

# Learning to Cook

An ethnographic study of how three hobbyists cook for themselves

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# Introduction

Cooking is a ubiquitous activity, yet preferences, practices, and skill levels vary widely among practitioners. Studying cooking as a hobby can ultimately improve understanding of what makes cooking pleasurable, how skills are acquired, and what it means to be a hobbyist. This qualitative study of three cooking hobbyists aims to provide insight to the research question “how do cooking hobbyists acquire and maintain skills?” While the related data could be used to answer other questions, the research question was narrowed for the purpose of creating a cohesive report.

The findings align with other research in indicating that learning to cook at a young age was significant in acquiring foundational cooking skills. Additionally, the results demonstrate that parental guidance can largely impact how hobbyists learn to cook. Finally, the findings suggest that the hobbyists in the study learn best by applying new ideas or practices. This paper will first discuss previous work on the topic, outline the research site and methods, then discuss the findings.

## Literature

Several informative studies have emerged on cooking habits. The three studies discussed below describe how individuals acquire cooking skills and the meaning they derive from cooking for themselves.

### *Acquisition of skills*

In their survey study of 1,049 Irish adults, Lavelle et al. (2016) investigated the relationship between food and cooking skills and the age at which cooks acquired these skills. The study participants were divided into three groups based on when they learned to cook: child learners, teenage learners, and adult learners. The survey results asserted the significance of learning cooking at an early age, drawing several notable conclusions. Firstly, teenage learners were more confident with both food skills and cooking skills compared to adult learners (Lavelle, et al., 2016, p. 5). Secondly, teenage and child learners had significantly more cooking skills (p. 5), were more knowledgeable about food safety (p. 5), exhibited more creativity when cooking (p. 6), and had a stronger sense of cooking identity than adult learners (p. 6). The researchers note that “if [cooking skills] are learnt at younger ages these individuals are more creative in the kitchen and are more likely to see themselves as cooks... (p. 7)” Finally, child learners invested much more time in cooking than the other two groups. In terms of how learners gained skills, 60.1 percent (%) of participants identified their mother as a source of their skills and 40.6% identified their mother as the sole source (p. 6).

Wolfson et al. (2016) used a mixed methods approach comprised of focus groups and a survey to study how adults in Baltimore, Maryland neighborhoods acquired cooking skills. Like Lavelle et al., Wolfson et al. found that 66% of adults in their study learned to cook from their parents, generally their mother (Wolfson, Frattaroli, Bleich, Smith, & Teret, 2016, p. 229). Additionally, 67% of the participants taught themselves to cook (p. 229). Wolfson et al. also identified differences between what individuals learned from their parents versus what was self-taught: participants “learn[ed] specific recipes or skills from family members that they still used often for special occasions,” but taught themselves to cook to accommodate their different cooking and eating preferences (p. 231). Methods of self-teaching include “cook books, the Internet, television shows, or by trial and error (p. 233).”

### *Meaning derived from cooking*

A third survey study used data from time-use surveys conducted in Belgium that asked participants to log their activities for a week (Daniels, Glorieux, Minnen, & van Tienoven, 2012, p. 1051).

Besides start and end times, participants were asked about the motivation for the activity, such as obligation, duty, necessity, or pleasure (p. 1051). Researchers found that individuals living alone generally cooked out of necessity or obligation, while those living with families cooked as “an expression of care and love (p. 1053).” The study further analyzed the behavior of those who cook for themselves by noting that “People who spend less than 25 min per cooking event approach cooking rather as a necessity, whilst people who spend noticeably more time on preparing food perceive cooking more as enjoyable or as an obligation (p. 1055).”

## Description of Research Site

### *Defining the hobby*

Because most people cook for themselves to some degree to eat, some care must be taken in defining cooking as a hobby. The study by Daniels et al. suggests that the definition of a cooking hobbyist is one who expends more time than required by obligation, duty, or necessity on the act of cooking, indicating that a sense of pleasure is derived from the act of cooking (Daniels, Glorieux, Minnen, & van Tienoven, 2012, p. 1055).

Other definitions also find a basis in the use of free time and the pleasure derived from the hobby. In an ethnographic study on information use in the hobby of gourmet cooking, Hartel defined the hobby as “the skillful preparation of high quality or exotic foods during free time and for pleasure. (Hartel, 2006)” Furthermore, the participants in the study all cooked in their home kitchens, primarily according to their own tastes. Therefore, a modified version of Hartel’s definition of the hobby is most suitable for this study: “the skillful preparation of high quality or exotic foods during free time and for pleasure according to one’s personal tastes.”

### *Participants*

The participants’ demographic information is summarized in Table 1. Each participant self-identified as a cooking hobbyist, and all three began cooking during or before high school (Appendix C, 34-41, 536-540, 959-965). None of the hobbyists described themselves as members of cooking organizations or groups and only one participant described his hobby as a social activity (C, 1105-1111), although family was a significant factor in all three participants’ data, as will be discussed in the findings section. Julia and Gordon were recruited through shared friends, while Ina is the researcher’s roommate. Because explicit permission to use their names was not obtained, the participants have been given pseudonyms.

*Table 1: Participant demographics*

	Julia	Ina	Gordon
Employment Status	Working part-time, job hunting	Student	Student
Gender Identity	Female	Female	Male
Age	22	21	21
Ethnicity	Asian/Chinese	White/Caucasian	White

### *Field Site*

All three participants lived with roommates in the area surrounding the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington. Ina and Gordon lived in what could be considered student neighborhoods

within 1.5 miles from the university, while Julia's neighborhood was slightly farther away. The observations and two out of three interviews were conducted in the participants' homes, while the third interview was conducted in a conference room on campus. Two of the kitchens were small, narrow areas defined by two parallel countertops with cupboards above and below. These were both in second-floor apartments. Ina's kitchen consisted of one longer countertop in a more open space that also served as a living room in a basement unit of a rental house. All three kitchens were equipped with a refrigerator, oven and stove, microwave, and the storage space described above. More thorough descriptions of the participants in their home kitchens can be found in the field notes included as Appendix A.

## *Methods*

The goal of the study was to learn about how cooking hobbyists acquired skills. The study was qualitative, using observations and interviews to gather data. Although the observations were intended to be purely observational studies, two out of three participants chose to explain their actions during the observational studies; therefore, the observations were closer to contextual inquiry. Two of the observational studies lasted approximately 30 minutes, while the third lasted a little over an hour, as the participant chose to cook dinner for the researcher. The interviews were conducted after the observational studies, lasted 20-35 minutes, and were semi-structured. The interview protocol is included as Appendix B. The data from the interviews are included as Appendix C. Observation and interview data were qualitatively coded together, where the codes used were developed iteratively. The final codebook is included as Appendix D. The next section discusses the findings.

# Findings

One major theme in the data was the transition from cooking with parents or at their parents' homes to cooking alone in their own kitchens. This section will outline how hobbyists built and maintained skills along through all phases of this transition by first discussing learning to cook as a child or teenager, then describing the role family and culture played in developing cooking skills, then by outlining how participants apply knowledge to maintain their skillset.

## *Cooking as a child*

Learning to cook in their childhood or teen years was the single most common factor among participants in terms of acquiring skills. All three participants began cooking, with or without parental guidance, by the time they were in high school (C 34-40, 536-540, 959-965). Moreover, two out of three participants strongly indicated that the foundation of their cooking skills were acquired during this time (C 549-552, 959-975). All three participants described cooking independently of their parents while in high school: Julia began baking on her own, and Ina and Gordon began cooking for their households (C 34-36, 576-581, 987-993). The participants' acquisition of skills in their child and teen years aligns with Lavelle et al.'s findings, which suggested that the acquisition of cooking and food skills during childhood is a vital phase in one's development as a cook. Still, all three identified different reasons for learning to cook, which are discussed below. The role of family is discussed in more detail in the next section.

