MenYou

Needfinding Report

Meet the Team!

Joseph Ngo

‘24
Fox Lake, IL

Faith Zhang

‘24
San Diego, CA

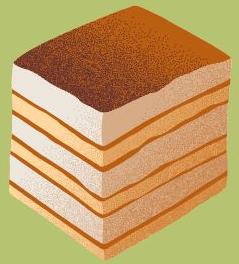
Kaitlin Peng

‘24
Naperville, IL

Melissa Lee

‘24
Sunnyvale, CA

Domain Selection

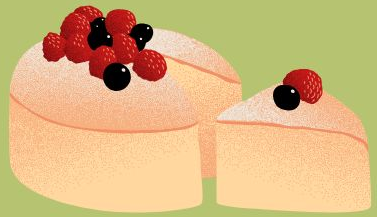


Can it be fixed?

EATING

what is an everyday struggle we face?

is this a universal experience?



Looking for Participants

Everyday people

Diversity

Those with allergies / dietary restrictions

Who We Spoke to

Ophny / Jenna

Couple
52 y/o, 51 y/o
Palo Alto, CA

Jason

Student
21 y/o
Cupertino, CA

Gustavo

Gott's Roadside
Assistant General Manager

Guiding Questions

	Everyday People
☑	Can you walk me through a typical dining experience?
☑	How do you currently discover and decide on specific dishes to order when dining out?
☑	How do you go about deciding where to eat and what to order?
☑	How do images of food contribute to your decision-making process?
☑	Do you have any dietary preferences or restrictions? How do these impact your dining choices?
☑	What would make your ordering experience even better?

Interviewer: Faith
Notetaker: Melissa
Tools: Otter.ai (transcription)

Ophny / Jenna

“Foodies” | 40 min. in person interview at Town and Country

“So you can read reviews and reviews... but it's a crapshoot”

Ophny + Jenna

Says

"So you can read reviews and reviews [...] it's a crapshoot, but it's fun. It's fun to do"

"We usually go with like specials"

"We're not young, we're in our 50s. So we know enough, we've seen it. We've been around long enough to know that we like what we like"

"We have an Amex platinum, so they book us stuff if we ever really need help."

"It's kind of like the wave of the future" (referring to membership clubs)

"We read Eater in every area that we go to"

"I always wonder, are they just saying that because if I had picked anything else on the menu, what would they have said?" (referring to asking bartenders for recommendations)

Ophny hates the term "foodies"

"I don't want to have to call to make sure they're coming out. Are they going to come or you know, whatever. What time we have to make a reservation... we just go and we sit down. And that's what we call a good experience."

"they're opening a sushi restaurant that's really **exclusive**"

"we dine out often, almost every night"

"We're not always motivated by reviews. Like if we're in an area and we want to try something we go anyways. Because we're willing to do it."

"15 types of wagyu and they all had certificates"

"Sometimes we'll go to LA or New York to try different things"

"Yes, that's our go to and we just become regulars at the bar"

"I think just from growing up from knowing I mean, those are word of mouth. You don't see them on Instagram" (referring to hole in the walls)

Thinks

While they frequently ask for recommendations from the bartender, they question when they say x is their favorite if it's actually their favorite.

They believe the best service is offered at the bar because you develop a more personal relationship with the bartender

Dining out is an integral part of their relationship, and is a shared experience they prioritize

Read reviews and think they matter, even if they don't always follow review recommendations

The best dishes are found through trial and error

Price of food doesn't really matter if they know that the service is going to be good

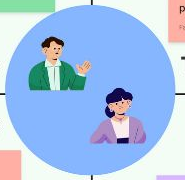
Dining out is an intimate experience which is why they appreciate keeping the details of their meals private

They have eaten and experienced so much food that they usually trust their own opinions over others' reviews

The best restaurant experiences are often found in flashy areas (Las Vegas, New York, LA)

They think about **optimizing** their dining experiences by carefully researching restaurants and menus in advance

