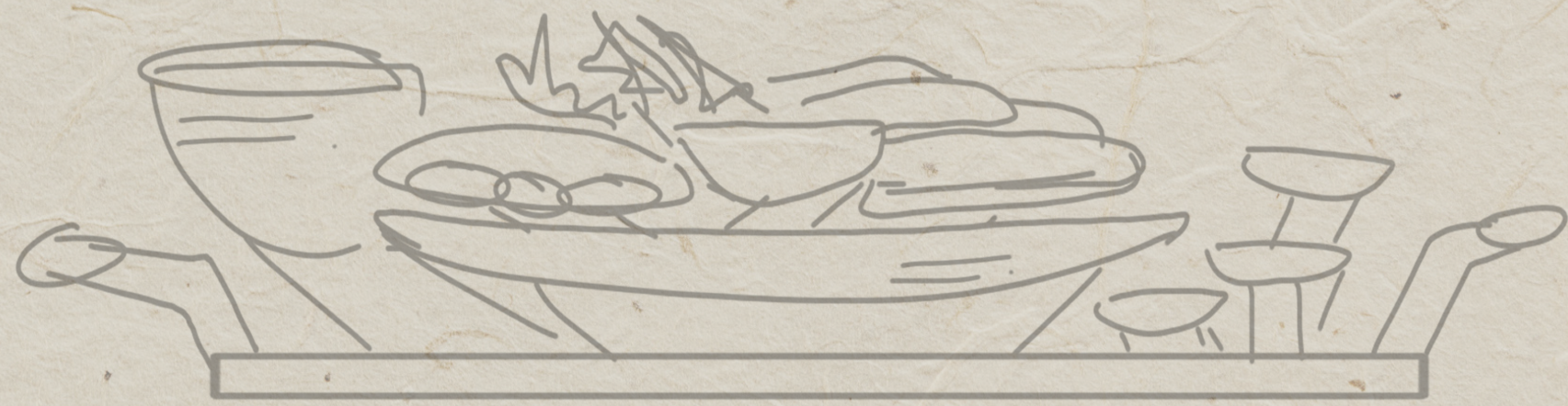




An interactive pop-up book was the outcome I'd be pursuing for the rest of the project. The interactions would be the way I would tell the story through facts about the culture while the pop-up pages would be used to emphasize the most important gesture and the final look of the dish. The idea was fun, colorful, and engaging and I was determined to make it work.

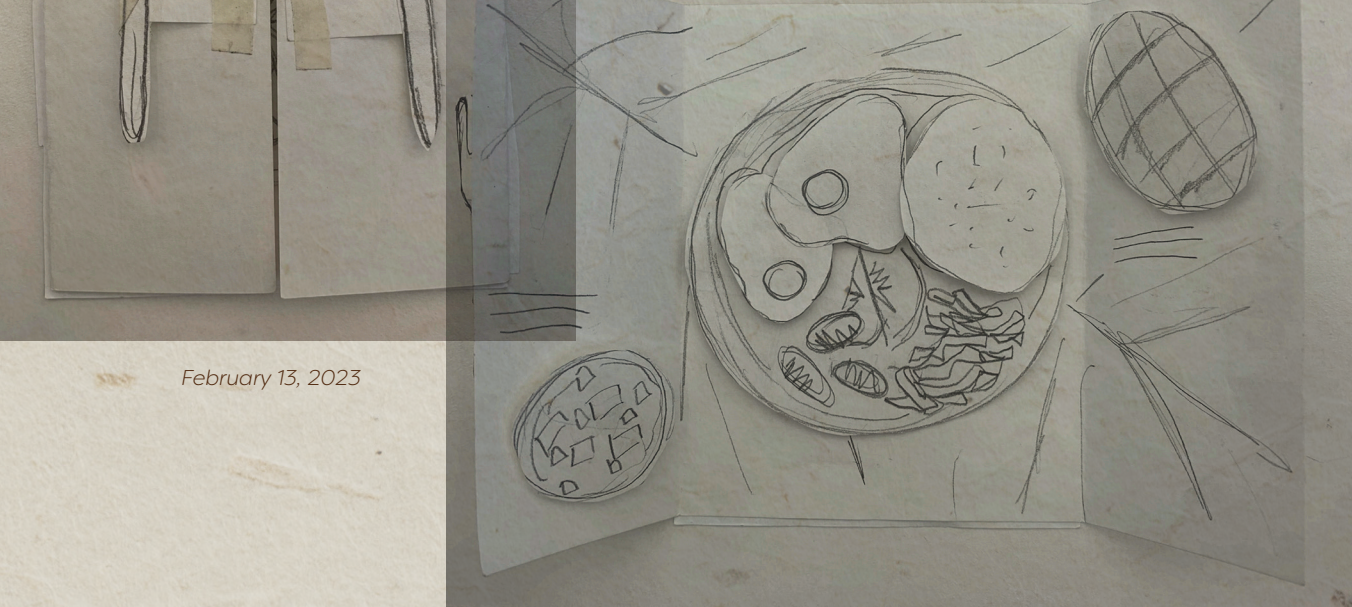
## DRAFT 2

Intimidated and worried about executing the tablecloth set idea, I tried to find a different way to capture the same idea without it having to be on a large scale. The interaction and full display were kept and instead of having the design on a full sheet, I separated each of the dishes into books instead with distinct approaches for each.