### *Initial motivations*

Of the three participants, only Ina mentioned starting to cook of her own interest (536-540). Gordon was prompted to cook by his father (959-965), while Julia began cooking for external recognition (34-40). Ina described how she began cooking:

“I used to watch my mom cook when I was in elementary and middle school and I think it was more I was bored and I wanted something to do, so I started chopping stuff and washing things and stirring things and being told not to stir things because

they need to sit for a little bit, and then it just kind of—all of a sudden I was cooking (C 536-540).”

As all three motivations are different, the findings suggest that the initial reason for acquiring cooking skills is not a significant factor in the hobbyists’ development of skills.

## *Family and culture*

While not all participants described their family as a source of their cooking skills, family was the primary source of skills for two out of three participants. This aligns with the research of Wolfson et al., who found that 66% of adults in their study learned to cook from their parents. Several similarities between the participants who learned from their parents were revealed in the interview data: slowly transitioning to cooking meals alone, building a foundation of smaller tasks, and learning from hands-on guidance. Finally, the data shows that culture and values were also passed on by family members.

### *Slow transition to cooking alone*

Ina and Gordon described learning cooking skills from their parents as a long-term, hands-on process spanning at least two years. Gordon, for example, cooked with his father every other week for two years and during this time learned the basics of cooking (C 962-965). He described first doing smaller tasks alongside his father, such as chopping ingredients, then transitioning to cooking meals by himself (C 979-993). Similarly, Ina gained a foundation of how to cook from her family, particularly her mother, then was able to start cooking for her family by herself once she had a driver’s license (C 549-552, 577-581).

### *Smaller tasks*

Smaller tasks provided the foundation for Ina and Gordon’s cooking skills. Both participants associated tasks such as chopping and sautéing with first learning to cook (C 549-552, 979-993). The interview data suggests that the participants first learned more granular tasks, then were later able to combine them into the preparation of a recipe or meal (C 979-993).

### *Hands-on teaching*

Both Ina and Gordon describe a hands-on process as being an integral part of their learning. Gordon described how his father would first demonstrate a task, such as chopping, then prompt Gordon to complete the task (979-993). As Gordon stated in the interview:

“Yeah, so oftentimes we would be in the kitchen together and he would give me something and say ‘chop it’ and at the start like ‘what? how do you want me to chop it?’ And he would be like ‘alright, you need to cut it long like that and then dice it.’ And he would maybe show me a couple times and then he would just have me do it. And really you learn by doing it over and over (C 979-983).”

Similarly, Ina transitioned from being told how to complete tasks to cooking on her own by participating (C 536-540, 560-562).

### *Culture and values*

While culture was not an especially significant theme, both Julia and Gordon referred to culture or values acquired from family. Julia, who was raised in a Chinese household, attributed some of her cooking practices, such as washing eggs, to Chinese culture (A 1-4, 42-44, C 143-144). Julia is also heavily influenced by a sense of frugality, which was passed on from her family (A 1-4, 42-44, C 276-279). Similarly, Gordon attributed some of his cooking practices, such as the use of onions for flavor and punching holes in egg shells to his father’s values and German heritage (A 322-327, C 965-968), along with the practice of using ingredients on hand (C 1010-1013). Finally, Ina attributes some of her early interest in cooking to her home environment (C 612-618):

“...there's always cooking going on. And if you're at a loss of something to do during the day, well, might as well cook something. Or it's like it's noon, you've got to start

thinking about dinner and then you have to go to the store and then you cook (C 615-618).”

This suggests that, for the participants in the study, family served not only as a conduit for concrete cooking skills, but also for less tangible values relevant to cooking. The next section will describe how cooks employ learning by doing to build their skills.

### *Applying knowledge to build skills*

A common theme in both learning to cook and maintaining cooking as a hobby was learning by doing. While participants learned about new skills and practices from a variety of sources, applying the skills and practices was a constant. As described in the previous section, family was a prominent source of skills for two participants when they first learned to cook. Beyond family, all three participants discussed using online forums, blogs, search engines, and videos with the intent to apply their new knowledge in the kitchen, as well as personal assumptions and experimentations. “The Internet” and “trial and error” as methods of self-teaching from Wolfson et al.’s study (2016) were echoed in this study, yet other means, such as television and cooking classes were not.

This section will discuss how participants used the three most prominent sources in the data: online resources, self-awareness and reflection, and experimentation.

#### *Learning by doing*

All three participants described the act of cooking as the way they built their cooking skills. Gordon and Ina gained the foundation of their cooking skills through repetition of basic tasks under the guidance of their parents, as was discussed in the previous section (C 560-562, 568-571, 979-983). A common theme among the three means of building cooking skills that follow is that they all involve applying them in a cooking session, indicating that for the three hobbyists, cooking is most successfully learned in a hands-on manner.

#### *Online resources*

Online sources used by participants include forums, food blogs, search engines, and videos (C 407-423, 886-892, 1254-1261). Julia described her use of a forum called Serious Eats as a source for recipes as well as for the science behind cooking (C 407-415), while Gordon Ramsay’s YouTube videos made her aware of new cooking techniques (C 416-423). Similarly, Ina uses food blogs like Smitten Kitchen and Food 52 to find new recipes. Both Ina and Julia described online resources as a means to inform how they use ingredients on hand (C 368, 886-892). Julia also described how she incorporates skills found online into her cooking practices, such as how to brown pork chops (C 206-209). Finally, both Ina and Gordon mentioned using online resources as a safety net when faced with a problem (C 567-571, 1254-1261). For example, Gordon relied on Google when confronted with opening a prickly cactus for the first time (C 1254-1261).

#### *Self-awareness and reflection*

All three participants demonstrated an awareness of how to order and organize tasks based on past experiences. Julia and Gordon, for example, know how long certain tasks would take them to complete and use this knowledge to plan their cooking sessions (C 240-254, 1085-1088). Correspondingly, Ina knows that onions affect her eyes and garlic leaves sticky residue on the cutting board and therefore chops these ingredients last (C 747-750), while Julia plans to avoid spreading meat juices around the kitchen (C 187-188). These results indicate that the hobbyists benefit from experience with smaller tasks when planning more complex processes. Finally, Julia reflects on cooking mistakes and uses them to improve her cooking in the future (C 370-374). As Julia stated:

“When it’s a personal failing, usually I cooked it for way too long, that’s when I’m likely to be like ‘it’s not my preference, it’s just my skill, so let’s go back and hone that skill.’ If it’s just like ‘I hate cumin,’ then I’m not going to eat it (C 400-402).”

This indicates that reflection and self-awareness are important practices for the hobbyists in building on their skillsets.

### *Experimentation*

Experimentation and creativity were a common theme among all three participants, both regarding flavors and recipes as well as how to complete tasks. Julia described how she had initially been confused by what level corresponded to “medium” on her stove:

“I used to be really worried. I'd be like, ‘is this high? Is this too high? Is this too low?’ But after a while, you're just like ‘I haven't died yet’. I've been doing it consistently on five because I just don't know, but I haven't died yet, so this must be ok, and that's really what it boils down to (C 226-230).”

Julia also described experimenting with chopping broccoli at different angles to find the most efficient method (A 46-48). All three participants also had mechanisms to incorporate new ingredients into their pantry. Ina relies on a farm box, a weekly box of seasonal fresh produce, to infuse her cooking with new ingredients and give her access to seasonal foods (C 835-840). Julia uses sales at grocery stores to dictate which ingredients she buys, then develops skills relevant to these ingredients by cooking them (C 378-383, 400-402). Gordon tries to buy new foods “semi-often” and recounted how he bought a cactus as an alternative to the apples he normally ate (C 1245-1250, 1254-1261).