The couple trusts restaurant recommendations the most, and will always try the "chef's specials"



Does

Rarely leave reviews but read them a lot

Don't really ask others for restaurant recommendations; they're the ones who venture out

Love taking photos of food but avoid posting them online -- like to keep their lives private

Enjoy trying new restaurants and always trying to stay on top of what's open and new in the area

Use different membership programs (e.g. Dorsia, Cita) to pay to get reservations

Buy into "pay-to-play" frameworks where they purchase a reservation online prior to the meal

Order with the intention of sharing their food with each other

Occasionally posts food photos on IG, thinks it would be cool to have photos posted on Bay Area Buzz

Both were very eager to talk about food

Go back to restaurants that don't have the best food if the service is good

Rely on digital tools like *Eater, Bay Area Buzz,* etc

Love to provide restaurant recommendations when asked, but hesitant to share online to strangers

Like to read reviews about what to order but usually order based on their own opinions

Feels

Sometimes skeptical about recs from the restaurant but still usually listen

Feels it's a hassle eating with a larger group of people

Ophny takes pride in the photos he takes

Love eating out often because of the whole dining experience

Feel more satisfied with restaurant experience when the people and service are good rather than when the food is good

Adventurous and enthusiastic about their dining experiences, as they frequently dine out to explore new restaurants and join exclusive "foodie" communities

Disappointed by food recommendation apps in the past and are pleased with the ones they have settled on now

Jenna is motivated by the chance to try good food to accompany Ophny on trips she's not the most interested in

Most captivated by a dining experience's ambiance and the conversations they have with waiters / bartenders / other patrons

Sometimes feel misled by online reviews

Confident in their own food opinions

Ophny + Jenna

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"We read Eater everywhere we go"

Melissa Lee

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Faith Zhang

Read reviews and

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Rarely leave reviews but read them a lot

Don't really ask

Love taking photos of food but avoid

Enjoy trying new restaurants and always trying to stay on top of what's open and new in the area

Use different membership programs (e.g. Dorsia, Cita) t... to get reserva...

Order with the intention of sharing their food with each other

Occasionally posts food photos on IG, thinks it would be cool to have photos posted on Bay Area Buzz

Enjoys taking photos but never knows what to do with them

Melissa Lee

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good

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Adventurous and enthusiastic about their dining experiences, as they frequently dine out to explore new restaurants and join exclusive "foodie" communities

Most captivated by a dining experience's ambiance and the conversations they have with waiters / bartenders / other patrons

Confident in their own food opinions

insights

Food enthusiasts are picky about what they choose from a menu, and **even more selective** about the tools they use to help them decide.

need

People need a way to easily combine restaurant recommendations, fan favorites, and personal preferences **all into one**.

insights

Restaurant recommendations are valued, but customers may sometimes be **skeptical** of the bias and intent behind the recommendation.

need

People want to receive personalized expert recommendations in a **transparent and objective** manner.

Interviewer: Faith
Tools: Otter.ai (transcription)

Jason

Stanford student with many allergies | 40 min. in person interview at Tresidder

"If I tend to not eat a lot from a restaurant, it just becomes less memorable"

Jason

Says

"I would say I dine out like twice a week"
Kaitlin Peng

(Talking about Panda Express) "I like how I can see the foods. I'm like, okay, I want that"
Kaitlin Peng

"I like stalls too, because they highlight the food and you can kind of pick what you want, and have like a tangible image of it"
Kaitlin Peng

"I am allergic to eggs, soy, shellfish, and nuts"
Kaitlin Peng

"I think it's when they don't have that like the little symbol indicating whether or not they have nuts or eggs is what really deters me"
Kaitlin Peng

"I don't think I'm that careful when it comes to selecting food"
Kaitlin Peng

"I like to order the same thing every time"
Kaitlin Peng

I went to a few restaurants where something's already pre made, so they weren't able to extract it. So I kind of understand from a logistics standpoint, like they can't really take things out"
Kaitlin Peng

