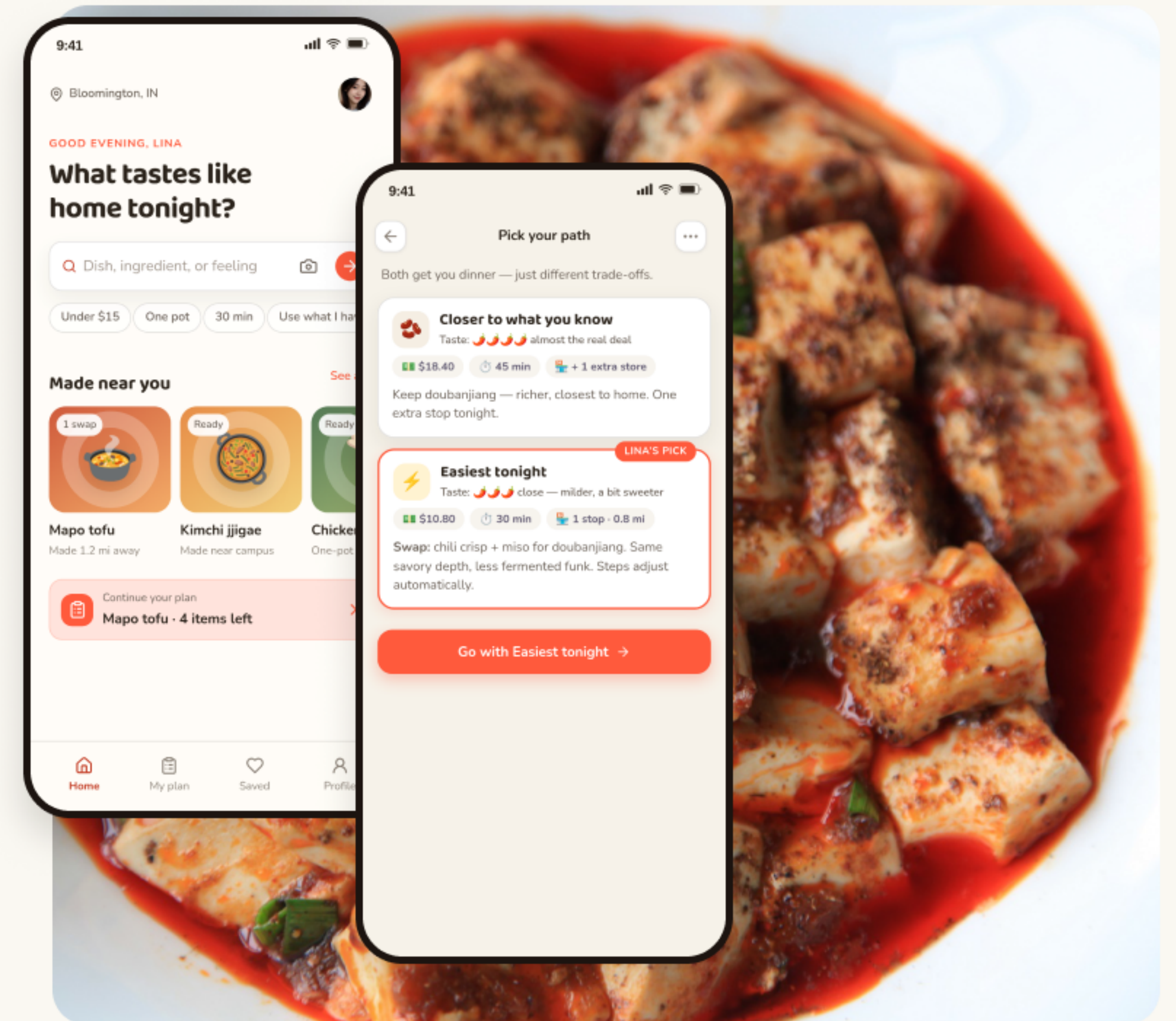


HOMEKIND

Make a little bit of home, wherever you are.

An international food companion that adapts one familiar meal to the store, budget, and kitchen available tonight.



A FAMILIAR DINNER BECAME A CHAIN OF GUESSES

COMPOSITE PERSONA

LOCATION	Bloomington, IN
KITCHEN	Shared · one flat pan, no wok
STORE	Walmart Supercenter · 0.8 mi
BUDGET	Under \$15 tonight
DISH	麻婆豆腐 / Mapo tofu

Saturday, 8:00 p.m. Lina wants mapo tofu. She has \$15, one flat pan, and a Walmart 0.8 miles away. When the plan is not obvious in a minute, dinner becomes cereal.

Lina combines recurring constraints observed across four participant journeys.



THE BREAKDOWN

She knows the dish. She does not know what Walmart calls doubanjiang, which jar will work, or how dinner changes without it.

I FOLLOWED OTHER STUDENTS INTO THEIR DINNER

RESEARCH SAMPLE

4
STUDENTS

04 HOME CUISINES

03 METHODS

01 SETTING

College town. No international supermarket.
Ordinary Walmart as the default store.

WHO I SPOKE WITH



P1

Chinese home cooking, no car, shared kitchen, Mapo tofu



P2

Korean, kimchi jjigae, shops with a friend



P3

Filipino, chicken adobo, one-pot weeknights



P4

Indian, dal tadka, dorm electric burner

HOW I LEARNED

1:1 INTERVIEWS

Last time they craved a home dish and what broke.

GROCERY WALKTHROUGHS

Walmart with the ingredient list in hand.