## **Conclusion**

The findings support previous works discussed in several facets and suggest new avenues for future research.

Framing the data as a transition from cooking in participants’ parents’ households to cooking in spaces shared with roommates allowed the development hobby to be understood as a progression through two phases. The first phase involved acquiring skills hands-on during childhood or teenage years, often with parental guidance, along with cultural values. The second phase involved applying the basic skills acquired in the first phase and further developing them according to personal tastes, experiences, and preferences. For those that learned from their parents, the first phase involved slowly transitioning to cooking without parents’ help.

To explicitly answer the question, “how do cooking hobbyists acquire and maintain skills?” the data from the study implies that the cooking hobbyists in the study acquired the necessary foundational skills early through applied learning, often with the support of parents, and use experimentation, online resources, and reflection to build and solidify new skills and knowledge.

### *Further research*

It’s notable that Julia did not describe learning skills from her parents and most frequently mentioned using online resources to build her cooking skills. Future research could explore the relationship between learning cooking skills from family members and use of online resources. Additionally, the findings suggest that initial motivation to begin cooking was not a meaningful factor in the participants’ decision to pursue cooking as a hobby. This could also be further explored. The implication that cooking knowledge must be applied could be further examined with a larger and more focused study. A final area for continued research is the transfer of cultural or family values from parents to children in cooking.

## Works Cited

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## Appendix A: Observation Field Notes

*Participant:* Julia                      *Location:* Julia's apartment

*Date:* 10/31/2016                      *Time:* 11:30 AM

47 broccoli florets and has found that not cutting from the top makes the "least  
48 carnage."

49

50 Julia tells me that she always cooks extra filling. She fills the Tupperware with  
51 broccoli and adds the stem to the Tupperware. She rinses the vegetable knife and  
52 cutting board in the sink. She pulls an open package of bacon from under the  
53 plastic bags that held the vegetables and, using two chopsticks, counts four slices  
54 from the package. She uses the chopsticks to pull the bacon out of the package and  
55 lays it on the black cutting board. She pulls an additional slice from the package  
56 onto the cutting board with the chopsticks. She folds the bacon in half lengthwise  
57 and cuts down the center lengthwise.

58

59 The dog ("Titan") barks, and Julia pauses to say the dog's name to stop it from  
60 barking.

61

62 Julia continues to chop the bacon into smaller squares. After cutting off a few  
63 squares she will scrape them into a pile of squares on the cutting board. She gets a  
64 frying pan out of a cupboard to the lower right of the stove. The burners on the  
65 stove have their circumferences wrapped in foil. She turns front-right burner to high  
66 (between 8 and 9). As the burner starts smoking a little, she turns on the fan by  
67 pushing a button on the oven.

68

69 She scrapes the bacon from the cutting board into the pan. There is a container of  
70 spatulas and spoons to the left of the stove, next to the refrigerator, and uses it to  
71 break up the chunks of bacon. She turns the burner down to 5.

72

73 [12:03] She keeps stirring, pausing after a few stirs, and adds the bowl of onions and  
74 mushrooms to the pan. She tells me she will use the same bowl for beating the eggs.  
75 She continues gently stirring with the spatula, but more slowly now, gently turning  
76 over the vegetables.

77

78 [12:07] She adds the broccoli chunks to the pan and turns the burner down to 3.  
79 The pan is very full, and some bits are spilling out onto the stove top. She puts  
80 them back into the pan and continues turning the vegetables over. She pats down  
81 the vegetables and bacon with the spatula, compressing them slightly in the pan.

82

83 Next, she cracks the shell of each egg on the countertop surface and then breaks  
84 the shell in half, letting insides fall into the bowl. After each egg has been cracked,  
85 she uses her finger to push any remaining egg white out of the shell into the bowl,  
86 explaining that she hates waste and there's a surprising amount of egg white that  
87 stays in the shell. She washes her hands in the sink and uses the spatula to break up  
88 the packed-down vegetables and bacon in the pan.