- from the side, reveals messages on the objects in





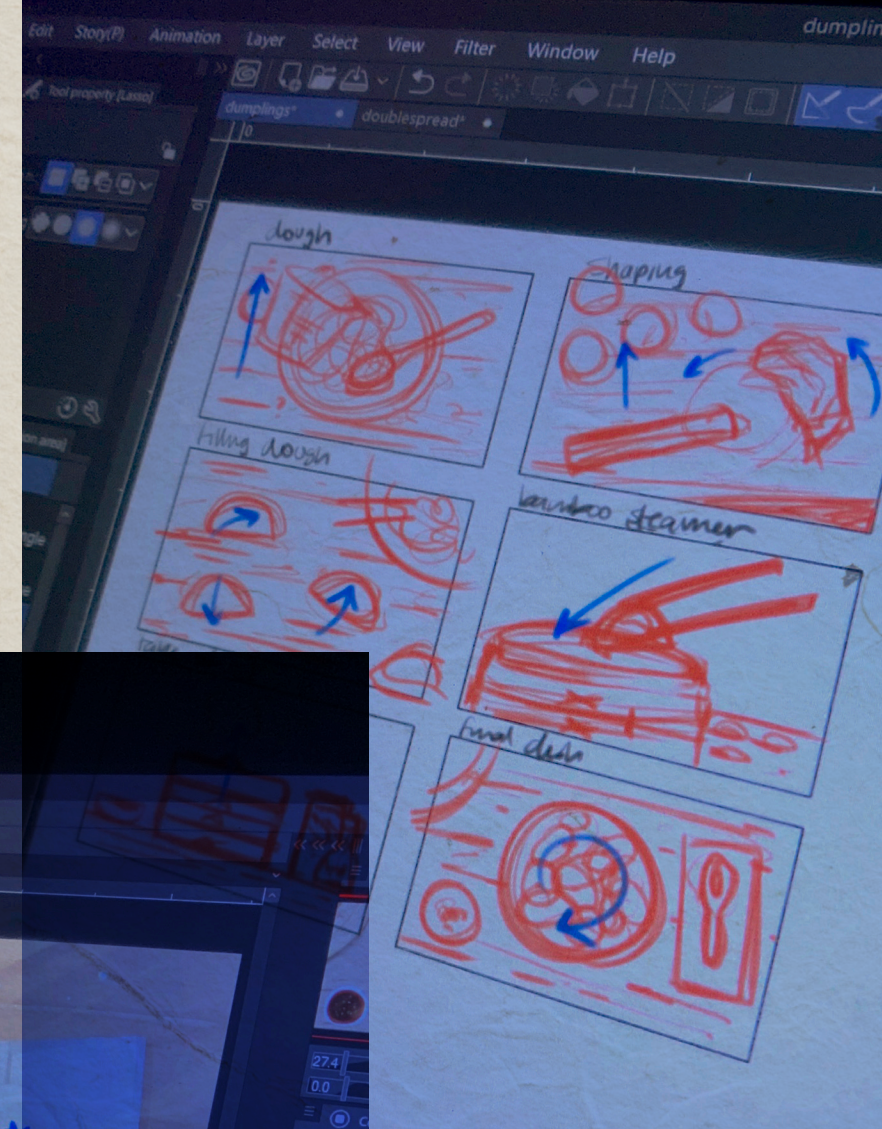
February 13, 2023

## Book Categories

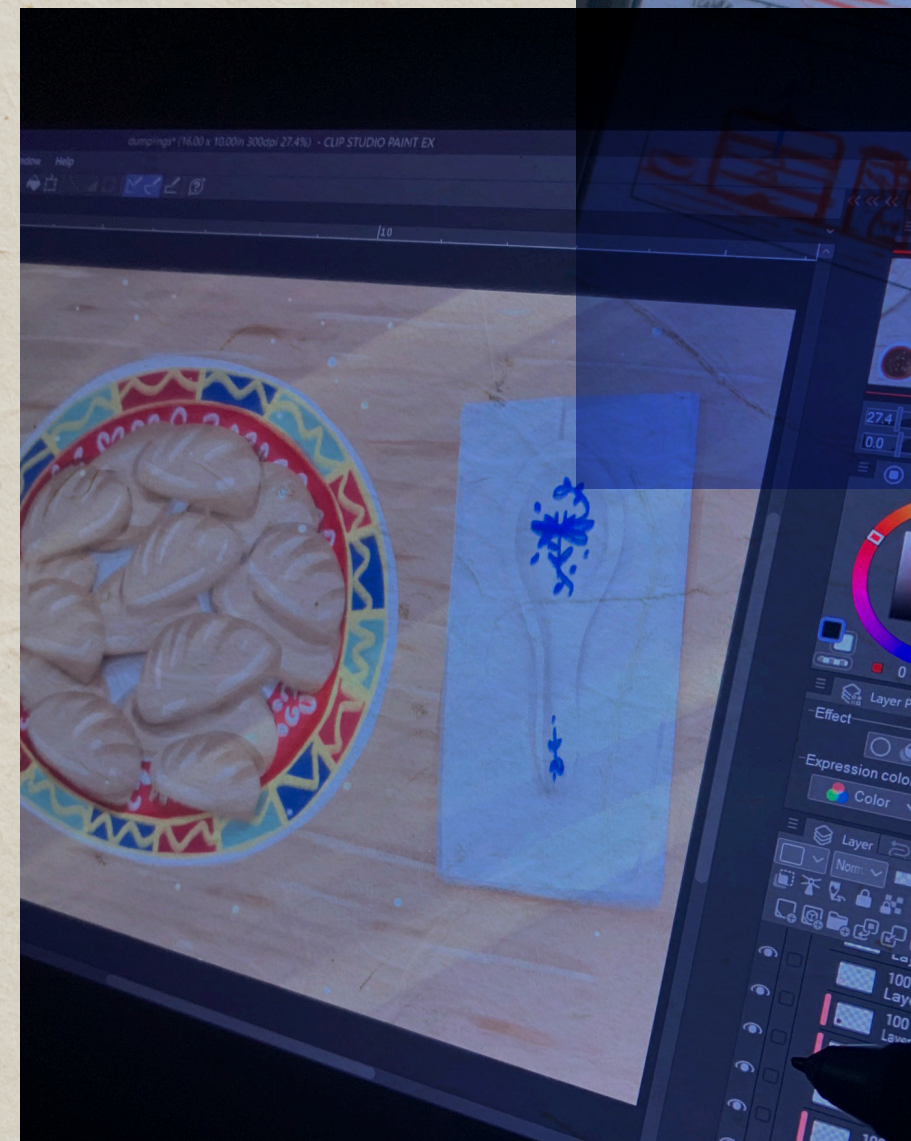
The five cultures that the cover of the books are based on the top demographics amongst Asian Americans in the United States. Chinese, Vietnamese, Indian, Japanese, and Filipino were the ones that I decided to design for.