COOK-ALONGS

Make the dish with only what they actually own.

CORE QUESTION

When a familiar dish feels impossible here, what would make someone actually start tonight?

DINNER FAILED AT FOUR HANDOFFS

Each unanswered question made the next decision harder to trust.



AI-GENERATED SCENARIO ILLUSTRATION

01 **NAME IT**

The grocery term was not always the name they knew. Search could fail before the store did.

02 **FIND IT**

The aisle and package did not match the ingredient in their head.

03 **SWAP IT**

Substitutes existed, but participants could not tell what would happen to heat, funk, or texture.

04 **COOK IT**

The original recipe still assumed the original ingredient, pan, and technique.

THREE SIGNALS FROM FOUR STUDENT JOURNEYS

These exploratory findings informed the concept. They describe this small sample, not all international students.

Exploratory study · n = 4 · counts are descriptive, not population estimates

3 of 4 participants

Abandoned a home dish over ingredients

Three participants had recently stopped before cooking because a key flavor base felt unavailable.

1 of 4 participants

Could name it on a US package

The others relied on package color, photos, or trial and error.

3 of 4 participants

Would accept a swap if told how taste changes

They did not need an identical result. They needed an honest explanation of the difference.

Design response: identify the ingredient, explain the trade-off, and carry the choice into the cooking steps.

THE DESIGN QUESTION CHANGED

How might we help international students adapt a familiar meal to the store, budget, equipment, and cooking skills available tonight?

The research moved the problem from recipe discovery to feasibility. Participants needed the constraints resolved before committing to the dish.

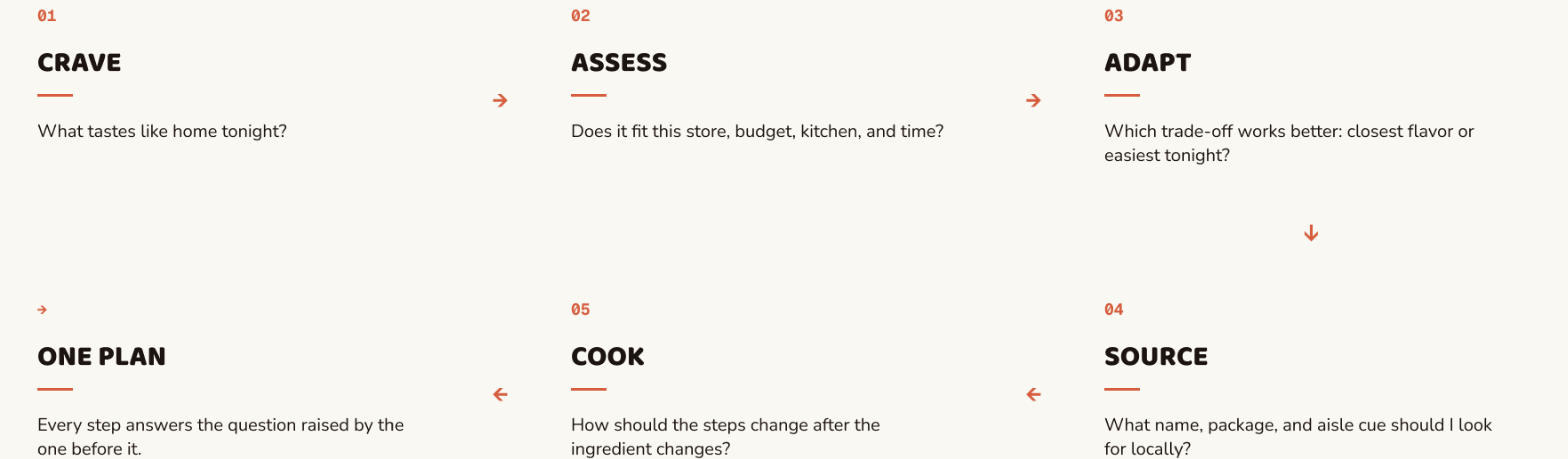


A RECIPE EXPLAINS THE METHOD

HOMEKIND CHECKS THE CONDITIONS

Ordinary recipes answer how. Homekind first answers whether.

A RECIPE NEEDED TO BECOME A PLAN FOR TONIGHT



The product is the connected plan, not the recipe collection.

WHY CHECK CONDITIONS BEFORE OFFERING A SWAP?

CONCEPT COMPARISON · DEVELOPED IN THIS REVISION · SEPTEMBER 2026

A · DIRECT SUBSTITUTE

Mapo tofu → Recipe → Suggested swap

Missing doubanjiang?
Use chili crisp + white miso.

BENEFIT

Fewer decisions for someone who already knows their constraints.

TRADE-OFF

Leaves the user to check cost, equipment and flavor consequences separately.

B · CONDITIONS FIRST · CURRENT DIRECTION

Mapo tofu → Check fit → Choose a path

Closer to what you know
Easiest tonight

BENEFIT

Explains the effort and flavor trade-off before the user commits to shopping.

TRADE-OFF

Adds a decision step. We still need to test whether the two options are understood.

Chosen for the concept: make the trade-off explicit. Next test: can users explain and choose a path without help?

ONE DISH MADE THE SYSTEM CONCRETE

AI-GENERATED ADAPTATION SCENARIO



TONIGHT'S CONSTRAINTS

Walmart · under \$15 · one flat pan · no doubanjiang

The concept connects ingredient choices to adapted instructions; cooking validation is still needed.

