

BXA Capstone Project  
Selina Du  
Due: May 13, 2020

## 1. Capstone Documentation

### *Images of event*





## Survey and Survey Results

### Comfort Food for Thought March 2020

Comfort Food for Thought Project Survey.

This project was funded by BXA Capstone Funding and Studio of Creative Inquiry's Frank-Ratchye Fund for Art (FRFAF).

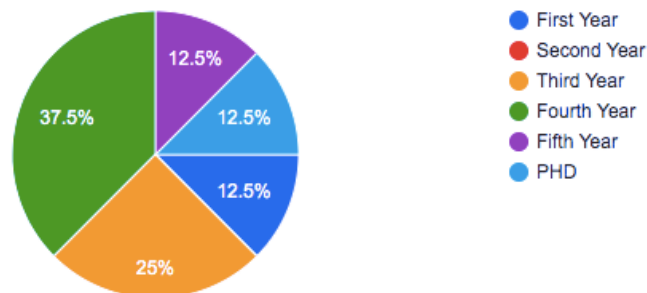
You may fill out the survey in Chinese or English

\* Required

What is your name?

### What year are you?

8 responses



### Did the Menu and experience emphasize the theme and purpose enough?

8 responses

The menu nicely portrayed the theme of the project. The environment played a larger role for me than the food.

我感觉非常棒。让我感受到了chinese food in a different setting.

我感觉menu很cool。我还带走了一张。而且感觉名片也非常有特色。

The theme was most emphasized when the artist spoke during the meal. The unique form of the dishes and western decorations gave us the image, the artist gave the details.

Yes

我很喜欢menu和meal

I think so.

我感觉有。

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How surprised were you at the forms of the food?

8 responses

I stayed behind to talk with the artist. I was surprised at the surroundings the most and how the room was designed. Rarely for chinese meals are in in this setting.

我感觉食物的样子真的很有趣。而且设计的颜色都非常鲜艳。食物的形状和口感都变了。很interesting

我找了好多照片！而且感觉食物的设计都非常unique。虽然感觉server 一个人忙不过来。可是overall还是非常棒的experience。

I loved how the drinks were paired with Chinese dishes. This normally does not happen.

Surprised, the form was not what I expected.

我特别喜欢房间的设计。我帮了照很多相片因为我感觉这个event太独特了。而且我特别欣赏the goal of the capstone。感觉非常有purpose and unique。perspective非常好。

I stayed behind to talk to the artist. I was surprised at how much prep work went into the project and the underlying goals.

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In one sentence, describe the goal of this capstone?

8 responses

I understood it as changing our view of chinese food and the limitations of the food.

我感觉是让我们experience一个新的style和form。这样才能understand中餐的limitations 和current

应该是change我们的view of what is chinese food。

The goal of this capstone was to show and expand our understanding of the role food and culture play in cultural openness.

Open food, open culture

Open the viewers understanding of comfort, food, and culture。

Changing the form of food, to open the mind of chinese audience. Hopefully discussing topics that are controversial and not the norm.

让我们看清楚中国文化的问题，从食物看出我们的limitations

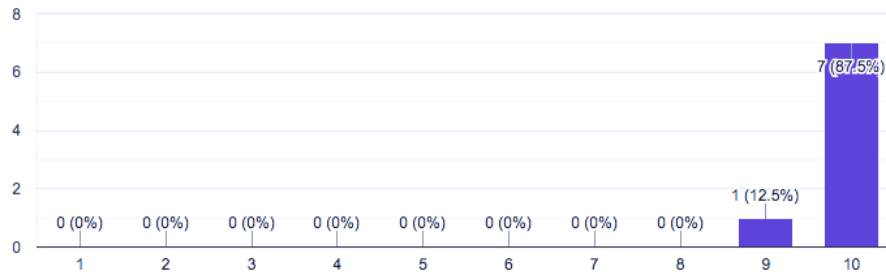
### Which dish stood out to you the most? Why?