February 13, 2023



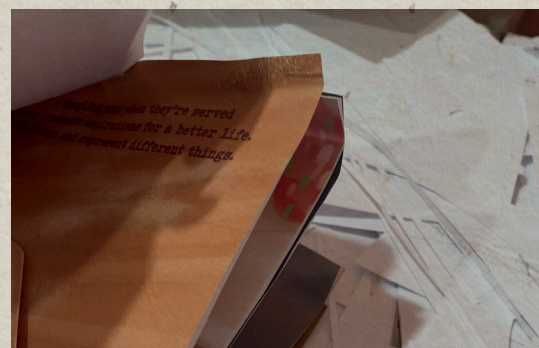
February 23, 2023



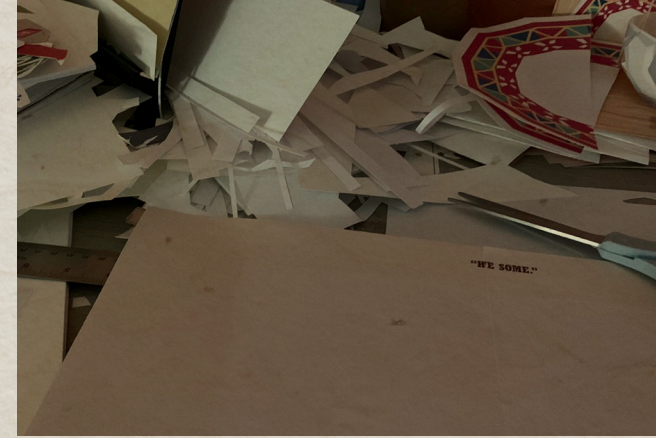




February 24, 2023



March 13, 2023



## Midterm Art Style Change

The overall art style changed from purely illustrative to a vector approach for a cleaner and more consistent look. The forms are created using only straight lines and jagged edges, mimicking cut paper and scraps.