"If I'm in a new location, I want to try like the best thing nearby"
Kaitlin Peng

"If I tend to not eat a lot from a restaurant, it just becomes less memorable. So I just tend to not go to restaurants that I have those experiences with"
Kaitlin Peng

"I'm always very, very receptive to try new restaurants, like I go onto Yelp all the time"
Kaitlin Peng

Usually asks to substitute ingredients but has still gotten allergic reactions for something that was supposed to be substituted
Kaitlin Peng

Very passionate when talking about bad pizza from restaurant in Jackson Hole (expensive vacation spot)
Kaitlin Peng

"It's like a whole social thing where I'm like, oh, sorry, like I have these allergens. And it's like a little bit of that confrontation. So I try to avoid that."
Kaitlin Peng

Thinks

Nicer areas should have better food/ service
Kaitlin Peng

Menu photos are a big factor in deciding where to eat
Kaitlin Peng

Being able to tangibly see menu item makes him desire it more
Faith Zhang

it's exciting to be able to explore new restaurants and the best food in the area
Faith Zhang

It's easier to just avoid cuisines w his allergens all together
Faith Zhang

A bad experience needs to be shared publicly on reviews
Faith Zhang

Rating and pictures are the most important
Faith Zhang

Hidden allergen info deters him from ordering or going to a restaurant
Faith Zhang

Feelings and who he's with also impact what he orders
Faith Zhang

most restaurants are good with substituting ingredients
Faith Zhang

Does

When going to new restaurants, still tends to eat dishes he's more familiar with
Kaitlin Peng

Tends to visit restaurants he's already familiar with
Kaitlin Peng

Doesn't use many digital tools to discover restaurants, mostly discovers them through word of mouth
Kaitlin Peng

Looks at review photos a lot when deciding where to eat
Kaitlin Peng

When looking for new restaurants to try, first focuses on those that have a rating of 4+
Kaitlin Peng

Eats chicken base dishes a lot more than other kinds of dishes
Kaitlin Peng

Tends to avoid certain cuisines like Thai food because of nut allergy
Kaitlin Peng

When people post food on Instagram that looks good and tag the location, he adds the location to his list of places to try
Kaitlin Peng

Frequents restaurants that have little to no nuts on their menu as a whole
Kaitlin Peng

Checks restaurants' menus on Yelp before going
Kaitlin Peng

Doesn't normally leave reviews, but if he does he only leaves bad reviews
Kaitlin Peng

Tends to order food that have pictures more than food that doesn't
Kaitlin Peng

Takes photos of food and will post on Instagram if it's really good
Kaitlin Peng

Feels

Relieved when restaurants have allergen information for items online
Kaitlin Peng

Visuals highly impact his menu-selection decisions
Faith Zhang

Very disappointed by pizza restaurant experience in Jackson Hole
Kaitlin Peng

experimental with restaurant specialities
Faith Zhang

More adventurous with new restaurants but less adventurous with new food
Kaitlin Peng

Slightly uncomfortable when asking waiter what ingredients are in menu item
Faith Zhang

Somewhat uncomfortable with trying out new restaurants
Kaitlin Peng

Inclined to post bad reviews because good experience normalize and average out
Faith Zhang

Frustrated by the additional efforts he has to put in if allergen info is not super transparent
Faith Zhang

Generally accomodated for at restaurants
Faith Zhang

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Nicer areas should have better food/ service

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it's unnecessary to leave reviews unless it was a bad experience

Melissa Lee

Feelings and who he's with also impact what he orders

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Relieved when restaurants have allergen information for items online

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Visuals highly impact his menu-selection decisions

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Likes being experimental but also plays it safe with restaurants because of fear

Melissa Lee

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insights

People with dietary restrictions may want to explore unfamiliar foods but can be **uncomfortable confronting** a waiter about their dietary needs.

need

People want to feel **confident** exploring new foods and be able to easily access information about the menu items.

insights

Pictures and visuals play a large role in a customer's **decision-making** process when selecting a menu item.

need

People want to make **informed choices** that will guarantee **satisfaction** with their menu choices.