PROPOSED RECIPE · NOT COOK-TESTED

1 tbsp doubanjiang
↓
1 tbsp chili crisp + 2 tsp white miso

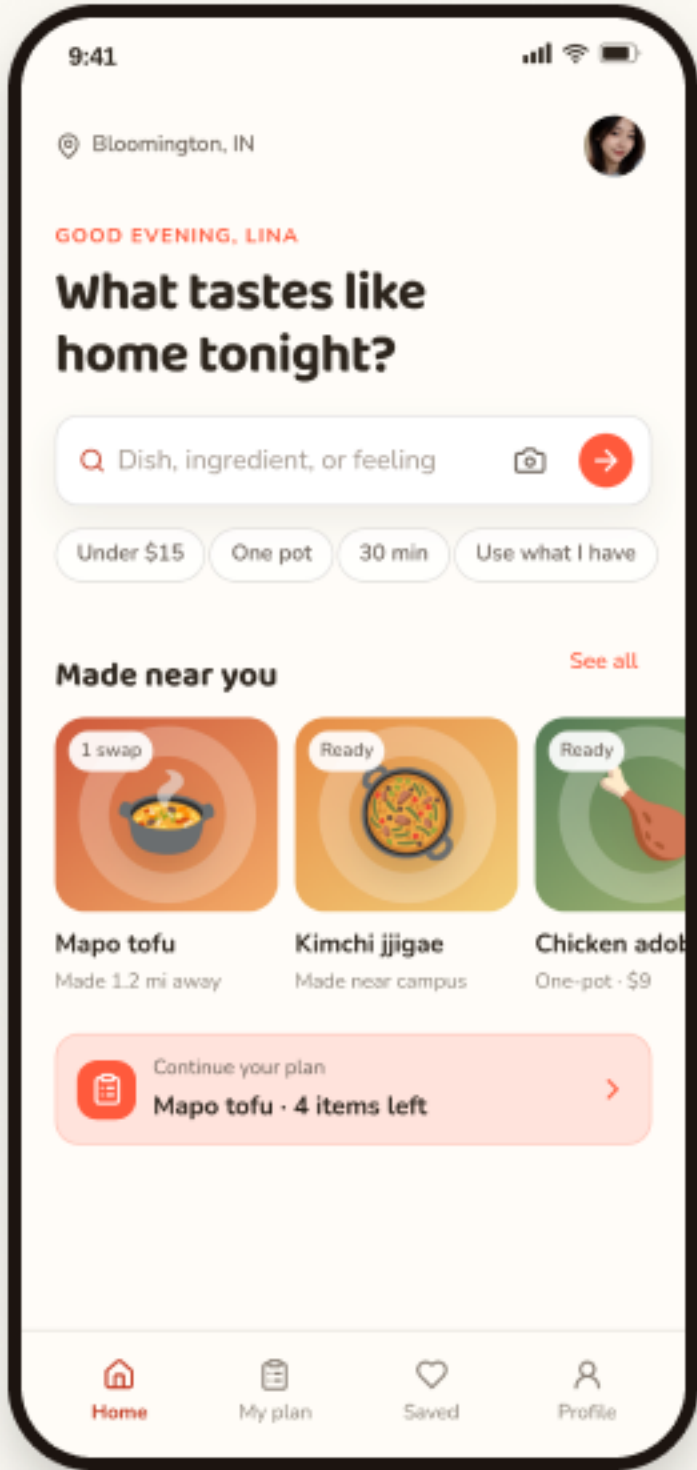
FLAVOR HYPOTHESES TO TEST

May add more chili-oil aroma and sweetness.
Fermented bean flavor may be less pronounced.
Heat will depend on the chili crisp used.

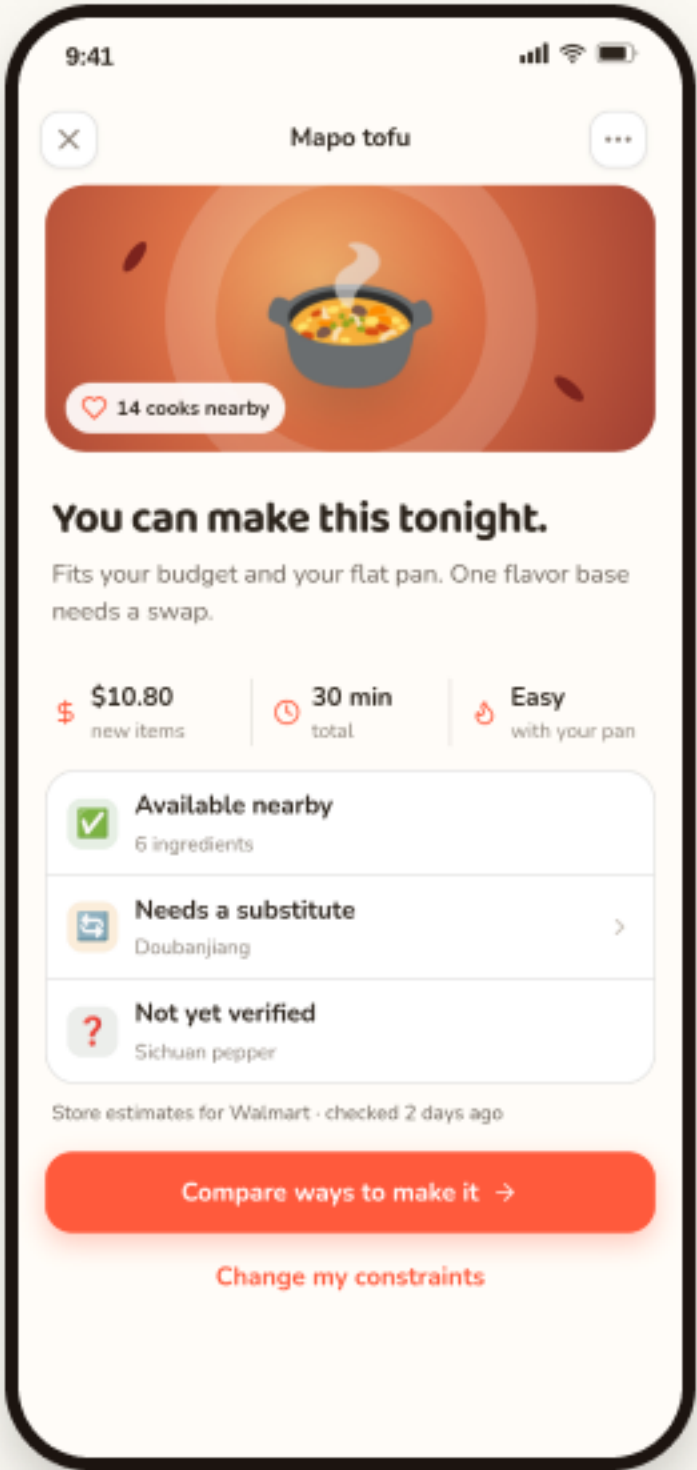
Compare both recipes before making flavor or timing claims.