6 responses

- Jian Bing. I haven't had a decent Jian Bing in the US before.
- jian bing
- Yoshinoya beef dish
- 一切的喝的都非常modern take on chinese rooted drinks
- 煎饼
- 芒果西米露

### Rate your experience?

8 responses



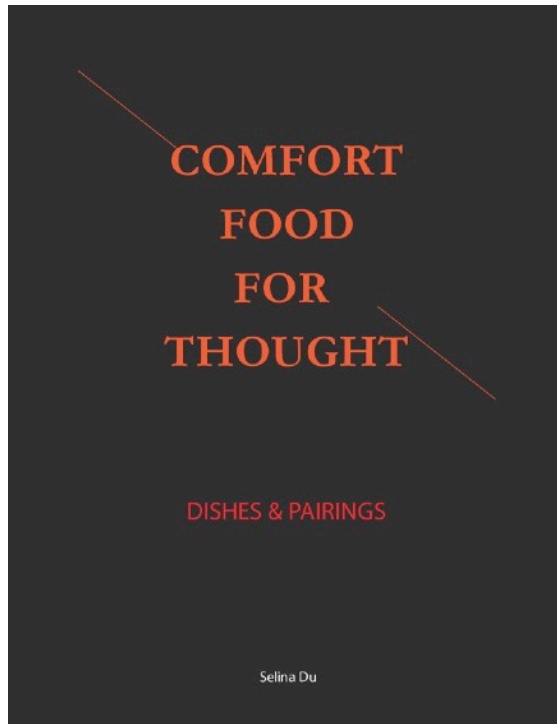
## Budget

### Budget Fixed

	Cost per Amount	Total Cost	Description
		1	128.11 Linda Ordered Supplies (Spherification kit, plates, cutlery, bowls, glasses
		1	86.03 amazon order (tea, ice freezers, matcha
		1	138.06 chinese grocery wfh food
		1	29.67 chair covers
		1	77.2 room divider tension rod + Curtain
		1	9.45 mango pulp
		1	47.23 dollar tree glasses
		1	<b>58.36</b> disposable plates, glasses
		1	13.3 uber XL
	10	8	85.6 chairs 8 construction junction
		1	55.02 target last minute decorations
			21.39 Drinks
			10.69 drinks
			53.38 lotus project raw amaterials
			21.04 target cups
			51.84 wholefoods raw materials
			24.67 amazon cups
			17.01 printed materials
			86.03 bxa materials


<b>TOTALSUM</b>	<b>1014.08</b>
FRAF Funded	500
BXA Funded	300
Total Out of Pocket Spending	<b>214.08</b>

# Menu




**COMFORT**

<p><b>DISH</b></p> <p><b>Tomato Egg Soup Spheres</b> This dish is a family staple, based on a snack widespread in Northern China, tomato egg soup is a traditional and popular Chinese dish. This tomato egg dish features a modified soup and a playful twist, but the same comforting flavors.</p> <p><b>Braised Beef Cubes</b> Orthodox in Sichuan, this braised beef dish emphasizes the rich, bold flavors of the region. The beef is paired with tender braised beef cubes and delicate flowered peas to give you the best of both worlds.</p>	<p><b>PAIRINGS</b></p> <p><b>Carbonized Green Tea</b> Green from the forest, a rich, the design is well with traditional egg as a classic local treat, you should enjoy it the most.</p> <p><b>Spicy Poppercorn</b> A dash of spicy heat and a little bit of Sichuan, the flavors of the Braised Beef Cubes, Spicy Poppercorn is inspired by Sichuanese.</p>
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**COMFORT**

<p><b>DISH</b></p> <p><b>Guo Da Soup</b> From the South of China, Guo Da Soup is a traditional dish with a long history. It is a hearty soup made with pork, beef, and chicken, and is often served with a side of rice. The soup is rich and comforting, and is a staple of many households.</p> <p><b>Jian Bing</b> A traditional street food of China, Jian Bing is a popular snack. The ingredients have been passed down for generations. The ingredients used to make Jian Bing are simple, but the flavors are rich and delicious. It is a must-try dish for anyone who loves Chinese food.</p> <p><b>Mango Sago Caribidee</b> This is a traditional dish from the Caribbean. It is a sweet and comforting dessert made with sago, mango, and coconut. The sago is cooked until it is soft and sticky, and the mango is sliced and added on top. The dish is often served with a side of whipped cream.</p>	<p><b>PAIRING</b></p> <p><b>Carbonized Spring</b> A simple refreshing drink to pair with the rich flavors of Guo Da Soup, carbonized spring water, carbonized tea, with a little bit of sugar.</p> <p><b>Rosemary Infusion</b> Rosemary is a classic herb with a slightly bitter, piney flavor. It is often used in cooking to add depth and complexity to dishes. In this pairing, the rosemary infusion complements the rich flavors of the Guo Da Soup.</p> <p><b>Langhin Plum</b> Langhin Plum is a traditional Chinese dessert. It is a sweet and comforting treat made with plum, sago, and coconut. The plum is cooked until it is soft and sticky, and the sago is added on top. The dish is often served with a side of whipped cream.</p>
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## **2. Artist Research Statement**

This project was supported in part by funding from the Carnegie Mellon University Frank-Ratchye Fund For Art @ the Frontier and BXA Frant.