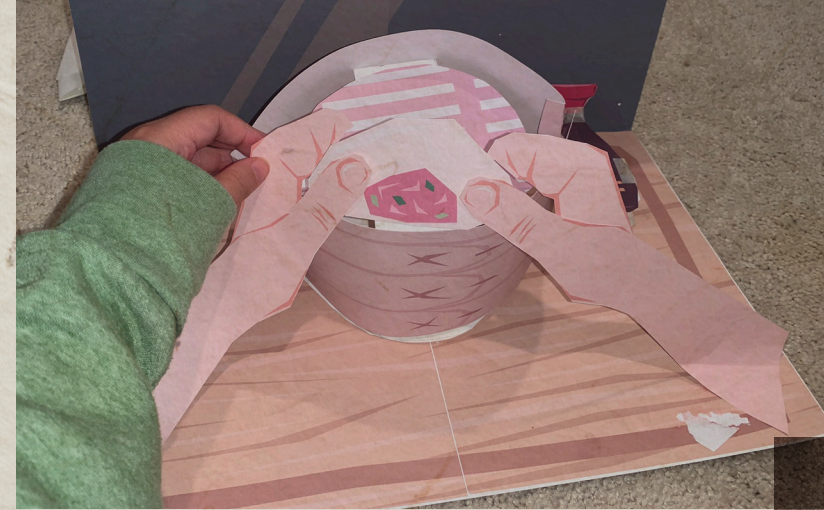


March 5, 2023

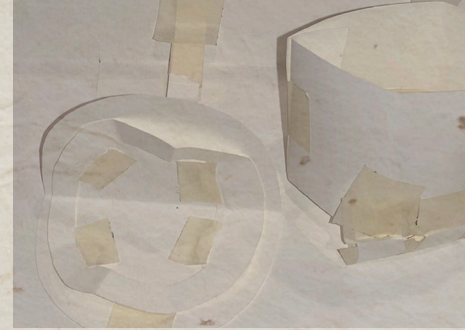




April 4, 2023



April 2, 2023



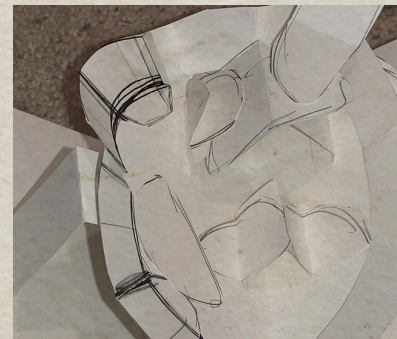
## Paper Engineering

Learning an entirely new skill that has a very in-depth history was daunting but exciting to learn. It was an incredibly difficult journey to trying to learn the fundamentals along with trying to combine expert techniques and think outside the box.

Since it was my first time designing 3D structures along with illustrations, it took me a while to fully approach the process because I was so intimidated by just how much I didn't know about one of the main distinctions of my thesis.



April 2, 2023



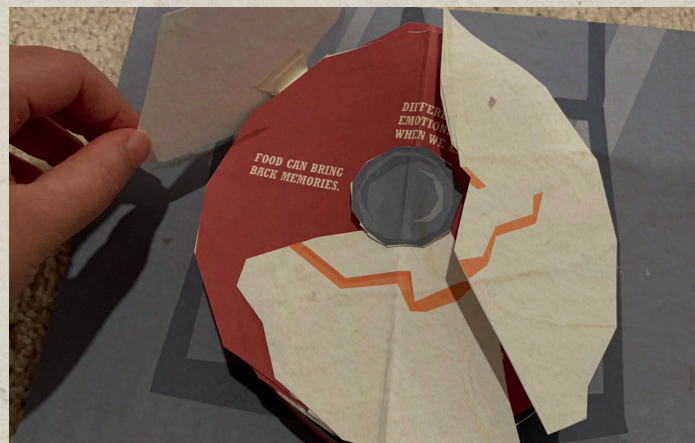




April 8, 2023



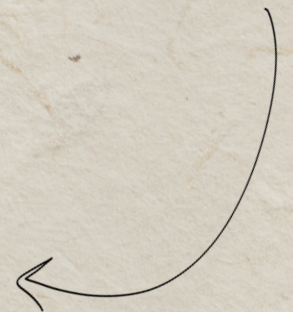
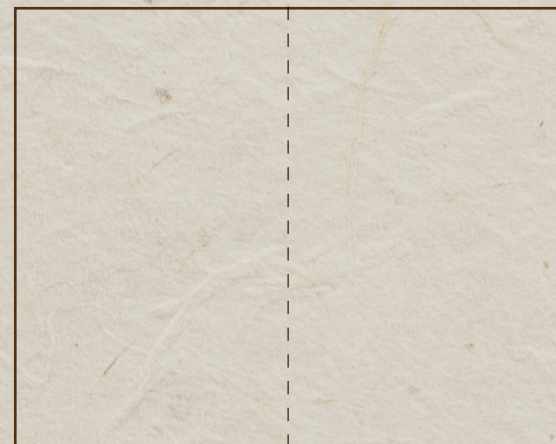
April 5, 2023



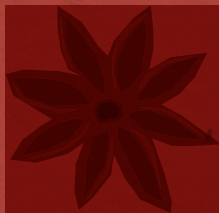
April 10, 2023

## Dimension Change

The initial size of the books was 16" x 10" but as I worked through the project, I realized the mechanics weren't going to work unless I made everything smaller so that I could accomodate my storytelling properly. The final size was changed to 8" x 5".

