

Chicken Adobo - An Educational Comic

Cooking Culture, One Panel at a Time

Updated: September 22, 2025

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Project Intro: The project consists of an easy adobo cooking recipe for beginners or kids who might have an interest in trying to make a different dish from a whole different country. A 12-20 panel educational comic that makes each ingredient come to life with its own personality. By doing this, the comic not only explains how to prepare the dish step-by-step, but it also makes the learning process more fun and memorable for the readers.

I worked on this individually so I had the chance to have some creative freedom and decided on creating a comic cooking guide for Adobo, a Filipino dish. It's a simple dish to make where each ingredient can be found in your local grocery store. Food provides a universal way to connect and relate with others where the comic demonstrates a combination of visual storytelling with step-by-step instruction.

My goal for this project is to demonstrate how we can reduce cognitive load through visuals, sequencing, and storytelling. During the process, I found it challenging deciding how each ingredient should look and act. For example, Captain Cluck (chicken) starts as a full chicken but "transforms" into a drumstick (work outfit) when it's time to cook. I found an opportunity to make this into a playful gag for children or beginner cooks. Overall, I think that giving the ingredients character and personality allows the reader to remember the instruction and purpose of each character for the recipe.

Ultimately, this project pushed me to be more creative in design and educational storytelling.

THE PROCESS

Understand (Discover, Interpret, Specify)

DESCRIBE THE CHALLENGE:

Learners need an engaging, fun, and easy-to-follow recipe guide to cook simple cultural dishes like Filipino Chicken Adobo. Breaking down the recipe into step-by-step ingredient addition and personifying ingredients, the comic can make the cooking process more fun and memorable.

CONTEXT AND AUDIENCE:

The typical audience for this comic would be beginners to young children who are curious about cooking a cultural dish and want a simple guide on this recipe. This can include high students or maybe even college students who are starting to cook on their own in their own place. Likewise, adults who might enjoy creative instructions through a comic-strip style or even infographics might also enjoy this format. Adults who might want a dish with vegetables and protein and improve their confidence in cooking might find this comic more appealing (Brasington et al.,

2021). The typical audience might need clear instructions that are not overwhelming, visual cues where it shows how to do something (not just tell), accessible ingredients that can easily be found in the local grocery store, and engagement (Lavelle et al., 2016). Behaviorally, people who have low skills need gradual and slow steps where encouragement is promoted and visual comics can help reduce intimidation.

In extreme cases, the audience might be younger children who can't cook on their own yet but want to learn some cultural knowledge and basic food instruction through storytelling. Likewise, it can also be accessible and inclusive with people who have different learning needs or barriers. For example, individuals with low literacy skills or those learning English as a second language (ESL) can benefit from the visual storytelling since the combination of images, characters, and the simplicity of text and dialogue makes its readability more easy. Similarly, people with mild cognitive or learning disabilities might find the step-by-step format less intimidating and easier to follow. On the other hand, experienced cooks who already know how to cook and make adobo, they might find the comic humorous because of the unique character. In both cases, the comic can help their needs where it's entertaining and instructional.

From a demographic perspective, the audience can be broad where students, young adults, and food enthusiasts might enjoy the comic, but the targeted demographic are younger children or beginners at cooking. Psychographically, the comic might appeal to people who are playful, enjoy humor, and maybe appreciate how food can bridge culture and learning together. Behaviourally, the audience might be leaning towards learning something practical and a life skill (cooking) and something lighthearted.

As for the audience's goals and motivations, it might be having more confidence in cooking, potentially learning about Filipino culture, and enjoying reading lighthearted comic strips. The comic allows for the complication of cooking to be broken down where the barrier is reduced through humor and visualizing ingredients as characters where they each have their own purpose for the dish. This can help the audience retain the information and maybe try to cook the dish themselves having read the comic.

POV STATEMENT:

A beginner cook or child who is curious about Filipino food where the meal is balanced with vegetables and proteins needs a clear and step-by-step instruction so they can learn how to prepare Chicken Adobo that is both educational and entertaining.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Primary Objectives

1. Cooking skills
 - Learners can identify key ingredients of Chicken Adobo
 - Learners can follow step-by-step instructions to prepare and create the dish
2. Cultural awareness
 - Learners can understand the cultural significance of Adobo in Filipino cuisine

- Learners can recognize similarities and differences between Adobo and other types of dishes around the world

Sub-Objectives

- Learners will understand how each ingredient has a key role in the dish
- Learners can interpret visuals and sequenced instruction together (dual coding)
- Learners can follow along a step-by-step process without feeling overwhelmed or skipping a step through the cooking process

Plan (Ideate, Sketch, Elaborate)

IDEATION:

I brainstormed different possible topics for my educational comic. I wanted something I was both interested in and educational. I considered two main topics: **handwashing and germ spread** (public health) and a **cooking recipe**. I sketched out a basic outline of what might be done for the handwashing and germ spread comic strip and I thought it might be too hard drawing the people with my hands. I had an idea of a kid touching a doorknob, doing a closeup of their hand that's filled with germs, and then they rub their face with the same hand. Afterwards, I would show another person where they sneeze without covering their face and the distance the particles would fly from the person and show how much germs can truly spread if we don't wash our hands well. In the final few panels, I thought of doing the step-by-step handwashing techniques that most health authorities enforce to the public to ensure a safe and clean environment for all of us. In the last two panels, I thought of putting the proper way to touch public surfaces and how to cover your nose and mouth when sneezing.