### ***Abstract***

The initial curiosity for this installation project, Comfort Food for Thought, was to explore my interest in food and art but to also explore human behavior to culturally and socially charged food art. I wanted to see and explore how individuals respond to culturally themed dishes in a food interaction dinner event. In addition, I wanted to understand the role food plays in the understanding and change of thought towards certain cultural and social issues. The goal is to create integration between food, formalities of dining, art and exploration of cultural and social significance.

The types of social commentary include consumption, capitalism, westernization and cultural misappropriation. The themes of the project are heavily influenced by my Economics and Business background. The physical form of the piece and interactive aspect of the piece is heavily influenced by my art background. Overall, I was curious on how to integrate all my interdisciplinary knowledge to create an intriguing interaction heavily piece that changed the viewers perception.

### ***Research Question***

Through the form of a food interaction installation, how do individuals respond to culturally and socially themed dishes? What role does food play in the understanding and change of thought towards certain cultural and social issues? The goal is to create integration between food, formalities of dining, art and exploration of cultural and social significance.

## ***Process and Intentions***

The project began when I wanted to conclude my time at CMU and combine all my newly learned skills. This included some of my hobbies and work outside of academics. I wanted to bring in cooking skills developed during my time here at CMU. I felt food was the best way I could feel at home, or share my culture. Trying to tie together culture, art and economics, I came up with Comfort Food for Thought.

I wanted to create an interactive art project that connects food and exploration of social issues. The goal is to create an intricately designed dinner event installation for a selected group and record the interaction. The inspiration for using molecular gastronomy as a technical method was inspired by The Center for Genomic Gastronomy. They use techniques in presenting social issues through food and will be further introduced below (Kramer). The goal for this project is to design dishes that create conversation and thought.

This project will be physically similar to projects like Judy Chicago's The Dinner Party and Daniel See's A Dinner Party series that have explored use of food, dining, collective eating, as conversation of art (See) (Through the Flower). I will be aiming to provoke conversation during a dinner event. My project will be thematically similar to Jasmine Cho's Cookies, but instead of utilizing a dessert, I would like to create an event that embodies my commentary (Cho). I intend to integrate food and art by creating recipes and an event for the purpose of presenting cultural and social commentary. This will differ from See's, Chicago's and Cho's work.



Skills I used included molecular gastronomy skills, photography, business presentation skills, budgeting, installation techniques, menu design skills, dish design skills and economics background knowledge.

Below is a table of the intended schedule for the spring semester.

January
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Order Supplies</li><li>• Finalize Concept</li><li>• Practice Dishes</li><li>• Order Supplies</li><li>• Decide on location for event- Temporary found a location at a friend's place, am still talking with a Restaurant owner about potential hosting at the restaurant</li></ul>
February
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Book Location for Event</li><li>• Order Supplies</li><li>• Invite Individuals- Started finding Participants</li><li>• Practice Dishes</li><li>• Work on Menus – Show Bob Semi-Finished Menus</li></ul>
March (Actual Event Mid or End of March)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Practice Dishes</li><li>• Document Dishes</li><li>• Print Menus</li><li>• Order Supplies- Raw Materials</li><li>• Actual Event</li><li>• Prepare</li></ul>
April
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• April 3<sup>rd</sup> (Deadline) Register for Meeting of Minds</li><li>• Compile Written Reflections and Plan Presentation of piece</li><li>• Create Poster/Documentation for Meetings of the Mind</li><li>• Documentation for BXA</li></ul>
May
May 6 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Minds

### ***Project Narrative***

I am aware there is an array of projects that touched on a topic similar to mine, but in different forms. These artists and organizations include Judy Chicago, Daniel See, Jasmine Cho, Jon Rubin & Dawn Weleski, The Jasper Project, and The Center for Genomic Gastronomy. My project will utilize skills present in these projects to tie in both a community and experimental aspect. Both the design of the dishes, methods for preparing the food, social response

and dinner installation environment will differ from previous projects and will add to the array of currently available projects and resources.

The project design will consist of a five-course meal with pairings shown on a designed menu. Each dish will have a short description and cultural background. The dishes will be similar to Omasake, where the chef will decide the dishes served. The initial phase will be to plan out the potential dishes and the way each dish relates to the overall theme. The goal is to have the dishes tell a story and hold cultural significance. The dishes will be traditional or comfort foods found in Asian culture, with a heavy focus on Chinese culture. Molecular Gastronomy and western techniques will be utilized to create and serve the dishes, this form of fusion will comment and create the environment to spark conversation around the role of western society on cultural heavy aspects of Asian society.