89



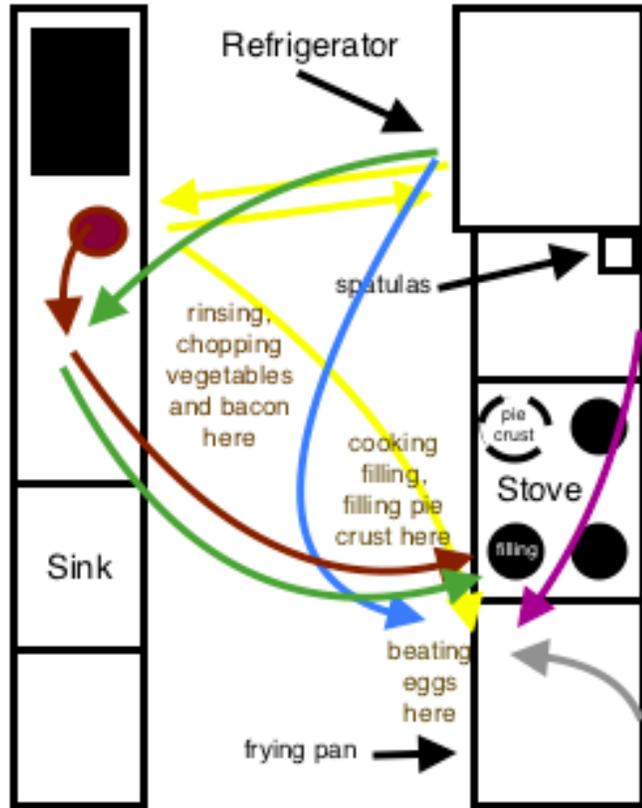
Appendix A: Observation Field Notes

Participant: Julia

Location: Julia's apartment

Date: 10/31/2016

Time: 11:30 AM



- vegetables
- spices
- eggs
- milk
- bacon
- salt and pepper







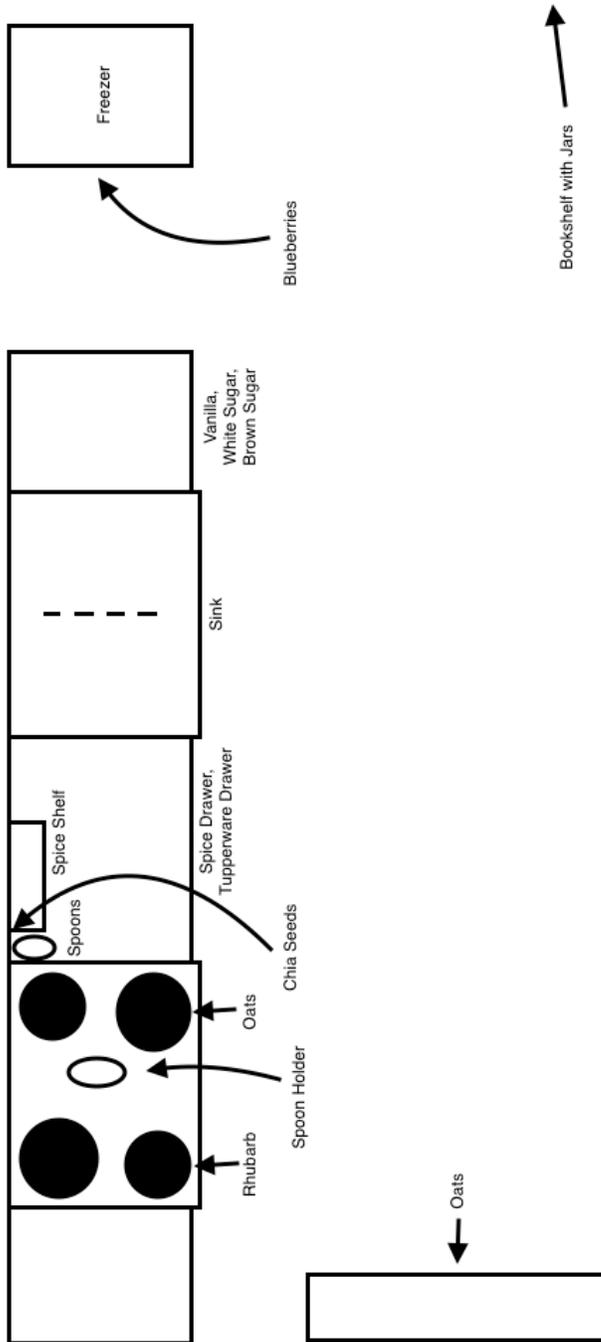
Appendix A: Observation Field Notes

Participant: Ina

Location: Our house

Date: 10/31/2016

Time: 7:30 PM



231  
232

## Appendix A: Observation Field Notes

*Participant:* Gordon                      *Location:* Gordon's Apartment

*Date:* 11/03/2016                      *Time:* 7:40 PM

233 Gordon's apartment is small but well-furnished. The low ceilings, wood floors, and  
234 seasonal gourds scattered in the living room give it a cozy feel. He has a mix of  
235 indie-folk artists (The Lumineers, Mumford & Sons, and similar) playing. The  
236 kitchen is at one end of the apartment, entered through the living room, and has  
237 windows overlooking the street. There is just enough room for Gordon to move  
238 around comfortably. The kitchen ceiling seems to be angled, making the kitchen  
239 seem slightly off-balance. The windows over the sink are covered with a metal  
240 lattice that seems more decorative than functional (as Gordon's apartment is well  
241 above the street).

242

243 Gordon begins by sharpening a knife, and then chopping the top off of an onion on  
244 a cutting board. He tells me he's making tea and offers me some (I decline)—there  
245 is a small ceramic tea pot on the counter between the sink and the stove. He cuts  
246 the onion in half and peels the onion. He gets a Tupperware from the refrigerator,  
247 and proceeds to dice the onion. He moves quickly around the kitchen, and even  
248 though he doesn't seem rushed, it's hard for me to follow everything he does.  
249 Gordon turns on a stove burner, then gets a heavy metal pot from a wall of open  
250 shelves opposite the refrigerator, which seem to contain pots, pans, baking tins, and  
251 dishes. He scrapes the diced onion into the pot on the burner, and then peels and  
252 minces the garlic on the cutting board and adds it to the onions.

253

254 Next, Gordon chops ginger on the cutting board and scrapes it into the pot, then  
255 throws away the pile of onion skins into the garbage. As he cooks, we talk about  
256 what he likes to cook. He tells me he really loves soup. He produces a plate and  
257 rests the spatula he's been using to stir the contents of the pot on the plate. From  
258 the refrigerator, he gets a head of broccoli, shuts the refrigerator door with his foot,  
259 and sets the broccoli on the cutting board. He pauses for a moment over the cutting  
260 board with his head cocked and says he's "trying to figure out what I'm going to  
261 do... evaluating appetizer alternatives.". He resumes moving around the kitchen by  
262 retrieving first two small shallow bowls, and then a third from the shelves. He uses a  
263 fork fill one of the small bowls with Kalamata olives from a jar. The two remaining  
264 bowls are filled with Mango chutney and olive tapenade (he describes them to me  
265 later). He licks a small spill of chutney off of his finger and washes the spoon he  
266 used to fill the bowls.

267

268 Gordon says he will make things a lot, then not for a while—for example, he used to  
269 make lots of risottos and kale chips, but now hasn't made them in a very long time.  
270 I hadn't noticed him put bread in the toaster, but in the corner of the kitchen the  
271 toaster pops. He pours tea out of the tea pot into a blue glass mug, uses a sponge  
272 from the sink to wipe off the counter, and removes the toast from the toaster. After  
273 refilling the toaster with two more slices of bread, he chops the finished toast into  
274 strips with the kitchen knife he had been using to mince vegetables. Gordon carries  
275 silverware from a drawer, two paper towels, and the three bowls to the table in the  
276 living room. The living room table is a large wood oval next to a window facing the  
277 apartments next-door. On the table are Gordon's phone and speakers playing  
278 music, some seasonal mini-pumpkins, and other personal items.

279

## Appendix A: Observation Field Notes

*Participant: Gordon Location: Gordon's Apartment*

*Date: 11/03/2016 Time: 7:40 PM*

280 Gordon returns to the kitchen to stir the pot. He returns to the toast and uses the  
281 knife to scrape burned bits off of the slices of toast from the toaster. The strips are  
282 arranged on a large green plate, which is carried to the table. Gordon adjusts the  
283 music and offers me water. I say yes, and he returns with a wine glass full of water  
284 from the kitchen.

285

286 [8:01] We sit down to eat the appetizers Gordon has prepared. He gets up several  
287 times to stir the onions, garlic, and ginger cooking on the stove. He tells me that the  
288 Kalamata olives are reminiscent of Morocco. He takes a Snapchat of the olives to  
289 send to his Moroccan friends. After about 10 minutes of sitting, Gordon returns to  
290 the kitchen. He washes the cutting board he used for the onions, garlic, and ginger,  
291 and washes his hands with dish soap. He stirs the pot on the stove with a spatula.

292

293 He washes the head of broccoli in the sink and gets a bag of carrots and something  
294 else out of the refrigerator. He jokes that he'll have to use his roommate's carrots  
295 before his roommate comes home. Gordon peels the carrots over the sink, chops  
296 the carrots into coins, and scrapes them into the pot on the stove, stirring again. He  
297 returns to the cutting board and chops off the base of the broccoli, close to the  
298 head, then chops the head into smaller pieces. He takes the large pot from the  
299 stove, adds water from the sink making a broth, and gets a pot lid. The broccoli is  
300 added to the pot on the burner. He stirs the pot one more time before picking the  
301 carrot peels out of the sink and throwing them in a compost container next to the  
302 trash. He puts the lid on the pot. Gordon produces a handful of green beans, rinses  
303 them quickly in the sink and chops them on the cutting board, after which he rinses  
304 the cutting board. He wipes the counter under the cutting board with a sponge from  
305 the sink, then rinses the sponge. He uses a pot holder to remove the lid from the  
306 pot so he can stir the broth inside.

307 [8:23] Gordon pauses cooking and we return to the appetizers for a few minutes.  
308 When he returns to the kitchen, he fills another smaller sauce pan with water,  
309 covers it with a pot lid, and puts it on the right-front stove burner next to the larger  
310 pot containing the broth. As he pulls two packets of Top Ramen from a cupboard  
311 below the counter, he tells me he likes Top Ramen noodles but not the flavoring.  
312 He removes the lid from the bigger pot and adds bouillon with a spoon. He stirs  
313 the bouillon into the broth. We sit down again briefly, although he gets up several  
314 times to stir the broth in the big pot.

315

316 Returning to the kitchen, he retrieves an egg carton from the refrigerator with 6  
317 eggs. He uses a device that seems to be made from a cork, bottle cap, and pushpin  
318 to punch a small hole in the shells of the eggs he's going to cook. As he does this,  
319 he explains that his father is German and it's probably a German custom. I ask if he  
320 made the egg puncher himself and he says it came from his father. He puts three  
321 eggs into the water that is now boiling in the smaller pot. Gordon goes into the  
322 living room to set a timer on his phone for the eggs, telling me he rarely uses a  
323 timer, except for when he cooks eggs. He tastes a spoonful of the broth with a  
324 spoon from the larger pot, stirs another spoonful of bouillon into the pot, and  
325 returns the bouillon jar to the refrigerator.