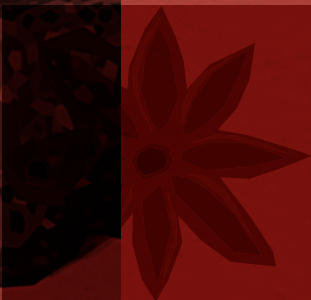






# Flavors of Love

Design Approach  
Outcome Overview  
Storyboards  
Final Books





# Design Approach

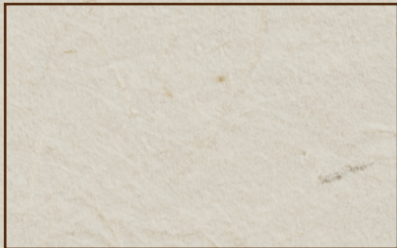
## Target Audience

Asian American Youth (10-18), Young Adults (19-21), Adults (20s onward), Foodies, Chefs

## Dimensions

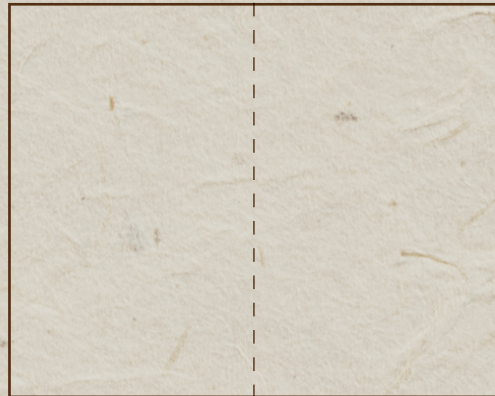
8" x 5"

Interactive Page



8" x 10"

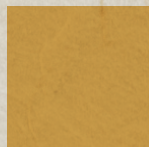
Pop-Up Page



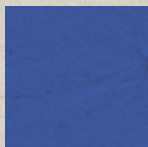
## Colors



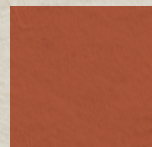
Vietnamese  
C74 M41  
Y98 K35



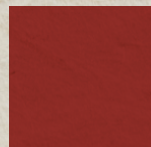
Indian  
C20 M37  
Y82 K1



Filipino  
C82 M70  
Y2 K0



Japanese  
C24 M73  
Y80 K12



Chinese  
C27 M91  
Y88 K25

## Typefaces

ClickClack

Tortang Talong

Birra

Bánh Xèo

Teko

Biryani

Isemin / 異世明

Onigiri

HelloFont ID Zhuo Ran Ti

Dumplings

ROCKWELL

UNSPOKEN





### Illustration Style

Imperfect, jagged, and bold, the illustration style throughout the project creates lively scenes that grounds the narrative in reality to relate to the reader in more personal ways.

Ingredients are scattered, stains are prominent, and settings almost seem less than ideal, but the feeling of home is shown through the nuances of a lived-in space.





# Outcome Overview



## Said within the gestures.

The final outcome had a change in perspective and focal point and now showcases what makes each dish unique on its own. Emphasizing the details and nuances of preparing food creates an experience that allows for the exploration of identity and love through the scene within the small details.

Though the gestures and scenes stay the same, the way someone approaches each creates a unique experience that holds both differences and similarities. These details throughout the books mimics the experience of being an Asian American. Even though culture and its traditions feel unchanged, the new generation gains a new perspective and creates an entirely new experience that encapsulates both the richness of culture and a strong sense of individuality.

The foundation is there, but it is up to the person to decide their own identity and curate the experience they want to enjoy for themselves and to share with others. With a strong sense of self, a person is then able to understand the ways of preparation and is then able to communicate unspoken words through the food that they offer with direct love and affection towards their loved ones.

## Prepared with appreciation.

With food, we are able to understand just how rich a culture is through the spices and flavors that create each dish. No matter how simple, complicated, or extravagant, they are the representation of the culture and its traditions. With words left unspoken, food is able to encapsulate love and care through its preparation as those very gestures can define a person's intentions.

Within the crevices of deliciously prepared food, love can be poured within the cracks. How a dish is presented to loved ones can emphasize their love and appreciation for them. No matter how big or small the gesture could be, the simple ways of wordlessly presenting a prepared dish for someone or asking if they've eaten anything yet can speak volumes.

Throughout the sequence of each book, questions are hidden within the scenes for readers to discover and connect the preparation to why food is so significant with culture and with someone's identity.







## Familiar, significant, and comforting.

Each dish that was picked to represent the cultures was decided because of the familiarity it has with people of that demographic. The dishes aren't decorative or elaborate as I wanted to focus on showcasing dishes that invoked feelings of home and comfort.

I also wanted to get away from dishes that were generally well known even if they immediately connect the culture with a certain dish because I wanted a deeper understanding of what that culture offered. It was much more interesting to look into dishes that the demographic would see as a typical lunch or dinner as it creates a more personal experience when looking through each dish

With the taste of home, the Asian American experience is emphasized through the familiar tastes and spices that remind them of their family. It's the unique experiences of a typical dish that can help bring back memories of spending time around the table, remembering the family celebrations, and experiencing once again the overwhelming feeling of comfort and love.