FEASIBILITY COMES BEFORE THE RECIPE

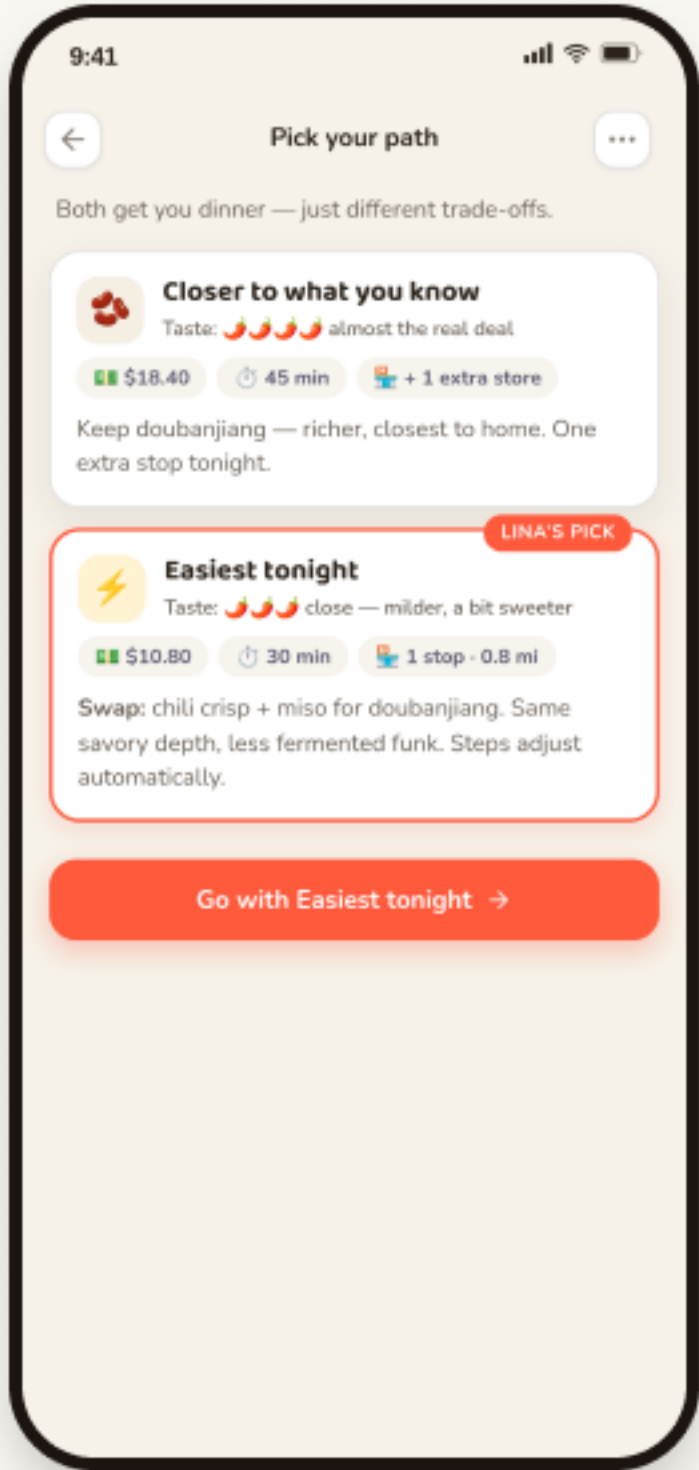
MOBILE EXPERIENCE ·
DECIDE
Homekind first checks whether the dish fits Lina's store, budget, equipment, and time. Only then does it ask which trade-off she wants.



01 CRAVE
Mapo tofu, tonight



02 ASSESS
Possible with one change



03 ADAPT
Closest flavor or easiest tonight

The first decision is whether to begin.