326

## Appendix A: Observation Field Notes

*Participant: Gordon Location: Gordon's Apartment*

*Date: 11/03/2016 Time: 7:40 PM*

327 The cooking pauses for a short while. Gordon clears some of the appetizer dishes  
328 from the living room table, leaving the plates on the counter. He tastes the broth  
329 twice, blowing on the spoon for several seconds each time before tasting it. He then  
330 uses a fork to fetch a vegetable chunk from the broth and taste it. He asks if I like  
331 spicy food and I say yes.

332

333 Gordon opens the refrigerator to get a brown bottle. He shakes the bottle and  
334 pours some of the contents into a small plate, which he puts on the living room  
335 table. He spoons the leftover chutney from the appetizers into the chutney jar and  
336 puts the jar back in the refrigerator. The egg timer on his phone buzzes. Gordon  
337 takes the pot from the stove burner to hold it over the sink, then changes his mind,  
338 mentioning they may “actually be under”, returning the pot to the burner. He  
339 almost pours a reddish sauce into a small flat bowl, but stops in the middle of the  
340 action and puts the sauce bottle on the table instead. Gordon opens the first Top  
341 Ramen noodle packet and crumbles the noodles into bits over the pot. He then  
342 removes the small pot with the eggs from the stove and lets cold sink water run into  
343 the pot. He gently tilts the pot around in a circular motion and the eggs roll around  
344 the pot without falling out. He lets the pot sit in the sink. The second packet of  
345 noodles is crumbled into the pot. Gordon tastes the broth and gets out two bowls.  
346 He rinses and squeezes the sponge in the sink. He searches through a cabinet  
347 containing Tupperware to the lower right of the refrigerator and retrieves a  
348 Tupperware. He puts something I don't catch in the Tupperware and moves the  
349 egg pot to a cool back burner.

350

351 Methodically he washes the knife, appetizer plates, pot lid, and cutting board and  
352 leans them in a drying rack to the left of the sink. He brings the egg pot back to the  
353 sink. One at a time, he cracks each of the three eggs on the counter and hunches  
354 over the trash to peel it. He clears the remaining plates from the tables and puts  
355 spoons on the table. He retrieves two bowls and spoons broth in to each bowl. He  
356 cuts each egg in half and adds one egg to one bowl and two to the other (he had  
357 asked me earlier how many eggs I wanted). He tells me he regrets that there is no  
358 “green sprinkle” for a garnish. Gordon brings the bowls to the dining room table,  
359 and his cooking is finished.

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Thanks for agreeing to be interviewed for this study about people and their hobbies. In this study we are not looking for right or wrong answers, instead we are interested more generally in what hobbyists do and how they do it. Please be as detailed as possible; the more detail the better. Finally, if there are any questions that you are uncomfortable answering, you are free to decline to answering them. I have 7 main questions, but I will also be asking you additional questions so that I can better understand your answers. Okay, let's get started.

1. How would you explain your hobby to someone else?
2. Could you tell me the story of how you became a cook?
3. How would you describe all the different tasks that you do for your hobby?
4. Could you take me through the last time you engaged in your hobby starting with preparation?
5. How are you motivated to continue participating in your hobby?
6. How do you decide what to cook?"
7. How has what you cook changed over the past 2 months?

Those are all the questions that I have for you today. I really appreciate your taking the time to participate in this interview. Do you have any questions for me before we wrap up?













## Appendix C: Interview Transcripts

*Participant:* Julia                      *Location:* OWC Conference Room, UW campus  
*Date:* 11/10/2016                      *Time:* 12:05 PM - 12:35 PM

279

280 L: Ok, is there a moment when you decided to cook for a day.

281

282 J: There definitely--so after the election [laughs]. The day before the elections, I was  
283 like "things are not going well", so I was like "ok, you know what, I'm going to make  
284 sure my day is full tomorrow." I was like "I'm going to take a day off, but I'm going  
285 to not wallow, I'm going to do things." So I make soybean milk and basically soak  
286 the soybeans overnight and then you do the--you throw it in a blender and you  
287 blend it. And then you strain the stuff and you boil it so that it cooks. So I put--I  
288 measured out all the soybeans, I put them in water, and then left them overnight,  
289 and... if you leave something out too long it goes moldy, so that was kind of my way  
290 of ensuring that I would go and do it, is knowing--sorry--knowing that it's moldy and-  
291 -or that it's going to go moldy if I don't do it, so definitely just forcing my--A.) I  
292 know I enjoy it and it's good for me, and B.) and when I know something is going  
293 up, forcing myself, putting those parameters in place so that I have to go and do  
294 them, and I feel better about them, kind of like working out. No one really wants to  
295 work out, you kind of have to put these roads in place for you to--everything lines  
296 up, and you're like "ok, I'm going to do--run, or go swimming, or play tennis or  
297 something." Yeah.

298

299 L: Ok, so what kind of roads do you put in place?

300

301 J: Just knowing that I have things in the fridge is... the main thing is just like "ok I  
302 have these things that I'm going to cook" and again, for the election, if I know it's  
303 going to be a bad day or a long day or whatever, kind of putting these things in  
304 place so that I do do them. Because a lot of it, I'm like... again it comes down to  
305 being not controlling, but kind of controlling in that way, just there is something in  
306 there that needs to get done. And kind of forcing m--or using that kind of... picky  
307 [picky sound?] drive to get at it. Otherwise... I also do a lot of frozen foods. I'll  
308 prepare things, like I'll prepare sausage, because sausage, the sausage you buy--and  
309 honestly this is--when I say it out loud I feel like a hipster. The sausages I buy in the  
310 supermarket, sometimes they've got weird additives in them and it's just like "oh..."  
311 and also it's expensive. I don't like paying more than... three dollars a pound for  
312 meat, and sausage is normally like three to five, and I'm like "ah, I don't know if can  
313 really justify this" so I'll make it myself and then I'll have a Ziploc full of sausage in  
314 the freezer, and then that's a really good way to be like "ah yes, I have these things."  
315 Doing the prep work in advance so that on the days where I'm not feeling up to an  
316 intensive cooking thing, I can be like "oh yes, I have things in the freezer that I can  
317 eat." Last summer I went through this incredible dumpling phase where I'd make  
318 dumplings once a week, and I'd make batches of 50-70 and I'd go, so I had a  
319 freezer full of dumplings, and I just kind of ate away at that stock for the next six  
320 months. And that's one of the things right, you just kind of set yourself up, so that  
321 when you are feeling not in the mood, you can still use the fruits of your labor from  
322 before, and that way you don't burn out. That way you're not--you don't hit that wall,  
323 where you're like "oh I haven't cooked for like a week, and I suck, and I should just  
324 give up." Because you have that buffer where it's like "ah yes, I did these things































## Appendix C: Interview Transcripts

*Participant:* Gordon                      *Location:* Gordon's apartment  
*Date:* 11/11/2016                      *Time:* 12:30 PM - 12:50 PM

918 L: Alright, so, thanks for agreeing to be interviewed for this study about people and  
919 their hobbies. In this study we are not looking for right or wrong answers. Instead  
920 we are interested more generally in what hobbyists do and why they do it, so please  
921 be as detailed as possible. The more detailed the better. Finally, if there are any  
922 questions that you are uncomfortable answering, you are free to decline answering  
923 them. I have 7 main questions, but I will also be asking additional questions so that  
924 I can better understand your answers. Ok, let's get started. So, the first question is  
925 how would you explain your hobby of cooking to someone else?