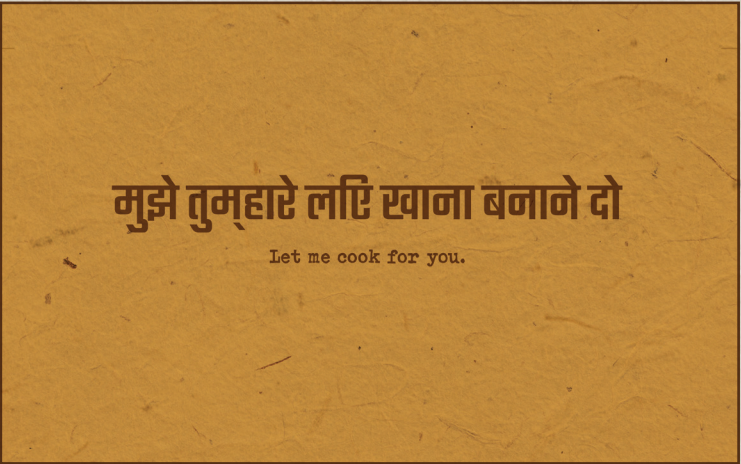


Covers

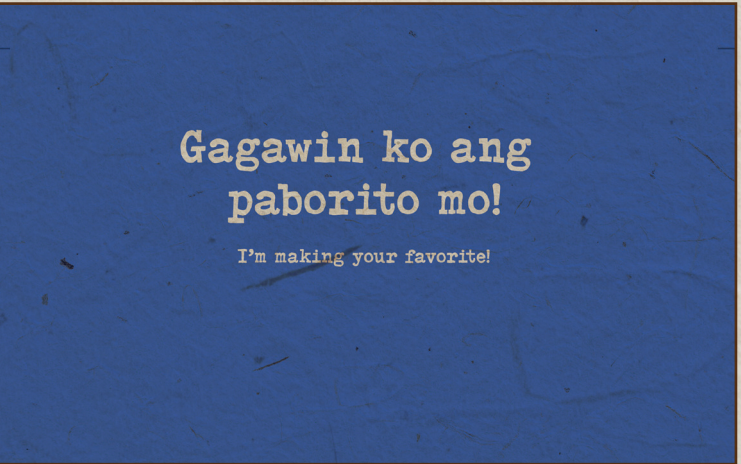
Vietnamese



Indian



Filipino



Japanese



Chinese





# Storyboards

Vietnamese – Bánh Xèo



Indian – Chicken Biryani





Filipino - Tortang Talong

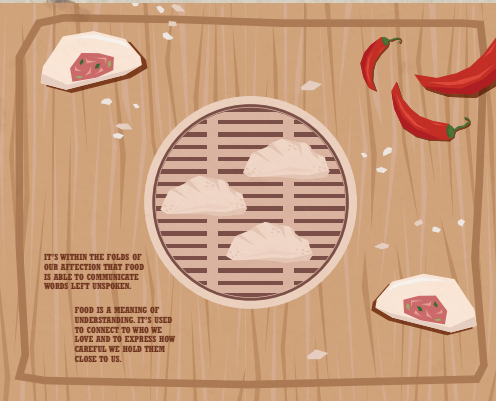


Japanese - Onigiri





Chinese - Dumplings





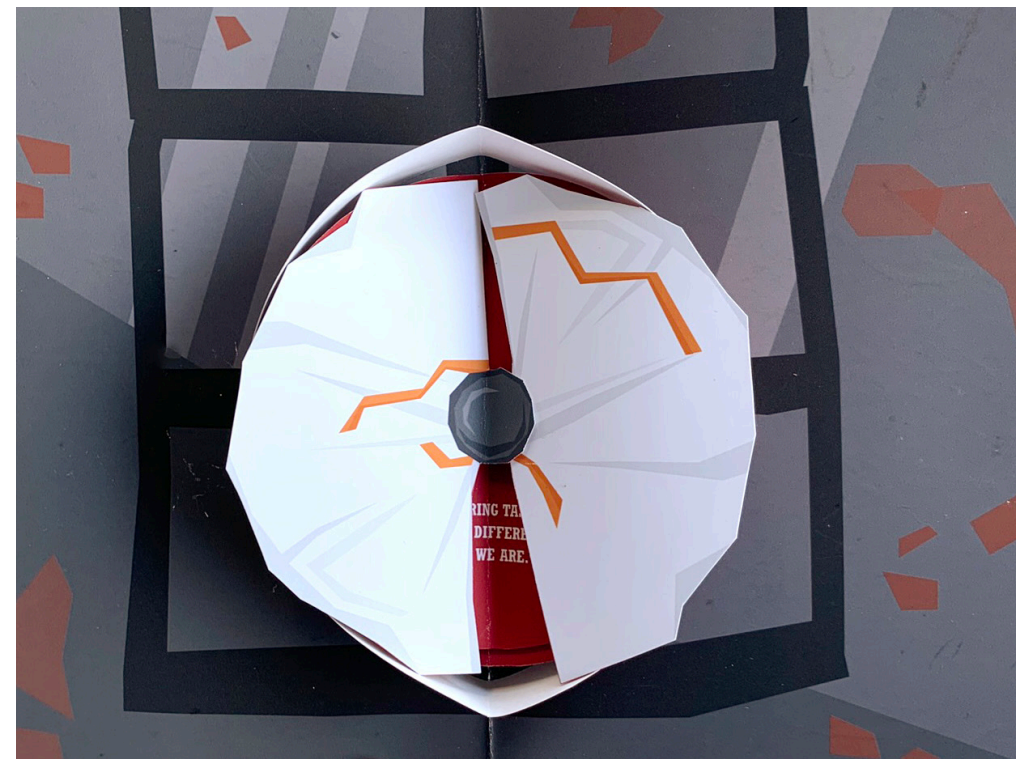
## Final Books











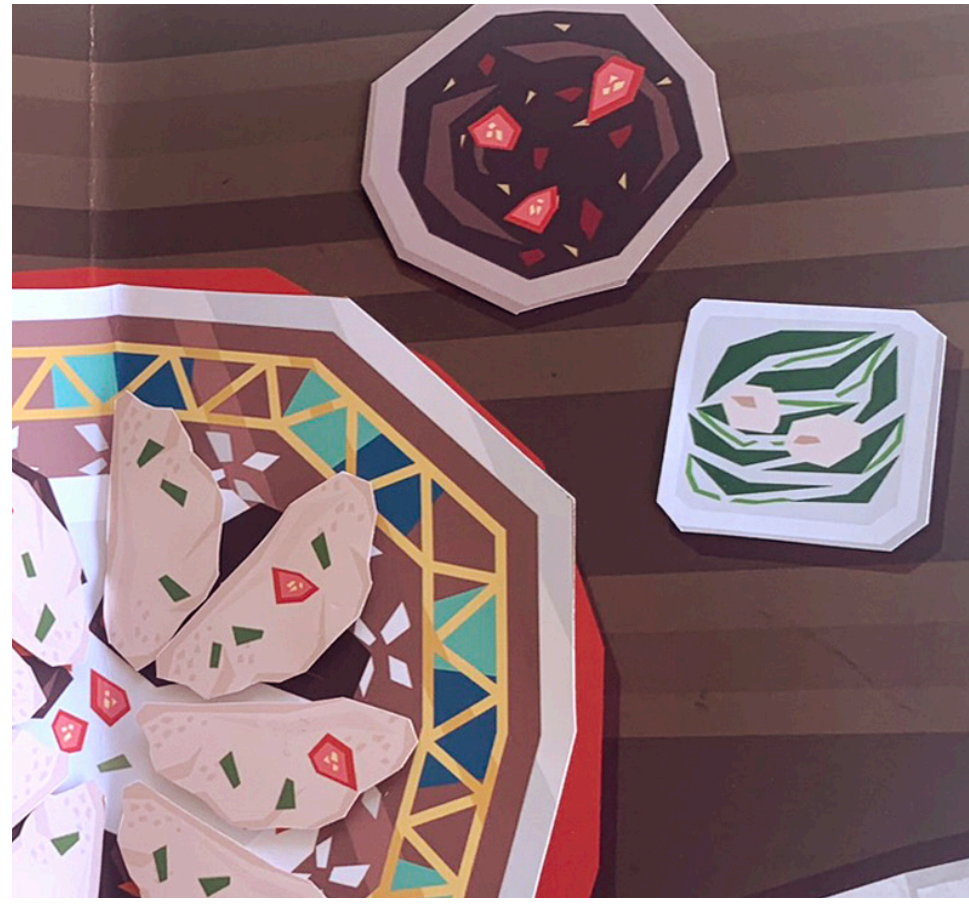


















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## Images

Finepoints. “The Texture rice paper. The background.” Adobe Stock #206767475. [https://stock.adobe.com/images/the-texture-rice-paper-the-background/106767475?prev\\_url=detail](https://stock.adobe.com/images/the-texture-rice-paper-the-background/106767475?prev_url=detail)





# Conclusion

- Reflection
- Acknowledgements
- Annotated Bibliography
- Colophon



# Reflection

As the project comes to an end, I find peace in the fact that I was able to showcase my appreciation for food through amplifying and discovering new perspectives shared among my fellow Asian Americans. It's been incredibly interesting learning about people's perspectives with their identity and seeing how food connects with them as an individual.

With love and care, I hope to have done the topic justice as it is something that I hold close to my heart. Throughout the project, I've become even more aware of my actions when it comes to preparing and thinking about food and realized just how important the small gestures can say.

Thank you to the class of 2023 for always supporting me and were there for me when I was hitting roadblocks while working on the project. You all have kept me grounded and sane in the midst of the chaos that was in my head.

# Acknowledgements



# Annotated Bibliography

Almerico, Gina M. "Food and identity: Food studies, cultural, and personal identity." Journal of international business and cultural studies 8 (2014): 1.