The kind of methods applied includes general installation techniques, molecular gastronomy techniques, general food preparation techniques, photography techniques and mixed media experience to set up an overall environment for the project. The end product after the experience will be a photo documentation of the dinner event and survey reflections from the participants. The purpose is to design food to create conversation and thought towards a group of 10 randomly selected Chinese International Students.

Below will be some background for inspirations for the installation project:

The Center for Genomic Gastronomy is an artist-led think tank that aims to showcase the connection between art, genomes, food systems, culture and technology (Kramer). They also utilize paper descriptions with their dishes to create conversation. However, their focus is more towards genetic, genomic issues of food and focuses more on environmental factors (Kramer).

Rubin and Weleski's piece Conflict Kitchen has received countrywide attention as the piece combines culturally charged dishes and political activism (Conflict Kitchen). The project consists of rotated cuisines in a take-out restaurant. The cuisines will be from cultures that have conflict with the US (Conflict Kitchen). This project successfully combines activism and food to engaging with a diverse set of audience. Although, I will not be working with political activism, it does show how to interact with an audience and bring in culturally loaded themes into food art.

Chicago's piece is also a heavy inspiration for this project, but Chicago's piece focuses on honoring the history of women through a Western perspective (Through the Flower). Although The Dinner Party is also a social commentary focused piece, does not focus on the same areas as the proposed project. In addition, the piece did not use the dinner itself and the formalities of dining as heavily.

The Jasper Project's The Supper Table aims to honor the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Judy Chicago's piece The Dinner Party (The Supper Table). This project functions similar to Chicago's piece and also will not be focusing heavily on the dining and food based aspects that my project aims to focus on. This piece focuses more on honoring important woman from South Carolina and has a smaller focus on culture, which differs from my goal.

See's series was a collaborative project where multiple Dinner Party events were held. Each event had a different focus, but they all aimed to provoke conversation while having a dinner event (See). The project had themes such as Holiday and Dine in the Dark (See). Each event invited 10 random participants and focused on societal issues such as inclusion and

created spaces where participants could “interact in unconventional ways” (See). This has a similar goal as my piece, but instead of putting less emphasis on the meal, I would like to choose food to play a more significant role. The role of the dishes would tie to the cultural commentary I aim to make.

Jasmine Cho’s activism Cookies serves a similar purpose to the dinner installation event I plan on building. The cookies are made with images of social or cultural topics and serve as a form of activism (Cho). Cookies also have a unique role in our society where it is a western desert and mainly intended for younger audiences. Through this, Cho is able to present her message to a large variety of audiences with juxtaposition with cultural heavy themes on a commonly viewed children’s treat (Haley). Finally, she presents her cookies through social media platforms to reach a wider range of viewers. My project will aim to create a similar juxtaposition by utilizing Western food preparation methods on Asian dishes. In addition, I will also be posting on social media to give access to a wider variety of audience. What differs with my project is rather than focus on only desserts, I will focus on a meal experience. In my opinion, an experience gives a more holistic and long-term change in an individual’s perspective. The installation experience will create interest in the themes presented during the event and help participants want to understand the goals more deeply.

Adding all these points together, my piece aims to create social and cultural commentary in the form of a dinner event installation experience. The methods of creating the dishes will be Western methodologies to juxtapose the comfort and cultural food dishes. The proposed work fits into and advances the field’s current creative context and conversation because in the past, projects similar

to the dinner project do not include culturally charged or socially charged goals such as consumption, capitalism, westernization and cultural misappropriation. Due to the lack of installation projects that focus on food and art, this project will advance and create the path for more ties between food, culture and art.

### ***Outcome***

Overall, the final project was similar to what I imagined it would be a year ago. However, I did adjust the scale of the project and the documentation of the project. Throughout the process of working with Bob, my advisor, and getting commentary from students and fellow artists, I felt photo documentation would be the best form of documentation. Video recordings would be too formal and cause natural conversation to be lost. Self-reflections were the alternative documentation to video, and this adjustment I felt was effective.

The project was also installed and performed 2 weeks before the projected date due to fears of the Coronavirus getting more dangerous. I had cancelled my spring break plans to host the event early. Although this created a more stressful situation, there were multiple happenstances that made this project very smooth even in a rushed state. In addition, I felt this situation also helped me function well under stressful situations and to push through with imperfections and accept them as areas of improvement rather than an reason to delay the project.