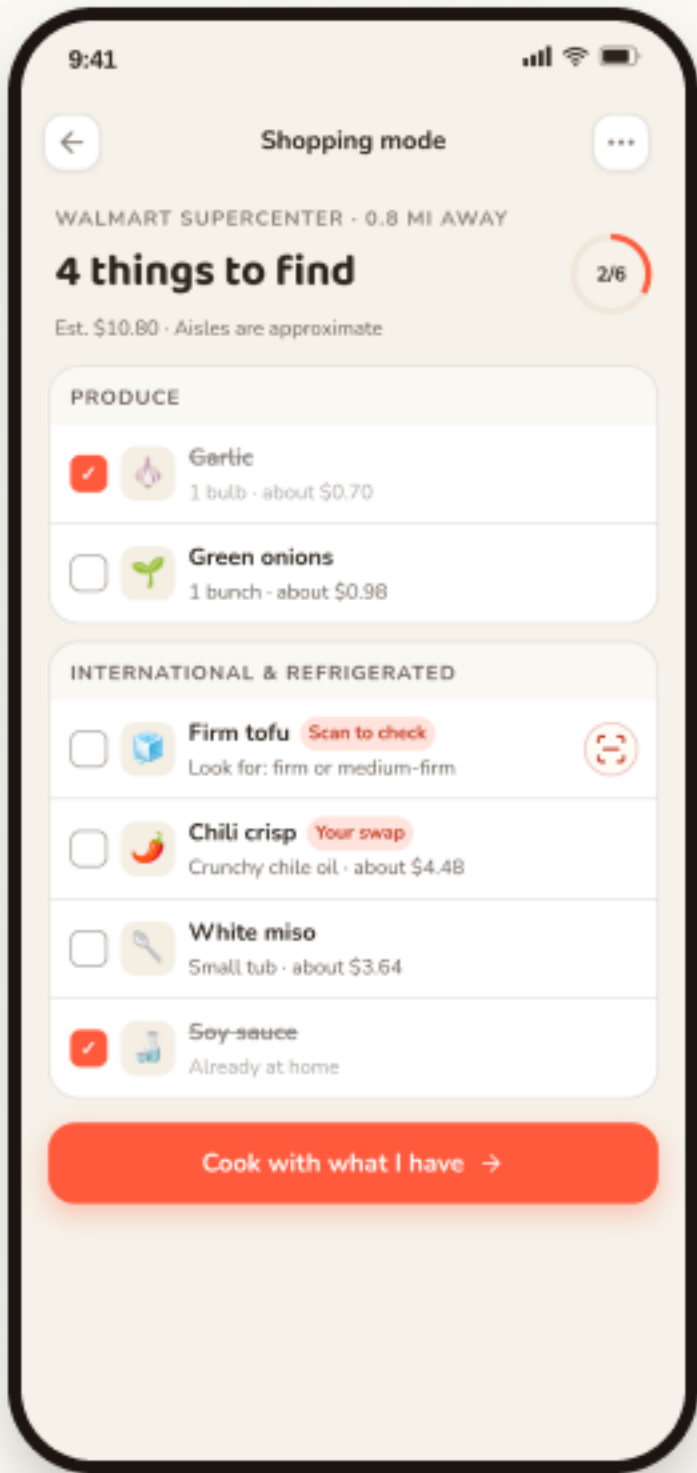
THE AISLE NEEDED TO SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF THE DISH

MOBILE EXPERIENCE ·
SOURCE

Lina chose the chili crisp + white miso path. The list now includes those ingredients. Here, she checks which firm tofu fits the same dish.