Guiding Questions

Domain Expert	
☑	How do you go about designing your menu?
☑	What are the most common factors that customers consider when selecting items from your menu?
☑	Can you walk me through a typical customer ordering experience?
☑	How does your restaurant process customer feedback?
☑	In what ways do you think the customer order experience could be improved?

Interviewer: Joe
Notetaker: Kaitlin
Tools: Otter.ai (transcription)

Gustavo

Assistant General Manager |
30 min. in person interview at
Gott's Roadside

> "Most people usually think about the price then look if it's organic"

Gustavo

Says

"We don't really respond to Yelp, we respond more to website submissions"

"The menu has remained the same since I started here"

"The culinary director makes sure we get new specials every month or two"

"Menu has basically remained the same since I started here"

"People use it to order online, sit down & start working, then go up to pick up the food when they're notified it's ready"

"Mostly young people" use the digital menu

"Most people usually think about the price then look if it's organic, but it mostly just depends on their mood

"Customize recommendations to each person"

"We have a physical allergy book that lists every potential allergy in an item"

"POS system tells what customers ordered and how long it's been since they ordered it"

Thinks

Customers have all the information they need to make the right decision about what to order

Yelp doesn't provide an honest picture of customer reviews. Those submitted to the website are better.

Trusting the culinary director is what has worked for us in the past, so why change it?

People with allergies are well-accommodated already, no changes have to be made on our end

Customers are happy enough with server recommendations and the provided samples

Offering samples is a good way to give recommendations

All restaurants should properly accommodate those with allergies/dietary restrictions

Gift cards and other forms of compensation are the best ways to please unsatisfied customers

Gustavo thinks that Google reviews and yelp are less important than reviews through website

Even with customer feedback, the menu should stay the same

Does

Menu specials are dependent on seasonal ingredients

Gott's has a physical allergy book that lists every potential allergy in a menu item

Gott's uses the book to give recommendations to people w dietary requests

People use digital menu to order online, sit down and work, and the pick up their food

Prioritizes reviews submitted through the website over Yelp reviews

Collects customer feedback through Yelp and website

Reviews person notifies location if particularly good or bad review shows up

Will customize recommendations to each person

Will give compensation in form of gift card for unhappy customers

Offered Joe and Kaitlin something to drink for free after the interview

Never looks at ratings or reviews from Google

Feels

Confident in culinary director's choices

Unbothered by negative customer feedback

Satisfied with current ordering / recommendation system

Hesitant to adopt new apps / digital systems because current setup is functional

Obligated to help customer choose what to get

Comfortable with the workflow of the kitchen

Happy to talk to customers about their experience

Happy to see families and regulars enjoy the food

Responsible for anything that might go wrong during his shift

Proud that he was able to become a manager within 2 years

Gustavo

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Happy to talk to customers about their experience

Sense of responsibility for customer's experience

Faith Zhang

Proud that he was able to become a manager within 2 years

insights

People in the food service industry feel a strong **sense of responsibility** for the customer's experience.

need

Workers want **comprehensive guidelines and feedback** to ensure positive customer experiences.

Key Learnings

Selective Decision-Making

Customers often weight a multitude of different factors when making their menu choices.

Discovery + Exploration

Transparency

Experience

Dining is an **Experience** that is shaped by more than just the quality or taste of the food.

Personalization

Digital Influence

Next Steps

- Continue interviewing a diverse range of people
- Continue analyzing and synthesizing interview data
- Narrow down problem domain within dining experiences
- Define specific problem statements

Thank You!

Appendix

(Additional Picture Artifacts)

Ophny + Jenna

Environment of interview

Gustavo

Environment of interview

Gott's Menu