Though this is somewhat of surface level researching for the topic with how food affects culture and identity, reading the citations within the journal has helped polish the edges of my thesis as I have a better understanding of the general idea of food and identity. With mentions of culture as well as the symbolism within just food or traditional food, there is a story to be told within the preparation and the background of what dishes can offer. This journal also briefly mentions how food has evolved from it just being used for survival to now it being a point of enjoyment that people can thoroughly enjoy no matter where they are. Though a necessities in most cases, it's involved to a moment of serenity and togetherness if someone wishes for it to be.

Chan, Katharine. "Why I Don't 'Respect My Elders' Even Though My Immigrant Parents Made Me." Medium. Breakthrough, January 11, 2022.

As someone living in a predominantly western society, it's not wonder it's hard for people of the newer generation to connect with the older generation. I've had experiences with these moments, but seeing others voice the same thing while also providing loose research helps solidify the experience among Asian Americans. In traditional Asian culture, there's a hierarchy that's present in most cultures that most people uphold without questioning. What's so unique about the Asian American experience is that we don't seem to be tethered to that mindset, and go along with being an individual instead. With how Asian culture focuses on being a collective, the western mindset introduces the experience of discovering who you are without the need of social and cultural expectations. While there's a weight lifted off your shoulders on one hand, there's also someone's background that can affect them any which way.

Cher, Stephanie. "The Role of Silence in Asian American Families." Verywell Mind. Verywell Mind, May 23, 2022.

Understanding the psychological reasons as to why the older generations among Asian American families provides another perspective on the Asian American experience and the communication among family members. It's very common for elders to not speak their mind and use buffering indirect statements instead to communicate their point. And most times, statements won't even make it out because actions come first for them. What they do and how they do it can speak volumes to the people around them. This also connects with culture as well, with not wanting to say anything because of expectations to not cause conflict and to stick to the status quo. With the knowledge of these situations in mind, indirect questions and statements can communicate more than what's only on the surface level, especially when food is involved.

Greene, Carlita P., and Janet M. Cramer. "Beyond mere sustenance: Food as communication/communication as food." Food as communication, communication as food (2011): iv-xix.

This source mainly focuses on how food is used as a way to communicate but also goes into detail about how it can connect to someone's identity. While also providing sources from many other journals to back up their point, it covers all the corners as to how food is more than just something of a sustenance. The journal mentions tradition, religion, identity, behaviors, and more and how they all can be affected with the food that people associate with themselves. It's a helpful way to understand the fundamentals of what my thesis is based on and is easily connected with the experience that I want to talk about. My interview questions were also influenced by the research in this journal, helping me dig deeper into someone's perspective on food aside from just surface level.

Pandika, Melissa. "Why 'I Love You' Is so Elusive for Asian Immigrant Families like Mine." Mic. Mic, February 28, 2021.

It's very hard for parents or elders of an Asian American family to verbally say "I love you." to anyone in their life. In my personal experience, I can't remember the last time my parents have said the phrase to me, let alone convey that message in any way verbally. Most of the time, small gestures and moments can communicate this phrase stronger than just simple words. It's not common to say "I love you." but it is common to always provide a warm meal whenever we get the chance. This is one of the major ways that I've observed over my lifetime where this experience doesn't change and is rather emphasized as I grow older because I understand the nuances of these actions. With this understanding, my thesis is more fleshed out as to how I see the importance of preparing food for loved ones.

Saxena, Jaya. "The Limits of the Lunchbox Moment." Eater. Eater, February 8, 2021. <https://www.eater.com/22239499/lunchbox-moment-pop-culture-tropes>.

After learning about what the "Lunchbox Moment" means, I've found a new perspective on the Asian American experience and how they view food. With food being able to influence a person's identity, this situation can be a major part of someone's life when they were growing up. Especially if people grew up around people who aren't Asian, it's hard to connect with them when they look at you so differently for what you brought to school. It's almost a universal experience among Asian Americans experiencing some for of this moment, and whenever it happens it almost always ends with being embarrassed or ashamed with your culture even when you don't mean to be.



Thomson, Julie R. “Psychologists Explain Why Food Memories Can Feel so Powerful.” HuffPost. HuffPost, May 10, 2017.

Food can leave a lasting impression on someone that can be carried throughout their whole life. It’s the simple gestures that can shape us into who we are today and how we define ourselves with our perspective on food. It’s an incredibly powerful way to connect with someone because of all the associations that come with experiencing food. The smells, the visuals, the tastes, the company. It’s a collective moment that can’t quite be defined by words alone but the experience is almost universal with how people enjoy gathering around their loved ones. Food doesn’t even need to be enjoyable for it to be memorable too, as just the strong feelings can invoke strong emotions that could stay with you forever. It’s almost like a tangible memory with how people can remembering all the features of the certain moment. It’s what makes food so special, whether it be for good or worse there’s always something that can come out of it.

# Colophon

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BFA Graphic Design Program  
San José State University  
One Washington Square  
San Jose, CA  
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