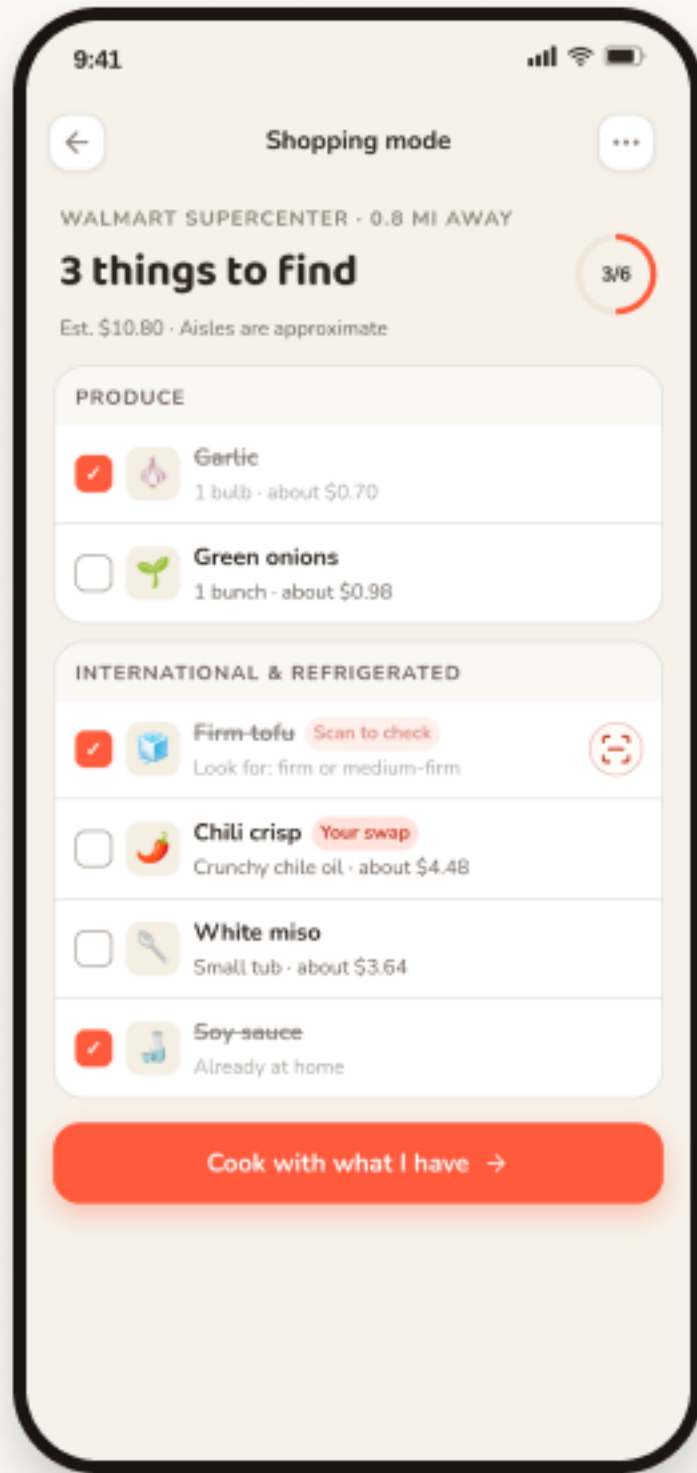
AI-GENERATED AISLE SCENARIO



01 FIND
Shop the adapted ingredient list



02 CHECK
Scan firm tofu for recipe suitability

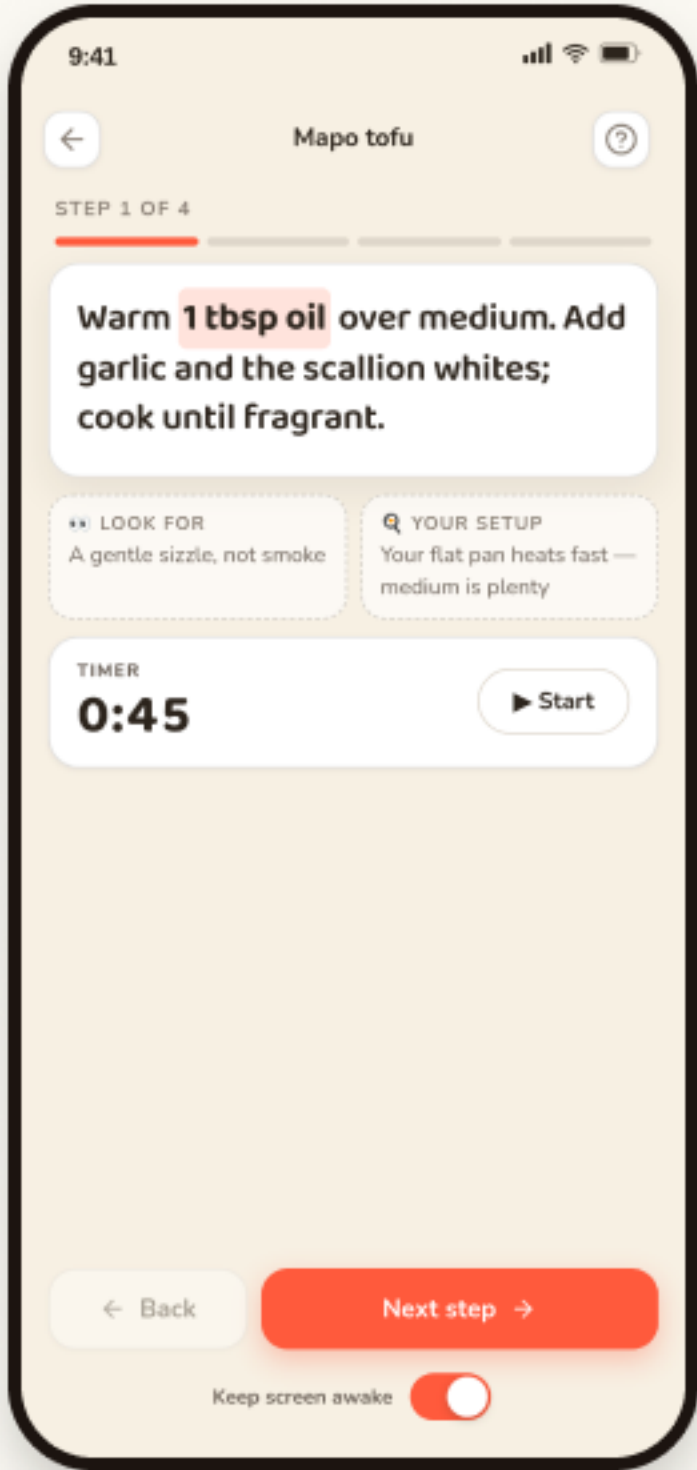


03 ADD
Add tofu; three items remain

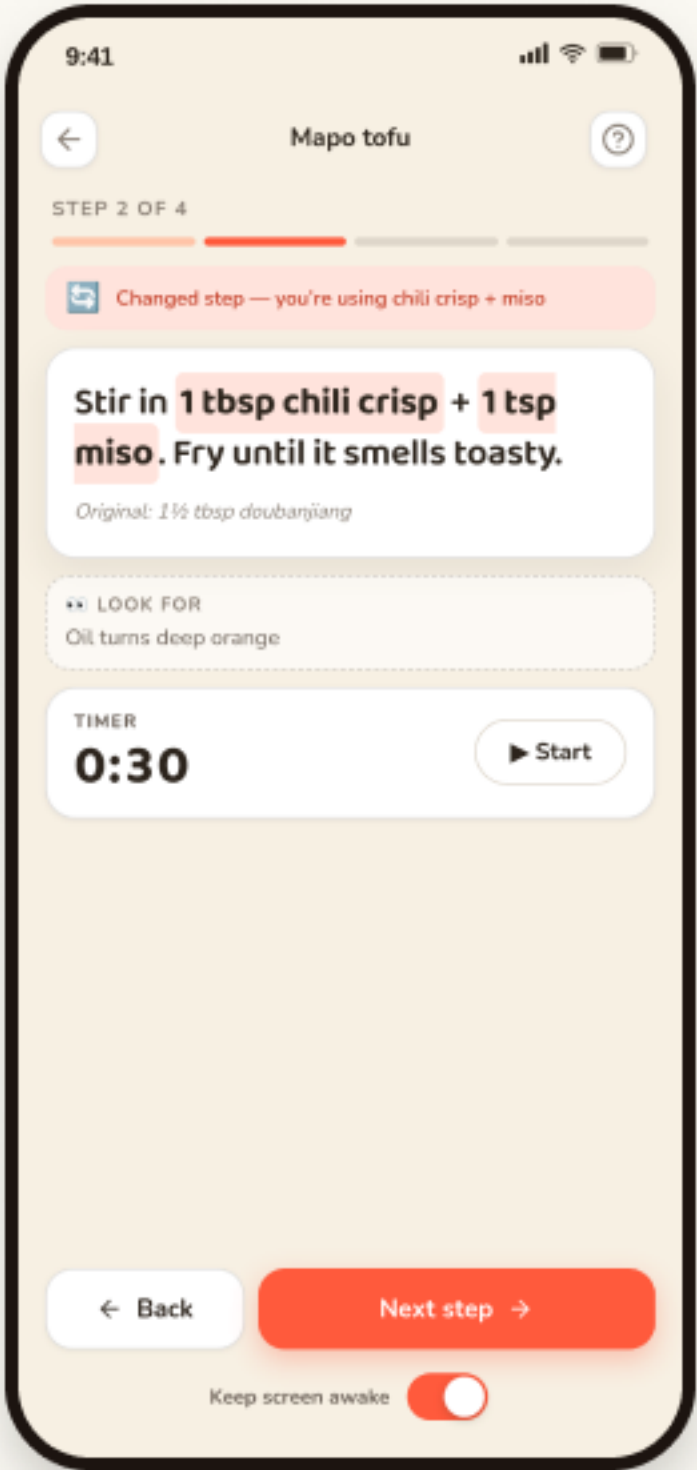