926

927 G: Right, um, cooking is a great way for me to use some creativity and practical  
928 skills to get a great outcome that influences my health and yeah. I enjoy cooking  
929 because it helps me relax after a busy day, and I also enjoy cooking because it gives  
930 me power over my diet. Instead of being at the mercy of fast food joints, I can  
931 choose not to cook with trans fats, I can choose to eat vegetarian, I can choose to  
932 consume 80+ grams of protein a day. So it gives me power over my diet, and it's  
933 something I enjoy doing. I like the creativity aspect of it.

934

935 L: Ok, so could me tell me the story of how you became a cook?

936

937 G: Yeah, so when I was in high school, my parents split up, and at my dad's house,  
938 if I wanted to eat I would have to help him cook, because he would come home  
939 after a long day of work and he wouldn't really feel like cook, he'd more feel like  
940 relaxing, and so if we wanted to eat something, he made me help. And so, I cooked  
941 with him, probably close to every day for two years or so, I don't know, maybe  
942 every other week or so, and so that really gave me a foundation in the basics of how  
943 long do you cook an onion, why do you use onions. I think a large part of it is  
944 cultural, for instance I have onions in almost everything I cook because I see them  
945 as a flavor enhancer, and so I just chop them finely and cook them until they break  
946 down, and that's how my dad taught me. So we started everything with onions,  
947 sometimes some garlic, some olive oil. I learned all the basics, like how long do  
948 different veggies need to cook. I learned about cooking and cutting meat and  
949 breaking down whole chickens, that sort of thing. And yeah, and I learned a bit  
950 about flavor. One of the things I took from him was be really careful with salt  
951 because it's very easy to add salt to a dish but it's very hard to take it out. And I  
952 think actually we had ramen when I cooked with you and it was a little too salty. So  
953 that's an example. Yeah, just things to keep in mind.

954

955 L: Ok, and so how did he teach you the things that you learned from him?

956

957 G: Yeah, so oftentimes we would be in the kitchen together and he would give me  
958 something and say "chop it" and at the start like "what? how do you want me to chop  
959 it?" And he would be like "alright, you need to cut it long like that and then dice it."  
960 And he would maybe show me a couple times and then he would just have me do  
961 it. And really you learn by doing it over and over. And yeah, the same with just  
962 breaking down different vegetables. You cook carrots, you chop them as you like,  
963 or potatoes, there's a way he always likes his potatoes peeled. I'm a little more

## Appendix C: Interview Transcripts

*Participant:* Gordon                      *Location:* Gordon's apartment  
*Date:* 11/11/2016                      *Time:* 12:30 PM - 12:50 PM

964 liberal in that regard. So yeah, I really just learned by doing. He would show me the  
965 first time, and then I would do it by myself. And then actually toward the end of  
966 high school I would start to cook dinner before he got home by myself just because  
967 it was something I enjoyed and he was working hard to put food on the table and  
968 pay for rent and stuff, so it was nice for him to be able to come home and have  
969 something to eat. So I guess that was also learning. He taught me the basics. I  
970 applied them under his guidance, and then I started to apply them by myself. With  
971 some disasters, I'll be very candid, but yeah.

972

973 L: Yeah, so how was making that transition from him teaching you to you cooking a  
974 meal?

975

976 G: Yeah, it was still a pretty safe space, because if he got home and some stuff was  
977 still on the stove and I didn't really know what was going on I could ask him. But  
978 that said... yeah, it was fun. It was something I enjoyed doing, and it's also a way to  
979 exercise power and self-determination. That's kind of rewarding. You get to decide  
980 what you want to make and how you want to make it.

981

982 L: Ok... so how would you describe all the different tasks that you do for your  
983 hobby?

984

985 G: Yeah... um... there's... I guess there's a lot of tasks but you could group them  
986 somewhat into preparation work, into actual cooking, and then maybe into plating  
987 and then into cleaning up. And so the preparation work is a lot of chopping  
988 vegetables. It's a lot about figuring out what you have. One of the things my dad  
989 emphasized was when you decide what to make you should look in your  
990 refrigerator first and then kind of gets at that idea of you should use what you have.  
991 If you have something that really needs to be cooked, like this morning I looked in  
992 my fridge and I had broccoli that I had bought a week and a half ago that was  
993 getting old and needed to be used, so I put it in an omelet. So that's the first step,  
994 the preparation, and there's actually a word for that in classical French cooking  
995 called "mise en place", "put it in its place" is the direct translation of that. And they  
996 have a strategy where they literally will get everything out they're going to use during  
997 that recipe and put it on their cutting board and organize it. And so I don't go that  
998 far, but... yeah, so you do preparation, you figure out what you're going to make  
999 and you chop the vegetables. Oftentimes for me that involves dicing an onion and  
1000 some garlic. And then you get into the cooking phase. You throw the onion and the  
1001 garlic in the pan with some olive oil. The rest of your veggies are chopped, so  
1002 generally you let that go for like five or ten minutes on medium, medium-high heat,  
1003 start breaking it down a little, maybe even brown it a little. And then you'll start to  
1004 add in whatever other vegetables you're cooking depending on what needs to start  
1005 first. And I use onions and garlic for most everything. I make soups out of them,  
1006 like it's kind of the base. And so once you have the base, and so once you have the  
1007 base you'll start--like if you're going for a soup you might add some broth and  
1008 vegetables and start to cook it. If you're going for a pasta sauce, you might add  
1009 some tomatoes and maybe some seasonings and that sort of thing. So, after the  
1010 preparation, you actually start the cooking, putting things together, adding

## Appendix C: Interview Transcripts

*Participant:* Gordon                      *Location:* Gordon's apartment  
*Date:* 11/11/2016                      *Time:* 12:30 PM - 12:50 PM

1011 ingredients when they need to be, and letting things go a little. And then, after  
1012 preparation, once everything is pretty good to go, you can start thinking about how  
1013 you want to serve it. For instance, one cool thing I did once was I had a small  
1014 pumpkin and hollowed it out and baked it for a while. And I served rice inside of  
1015 it. So you can get into cool stuff like that, which my roommate gives me a lot of shit  
1016 for, but I kind of enjoy. Um... and yeah, and then throughout it all is sort of the  
1017 cleanup phase. I think we talked last time about how different people have different  
1018 ways of cleaning up. What I like to do is have the cleanup phase throughout all of  
1019 the phases. So I might chop an onion and garlic and chop all the other vegetables  
1020 and then put them aside and I might wash the cutting board. That sort of stuff.

1021

1022 L: Ok, so how do you organize all of... do you plan these out beforehand? How do  
1023 you organize...

1024

1025 G: The phases?

1026

1027 L: Yeah.

1028

1029 G: Um... yeah, so generally I have an idea of what's in my refrigerator and what I  
1030 want to make when I get home. And so that part is pretty planned already. And  
1031 then of course there's definitely some improvisation to it, depending on what sauces  
1032 I have on hand, or anything special that comes up. Can you repeat your question?

1033

1034 L: Just how do you organize the tasks that you're doing to do?

1035

1036 G: Yeah... I kind of just start doing things, and then oftentimes I get distracted in  
1037 the middle of chopping...like broccoli, I'll look at the onions and they're burning.  
1038 Like "oh shoot, I have to stir them." So I kind of just tackle everything and multitask  
1039 in terms of cooking and preparation.

1040

1041 L: Ok, and... dang that just went out of my head. It'll come back. Ok. So could you  
1042 take me through the last time that you engaged in your hobby starting with  
1043 preparation.

