Cramps suck. They suck more when you eat the wrong things.

When you’re on your period, you’re probably low on energy. You’re also probably hungry — you reach for the easiest (and nearest) source of food, and hours later, you find yourself having worse pain than before.

What happened?

Your body has a balance. Every time you eat, depending on the metabolic processes that occur in your body, your body’s balance wavers a bit. In various interpretations of medicine, foods are either cooling or warming, and an imbalance of either can lead to inflammation, disease, or cramps infinitely worse than they should be.

FoodFlow is an app that uses your camera to scan the contents of a fridge or receipt, and recommends recipes and food combinations in line with dietary restrictions and one’s preferred cuisine to consume or avoid depending on the period symptoms the user logs in over time.

Informed consumption heals the body from the inside out, and equips women to better understand and interact with their bodies.
**Manifesto - Overview**

Upwards of 31% of women who are on the pill use it as a way to combat bad menstrual cramps. With each of those pills come pages of side-effects, and millions of women experience mood swings, weight gain, and other hormonal imbalances that are far from ideal for one’s physical and emotional health. FoodFlow challenges the notion that the best remedy for cramps is by inducing additional hormonal imbalances and instead empowers women to look within, as conscious consumers. The philosophy behind the app is one of agency — by choosing what you eat, you can control your body’s circumstances and symptoms.

The app’s functionality is simple: the user feeds in information of two types, both information about their symptoms throughout the month, and scans of either their fridge or a receipt so the app knows what options the user has to eat. Based on earlier reported eating habits, the app will then recommend a few dishes for each meal, each with a description of how the ingredients can improve the user’s condition. Those dishes can be altered if the user identifies certain dietary restrictions, or their preferred cuisine. The user can conduct reviews of each recipe they tried, and give feedback as to whether those ingredients successfully alleviated their symptoms. This user-feedback oriented approach creates an increasingly personalized software that informs the user of how their body is responding to certain foods, and how they can improve their period symptoms.

The ultimate goal of FoodFlow is to shift from a society in which women have no choice besides pills that often do not interact well with their body to one in which women doing anything short of improving and nourishing their health is not an expectation nor a necessity to combat menstrual pain. By using human-centered AI in which the user’s considerations steer the technology, FoodFlow can not only relieve women of their pain, but also empower them to use traditional medicine to consciously consume foods that will improve their overall health.
FoodFlow aims to give women the intuition necessary to interact with their body and enrich it enough to mediate cramps — giving them an alternative to going on the pill if they have circumstances that are difficult to reconcile with the symptoms of birth control (e.g., eating disorders, mental health concerns the pill’s hormonal imbalances exacerbate). Giving women and menstruating individuals the ability to control their menstrual symptoms is a cornerstone of empowering them, as removing the physical burden of cramps and emotional distress they bring directly leads to women being able to flourish — in their social interactions, by not being limited by their physical pain and mental discomfort; in the workplace, by giving them the ability to focus better and not be limited in productivity due to their cramps; and personally, in their ability to better understand and feel empowered with their own bodies.

By giving women more choices, FoodFlow addresses the needs of individuals with concerns that they may find themselves in a worse physical or psychological state after taking birth control than they were initially. FoodFlow provides an alternative where instead of the individual being forced to relinquish control over their body as a result of taking the pill, it instead directs control in the hands of the user themselves, equipping them with the knowledge to mediate their symptoms without having to take on a list of additional side effects that may only worsen their state. By empowering women and reducing the extraneous physical and psychological burdens the pill causes, FoodFlow brings its users closer to a state of flourishing.

In order to better allow for flourishing for individuals regardless of their current circumstances, FoodFlow allows its users to decide which type of traditional medicine that is derived from hot-cold metabolization theory (e.g., Persian, Chinese, etc.) they’d like their recommendations to come from, and takes dietary restrictions into account if someone is living with a roommate or has certain preferences in their cuisine. It also suggests (via push notifications) ingredients for the user to stock up on before their cycle begins, to reduce the amount of stress users may experience during their menstrual period, further allowing them to flourish as it reduces the mental burden they have. In these ways, FoodFlow challenges the norms and expectations for women today and fights for a future in which women have more agency and control over their own bodies.