Scanning checks recipe suitability in this prototype; prices and store availability are illustrative.

THE STEPS SHOULD FOLLOW THE SWAP

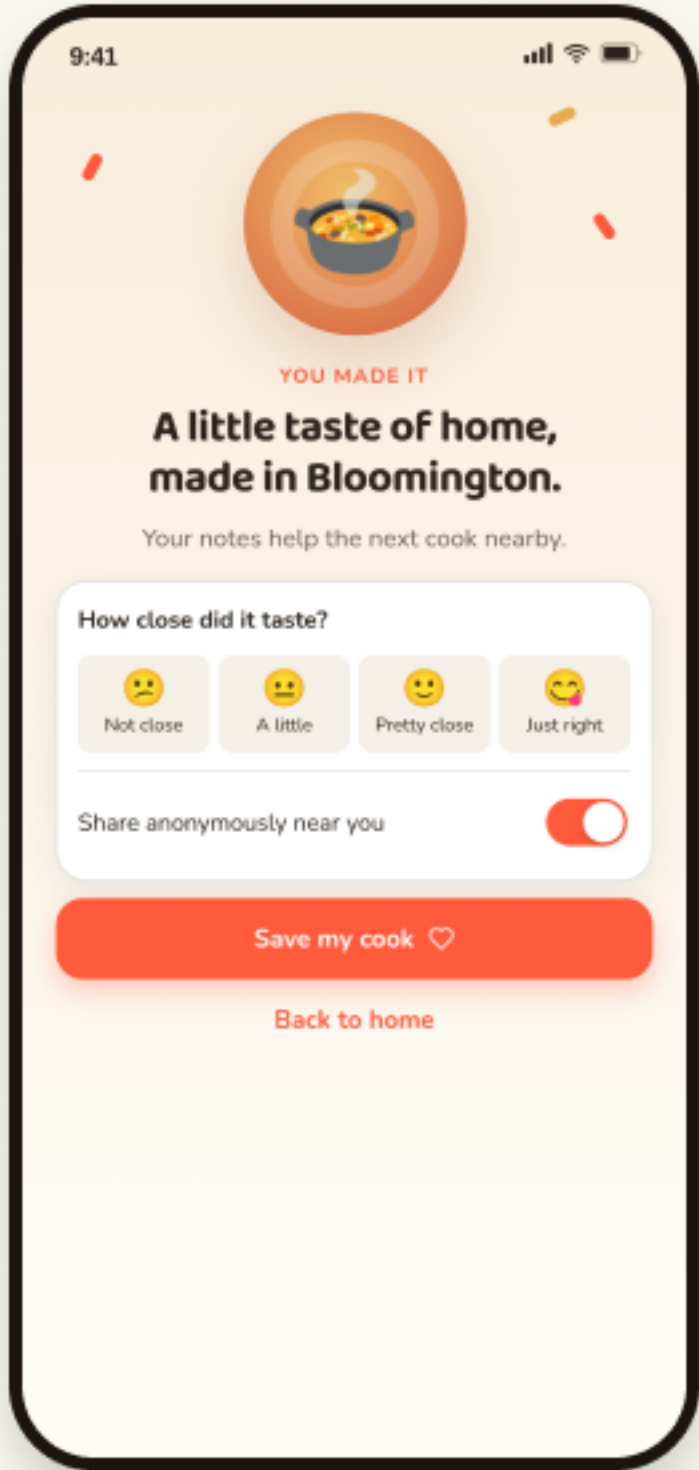
MOBILE EXPERIENCE ·
COOK
Lina chose chili crisp and miso. The cook flow takes her through preparation, the adapted step, and a reflection on the finished dish.