1044

1045 G: Yeah, that was actually this morning. So, I got up, I put the tea kettle on,  
1046 brushed my teeth, got ready for the day, by then the tea kettle was done so I made  
1047 tea. I had a very simple breakfast because I was waiting for my roommate to get up  
1048 to make something more elaborate. Cooking is much more fun if you're not eating  
1049 alone. And so I had some high-fiber cereal and soy milk, and then when roomie  
1050 got up, we had the plan to make breakfast sandwiches. So... I got some croissants  
1051 from a business event thing last night, so we were going to fry an egg and have some  
1052 avocado and do some breakfast sandwiches like that with some cheese, but the  
1053 avocado wasn't ripe and my roommate a bunch of toast that needed to be

## Appendix C: Interview Transcripts

*Participant:* Gordon                      *Location:* Gordon's apartment  
*Date:* 11/11/2016                      *Time:* 12:30 PM - 12:50 PM

1054 eaten...long story, I won't get into it. But there was just a bunch of toast around  
1055 from yesterday. And so part of my thing is like "yeah, you look in the fridge what do  
1056 you have that needs to be used?" So instead of croissants we used the toast that he  
1057 made. And so he re-toasted the toast, which was pretty bad at that point, but what  
1058 you do what you gotta do. And in the meantime, he had some bell pepper he  
1059 needed to use, and so I chopped up the bell pepper and then I chopped up that  
1060 broccoli I was talking about earlier that needed to be used, and I kind of just fried it  
1061 in a pan. I put it in a pan with some olive oil. Normally I would add some onion,  
1062 but I was in a hurry because I had something to get to in the morning. So I skipped  
1063 the onion and I just put olive oil in the pan, turned it up to a pretty high heat and I  
1064 kind of browned it a little, and then I added some water and threw a cover on it and  
1065 let it soften. Because broccoli's very crunchy when it's not cooked and once you  
1066 cook it, it gets softer. And so I cooked it for a while, I let the water evaporate with  
1067 the cover on, I took it off, I like my broccoli with a good bite to it. I think in some  
1068 places in the world they really like mushy vegetables, like India for instance, but I  
1069 like vegetables with a bite to it, especially if it's some sort of stir-fry. Um... but... so I  
1070 took the cover off, I kept the high heat and browned everything a little more and  
1071 then I added... I had a tea mug and I whisked together five eggs and then added  
1072 some salt and pepper and then added the eggs to the pan. I was doing a little  
1073 omelet thing for the breakfast sandwiches. And then threw some cheese on, turned  
1074 the heat down low, and put a cover on. And then let that go for a bit, and then  
1075 when it came time to plate, we added some ricotta cheese on the really bad toast  
1076 and then some omelet and had open-faced sandwiches and they were very good.

1077

1078 L: Ok, and so how do you cook with other people?

1079

1080 G: Yeah, oftentimes, if it's family, like my sister, we both really enjoy cooking, so we  
1081 might each make a dish. Or we collaborate or stuff like that. But to be honest,  
1082 oftentimes when I cook with people it's me giving them direction like "chop this",  
1083 "do this", "what do you like, do you like onions? do you like garlic?" and modifying  
1084 the dish based around their tastes. But there are a couple people who also really  
1085 enjoy cooking like me and when we get together we do more collaborative things  
1086 with multiple dishes and that kind of thing.

1087

1088 L: Ok, yeah, and how is collaborating with other people?

1089

1090 G: Yeah, it's kind of fun! You share a hobby and an interest and then also  
1091 everybody comes from really different background. One person I cook with a lot  
1092 named Zach Lynch, you might have met him or heard about him, he has a very  
1093 different background me. I learned cooking from a German, who's rooted in  
1094 traditional European cooking. But Zach, his family, I think, is somehow Mexican,  
1095 and I think he learned a lot of new-age cooking and stuff, and so the things he  
1096 makes are really different from the things I make. In fact, oftentimes I don't even  
1097 know what they are. Zach travels a lot in South America and Spain, and so he  
1098 brings back a lot of recipes from those countries that I just have no idea what they  
1099 are. And so it's always interesting seeing the different grains and the different ways  
1100 of preparation and presentation from different cultures.

## Appendix C: Interview Transcripts

*Participant:* Gordon                      *Location:* Gordon's apartment  
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1101

1102 L: Ok. How would you contrast or compare your cooking styles?

1103

1104 G: Yeah, good question! Part of it is definitely just different ingredients, like some  
1105 of the grains that Zach uses a lot, like one is called "paleo" or something. It's just  
1106 something I've never heard of. Sometimes it's the ingredients. Also, like shrimp and  
1107 cumin, I think he uses a lot. And I don't really use shrimp at all. And then also  
1108 other differences... hmm... I think also in different cultures you eat in different  
1109 ways. I think a lot of the dishes that Zach makes from like Ecuador are served  
1110 family-style, which is pretty cool. And in Europe to some extent but also to a large  
1111 extent you have the individual dishes and everybody's plate. Also like Germany  
1112 uses a lot of potatoes... like a lot of potatoes.

1113

1114 L: Yeah. Ok, and so how are you motivated to continue participating in your  
1115 hobby?

1116

1117 G: Yeah, well to some extent I need to eat to survive, and so cooking is a way to  
1118 fulfill that need. It's also cheaper than going out all the time, so that's another  
1119 motivation, but I think probably the biggest motivation is that I enjoy it and it helps  
1120 relax me after a busy day.

1121

1122 L: What about it do you enjoy?

1123

1124 G: Yeah. I kind of like the creativity and then also just getting to a different  
1125 headspace. When I'm at school or work I'm always sort of problem-solving and  
1126 working and thinking about what I have to do and... yeah. There's definitely some  
1127 stress, but in terms of cooking, there's not a... there's not a lot of stress. There's  
1128 maybe like an "oh shit" moment when you realize you burned the onions or the pot  
1129 is overflowing because it's boiling over. But aside from that there's not a lot of stress.  
1130 You kind of just let it go and you kind of do things so it's a way to sort of escape  
1131 from the busy day. Yeah.

1132

1133 L: Yeah, ok, and how does it allow you to be creative?

1134

1135 G: Yeah, because I can do things that just popped into my head, that... aren't--that I  
1136 didn't find in a recipe, but that I thought would be a good idea. An example of this  
1137 is I think a year or two ago, I was dating a baker, and she was very--bakers are very  
1138 strict people because baking is complicated, so they follow the recipes exactly. And  
1139 I'm not much of a baker, I do a lot of cooking, because it's a lot easier just to  
1140 improvise in cooking, but one thing that was really cool was we just had a bunch of  
1141 stuff lying around like chocolate powder. I didn't even have sugar. I had hot cocoa  
1142 mix. I had hazelnuts. I had whole wheat flour. I had all this other stuff. And so we  
1143 made cookies, just with the stuff on hand and improvising and that took a lot of

## Appendix C: Interview Transcripts

*Participant:* Gordon                      *Location:* Gordon's apartment  
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1144 creativity to decide what to put together, like hot chocolate and hazelnuts and  
1145 Nutella, a lot of Nutella. So yeah, you had to decide what you wanted to eat and  
1146 then go from there.