The type of knowledge produced in the creation of my project was a group of 9 students who got to experience Comfort Food for Thought for the first time. I will be continuing this project to impact more individuals. In addition, the research and the documentation of the project are knowledge produced and the outcome of this food art project. The project will add to the limited food art projects out in the art world. I as an artist gained valuable skills as arranging a large scale interactive, installation. I

have also gained skills in working on a longer-term project that is heavily interactive and requires participants. In the past, my long-term projects have mainly been small daily tasks alone and wouldn't require heavy amounts of feedback and interaction as the final outcome. I was glad that my project and research was able to inform some younger artists at CMU. Bob had asked for some of my research and I had shared some of these links to a younger student to help with her works.

Finally, this project was able to tie together my skills earned throughout my time at CMU. From art skills for the installation, menu design, dish design and photography, to business presentation skills during the actual installation and economics skills for budgeting and thematic backgrounds, I was able to use all these skills to accomplish this project. I felt these skills were all tied together in this project. When integrating knowledge across these areas, I felt I was able to intrigue the audience to want to know more. They were curious to understand my perspective and learn about my intentions. This is a positive benefit of having interdisciplinary education. I feel that with different perspectives, I was able to create a unique perspective that other students are unable to see. When I show them my perspective, they will naturally be inclined to understand more out of curiosity. In addition, the combination of skills helps create larger scaled projects and I am able to do a variety of tasks independently. Not needing anyone to do my budgets, research, installation, and photography, I felt independent and motivated to keep pushing the boundaries of what is considered art.

### ***Response to Feedback***

After the project, I had asked for feedback via a Google form. A few participants also stayed behind to talk about the project itself. I felt that overall, the response was very positive and they were very willing to discuss the goals and themes of the project. A

large majority of them were intrigued by the foods themselves to stay behind and ask about the thinking behind the creations. Many wanted to bring portions of the night home, such as the menu and name cards.

However, I received feedback where some participants felt that the whole event and my presentation of the pieces were too quick. I felt that, due to doing the serving, cleaning and cooking alone, added to that problem. For this event, I wanted my assistant to be part of the event and decided to do the event myself, due to the limited kitchen space and preparation space. In the future, I would like to have more assistants for the event to create a better experience of the installation for the participants.

Overall, my response to the feedback was that I am further inclined to continue this project and keep creating these installations. Hopefully, in the future I am able to handle larger scale events with more charged dishes.

### ***Future Intentions***

In the future, I would like to continue working on this project and planning more dishes, events and installations. This project helped me realize the importance of trying to combine your skillset to create change. Rather than functioning in all my majors separately, it is important to work these skills together. This helps my art, economics research and business projects have more innovative direction and outcomes. Uniqueness of a project then creates more interest in the audience or participants. This interest will help spread your theme or be more persuasive. I feel this is an important thing to realize before going into more of a business setting environment.

The future for this project will be similar recreations with different dishes and different sets of participants. I would like to branch into different Asian cultures and

dishes to help spread more innovative thinking and culturally open minded thinking. In addition, I feel this semester and last semesters initial experimentation with food art has helped me branch into another area of long term art projects I can work on in my free time. In the past, I've done long-term data collection projects and documentation projects. These received very positive feedback, however, I feel now, they lack interactive aspects. To create truly audience changing pieces that touch on consumption, culture and capitalism, it is important to create interactive installations. In my opinion, interactive pieces leave a more long-term impact on the audience. In addition, installations put the audience in an environment that also forces the audience to interact with the objects in that installation.

I felt, food was a good pairing to interactive installation. During the project, I was able to observe how the audience members were extremely open to new or culturally open ideas. They may have not been as open to talk about these topics in a museum. This project also helped me push the boundaries of what is considered art and what I consider as impactful art. I was able to fully present my perspective and understanding to an audience through techniques I have never used for art before. I also used the feedback from my previous semester of initial experimentation for food art to improve the experience of my capstone project.

In the future, I want to use Comfort Food for Thought as the first version and help inform and act as a basis for the future versions and iterations of this project. The goal is to have each version be stronger rooted in the theme and intensions as the previous. I feel the feedback to each version will be crucial to the improvement of the project.

Personally, I really enjoyed working with food and seeing how successfully food tied to culture for the audience members. I felt that I was able to share my



understanding of Chinese culture to a group of people. I hope in the future I am able to share more of my unique understanding of Asian culture to more audience members.

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