01 PREPARE
Warm the oil and cook the aromatics



02 ADAPTED STEP
Follow the chili crisp + miso instruction



03 RESULT
Reflect on the dish and save this cook

The selected substitution updates the instructions. Quantities and timing still need a real cooking trial.

TEST THE CORE LOOP BEFORE BUILDING A BIGGER APP

PLANNED VALIDATION • NOT YET RUN

01 Can someone tell in 30 seconds if tonight is possible?

Recruit 3–5 target users. Ask them to choose a feasible dinner. Record time, wrong assumptions and requests for help.

02 Can someone explain the two paths and the taste trade-off?

Ask users to explain both paths and why they chose one. Record whether they understand effort, ingredients and expected flavor differences.

03 Can someone follow the adapted steps without guessing?

Observe quantities, order and points of hesitation. Run a separate cooking trial to check taste and timing. Confidence ratings are secondary.

Use observed confusion to revise one interaction, then repeat the task. Report findings only after the sessions.

HOMEKIND MADE UNCERTAINTY PART OF THE DESIGN

REFLECTION

I began with a recipe companion. Research moved the project toward a decision system that resolves constraints before asking someone to cook.

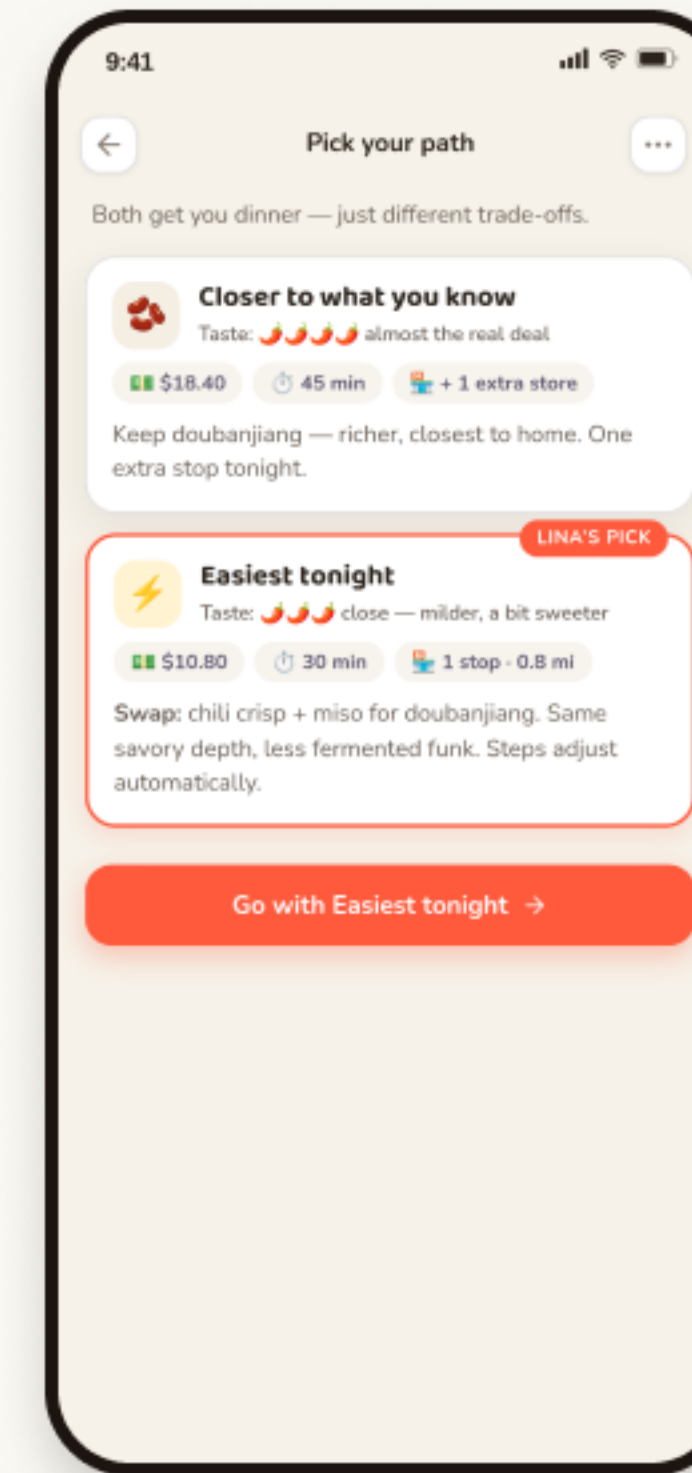
WHAT CHANGED

Substitution became part of the complete journey, not a note beneath the ingredient list.

WHAT REMAINS

The core interaction still needs usability testing. The taste language also needs comparison across more dishes and cuisines.

A little bit of home needs an honest plan for the ingredients you can actually find.



Current prototype

Two explicit paths make the effort and flavor trade-off visible before shopping.

This is the current design direction; user preference has not been validated.

NEXT

Test the current path choice and adapted steps. Compare the recipe in a real kitchen. Revise the points where users hesitate.