1147

1148 L: Ok.

1149

1150 G: Yeah.

1151

1152 L: Cool. So how has what you cook changed over the past two months?

1153

1154 G: Hmm... Well I was in India for one of those two months, and so that definitely  
1155 influenced my cooking. I didn't cook a lot in India, but I ate a lot of Indian food,  
1156 and so I brought some of that over. One thing that I talked about before was the  
1157 mushy vegetables in India. So when I came over, I think one of the first things to  
1158 do was bite into a carrot, or just have those firm vegetables in a stir-fry. Also, I  
1159 stayed away from curry. I actually cooked with curry a lot before going to India, but  
1160 after so much curry in India, I came back and I was sick of curry, and so no more  
1161 curry. Elsewise... the last month, I got really into pumpkins, like pumpkin spice,  
1162 squash, butternut squash, acorn squash... I was actually cooking with my sister  
1163 briefly and she's a big squash person so we made like four or five different kinds of  
1164 squashes. Pumpkins have been a big theme. I threw a pumpkin party a while ago,  
1165 so we made the seeds and we had a bunch of different pumpkin dishes. Pumpkin  
1166 bread is really fun. Maybe I'll make that in the next couple weeks.

1167

1168 L: Ok.

1169

1170 G: Yeah, so I guess the seasonality of the season, like what kind of vegetables are in  
1171 season and also some of the travel experiences that I had.

1172

1173 L: Ok, so how did you bring things back from... did you bring like ways of doing  
1174 things back from India?

1175

1176 G: I brought some spices back, and as for ways of doing things, not really. I would  
1177 have liked to have seen--oh except how to make chai tea I guess. That is something  
1178 I brought back. But in terms of cooking, I didn't really cook a lot or see a lot of  
1179 cooking happening. And so, but one thing I did see a lot was chai tea, and in India  
1180 they do it interestingly. They make it very strong and then in a sauce pan they have  
1181 the milk and they add the chai tea and lots of sugar and maybe some ginger and  
1182 they just pour it and then strain it into cups. So that's something I brought back.

1183

1184 L: Ok. Cool. Um... and then... yeah, the last question here is just how do you  
1185 decide what to cook?

## Appendix C: Interview Transcripts

*Participant:* Gordon                      *Location:* Gordon's apartment  
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1186

1187 G: Yeah, a lot of it is what do I have. But of course before what do I have, what's in  
1188 the refrigerator, I'm at the grocery store and I'm deciding what to buy. And then  
1189 oftentimes I crave variety, like I'll make something and it turns out really well and  
1190 I'll make it another couple times then I'll say "you know what, I've had a lot of this,  
1191 it's time to move on." That happens to me a lot with say sweet potato fries, with kale  
1192 chips, with breads like banana bread and pumpkin bread, like I used to make those  
1193 a lot and I haven't probably in the last year or so, just because you make something  
1194 a lot and you want to move on. And so at the grocery store is really kind of where  
1195 I'm deciding what I'm going to make that week because it's like "what do I buy?"  
1196 And so I have some staples like onions. I think I talked about that a little, so I'll  
1197 always have onions around and every week I'll get onions at the grocery store just  
1198 because I use them with everything. I also have other staples like rice and some  
1199 dried pasta and some concentrated vegetable stock to make broths. That kind of  
1200 stuff I always have on hand. And then other stuff just rotates depending on what I'm  
1201 tired of. I think I've had green beans the last couple weeks just because they're easy  
1202 to toss into stuff. At Trader Joe's they come already cleaned and trimmed so you  
1203 don't have to snip the ends, because that sucks... unless you're listening to radio or  
1204 something and have nothing else to do. But I... so yeah, I guess what influences  
1205 what I cook is kind of what I want to eat and also what's available definitely  
1206 seasonally. Though, this day and age that's less relevant because you can get  
1207 anything any time of the year.

1208

1209 L: Ok, and how do you... once you've decided on what you want to cook, how do  
1210 you know how to cook it?

1211

1212 G: Yeah, that I kind of... oftentimes a little experimental, but oftentimes you kind  
1213 of already have a basis. For instance, when I was cooking with my dad, I learned do  
1214 you need to cook a carrot roughly, or how long broccoli, what about Brussel  
1215 sprouts. How about rice. And with a lot of these things actually the answer is you  
1216 cook it until it's done, because a lot of times it's really more about taste. One thing I  
1217 do with vegetables all the time is I'll take a fork and I'll poke it. And if it goes in  
1218 easy, great, it's probably done. If it goes in a little more firmly, do I want to eat it  
1219 that hard, or if it goes in mush, went too far. So... that's definitely a part of it. But  
1220 oftentimes if I buy something new, which I try and do semi-often, like I bought a  
1221 cactus from Safeway once, which was prickly fruit sort of thing, and I had no idea to  
1222 eat it. And you know, I actually hurt myself because I got the pricklers everywhere  
1223 trying to open it. It sucked. And it wasn't even that good. And so in some cases you  
1224 just kind of go for it, try and make it work.

1225

1226 L: And so when you bought that cactus, how did you approach it?

1227

1228 G: Yeah, well I was like... I was bored of apples. I used to be an apple-a-day person  
1229 and so I was trying to branch out into pears and satumas/mandarins, bananas... just  
1230 different fruits. And so I said "oh, this is an interesting fruit... might as well give it a  
1231 shot." And so I picked one up and tried to--I think I Googled it to. I was like "how

## Appendix C: Interview Transcripts

*Participant: Gordon Location: Gordon's apartment*

*Date: 11/11/2016 Time: 12:30 PM - 12:50 PM*

1232 do I eat this?" and they were like "yeah you break it open and eat it" and I'm like  
1233 "alright I can do that" so I tried it and got prickles into my hand and it hurt. It was  
1234 like a fruit sort of cactus. I don't remember what kind.

1235

1236 L: Ok, and then circling back to the different tasks, how do those fit into your day  
1237 or week?

1238

1239 G: Yeah, oftentimes, the most cooking I'll do is in the evening, because in the  
1240 morning I generally--in the morning get out of the house quickly. The weekend is  
1241 somewhat of an exception. This morning was a bit of an exception because it's a  
1242 holiday. So in the morning I'll definitely something quick, just like toast with  
1243 something, or maybe some cereal. I used to be a big oatmeal person. And most of  
1244 the cooking I do is in the evening when I get back from class and work or on the  
1245 weekend when I have extra time. Yeah.

1246

1247 L: Ok... and how does planning or grocery shopping fit into your day?

1248

1249 G: Yeah, oftentimes after I go to yoga I'll go to Trader Joe's because yoga--my yoga  
1250 place is right next to the Trader Joe's. And so yeah, so I'll get out of yoga, I'll go to  
1251 Trader Joe's, I'll kind of like--I have a sort of pathway I walk through the store. And  
1252 I'll just kind of look out for new interesting things or different staples I want to try  
1253 that week and grab them.

1254

1255 L: Ok. Cool. Um... yeah. So those are all the questions I have for you today. I  
1256 really appreciate the time to participate in this interview. Do you have any questions  
1257 for me before we wrap up?

1258

1259 G: I don't think so Leo, it's been interesting. Yeah, it will be interesting to see where  
1260 you go with this research. Keep me in touch. Yeah.

1261

1262 L: I'll keep you updated.

Appendix D: Final Codebook

Category	Code	Sub-Code	Description
Sources	Family	Mother	
		Father	
		As unit	
	Experience	Mistake	Learned from a mistake
		Assumption	Made an assumption about how something should be done
		Experimentation	Tried something new
	Friends		
	Online	Blog	
		Forum	
YouTube			
Type of Skill	Recipe	How to cook a certain food or recipe (less granular tasks)	
	Practice	How to do a certain task or process (more granular tasks)	
	Value	Learning a certain value, such as cleanliness or frugality	
Means	Online	Reading, watching, or otherwise consuming online guidance	
	Doing	Learning by doing	
	Cultural	Absorbing cultural values or practices	
	Showing	Observed a person or received verbal instructions	
Age	Childhood/Teens		
	Adulthood		