As for the **cooking recipe** route, I was between having a person be in a cooking show and present the recipes to the reader or making each character have its own personality come to life. I chose the latter because I found it more fun and challenging to create new characters with different personalities that demonstrate how each of them contribute to the dish. I brainstormed how each ingredient would have a personality and how accurate it might be if they were to come to life. For instance, I'd imagine a Thai red hot pepper to be hot headed or enjoy the heat so they might be more impatient or have a temper. I mapped out in my head that I wanted each character to introduce themselves to the reader and maybe have a catchphrase to go along with it. Some of the resources that supported most of my brainstorming included online recipe cards, and readings on Mayer's Cognitive theory of Multimedia Learning which ultimately made me think of step-by-step instructions that are easy to follow for the readers without the content being too heavy.

STORYBOARD OR SCRIPT:

In order to make the prototype, I used Canva (without AI) to make the panels. Through Canva, I used their available and free comic templates and then made each panel my own. I used whatever available graphic and cartoon there was on the platform. If I couldn't find the ingredients with faces, I just placed a cartoon set of eyes and mouth on the ingredient to make the ingredient come to life as a character. I used available text bubbles and backgrounds in Canva as well.

SCRIPT:

Introduction

1. The main character is hungry: *"I'm hungry..."*
2. *"Let's cook Chicken Adobo with a little help from our friends!"*

Meet the Ingredients

3. **Chicken:**
 - Name: Captain Cluck
 - Catchphrase: *"I'm the protein that makes this hearty!"*
4. **Soy Sauce:**
 - Name: Soy Sam
 - Catchphrase: *"I bring the salty, savory flavor."*
5. **Vinegar:**
 - Name: Vina Vera
 - Catchphrase: *"I keep things tangy and help preserve the dish!"*
6. **Garlic:**
 - Name: Gigi Garlic
 - Catchphrase: *"I fight off blandness with my bold taste!"*
7. **Bay Leaf**
 - Name: Baymax
 - Catchphrase: *"I may be subtle, but without me the Adobo tastes incomplete!"*
8. **Peppercorns**
 - Name: Spicy Jr./s (?)
 - Catchphrase: *"We may be small, but we certainly pack a punch!"*

Cooking Step-By-Step

8. Gigi Garlic jumps into the pot
 - *"To make a base, start with me. Add some oil too while you're at it!"*
9. Captain Cluck joins Gigi garlic in the pot
 - *"I swear I'm still Captain Cluck! I'm just in my work uniform. Anyways, let's get sizzling!"*
10. Soy Sam pours himself in
 - *"Adding depth..."*
11. Vina vera pours himself in
 - *"Don't forget the tang!"*

12. Baymax joins them for a boil

- *"Patience... let us simmer."*

13. Spicy Jr. goes in with everyone to finish the dish off!

- *"Flavour boost activated!"*

Conclusion

14. A FEW MOMENTS LATER (french accent like Spongebob)

15. Random kids (audience)

- *"Teamwork makes the dream work."*

16. Final dish shown with rice with main character eating the dish

17. Feel good slide

- *"Adobo is more than a meal... it's a taste of home."*

18. Gag slide

- Captain Cluck
- *"Let's be honest here, I was the REAL star of this comic"*

19. Recipe Card

PRINCIPLES APPLIED:

The design of my Adobo Recipe Comic is guided by Mayer's Educational Multimedia Design Principles where I focused on reducing cognitive load and promoting knowledge retention.

Segmenting Principle

The comic strip layout where each panel breaks the recipe down by showing which ingredient to add first and introducing each ingredient separately for the reader to know what is needed can help manage the intrinsic load by gradually pacing the information and material to the reader (Rey et al., 2019). The readers can process one thing at a time and recognize what each ingredient is used for in the dish rather than overwhelming the reader with information all at once. For example, Captain Cluck the chicken is introduced before moving onto the garlic or soy sauce where he says that he "adds the protein in the dish to be hearty". Likewise, the step-by-step introduction of steps and ingredients follows how cooking is done where we must gather the ingredients first and then combine them all together. That being said, it reinforces the reader to understand the dish and practical application of the guide.

Modality Principle

The modality principle focuses on making sure that information is presented in a way that has both visual and verbal mediums rather than relying on text only (Oberfoell & Correia, 2016). In my comic, this is applied through a combination of images where the characters are jumping into the pot and the liquid ingredients are being poured in. Additionally, the characters also have

dialogue (speech bubbles) where the Soy Sauce says “I add depth and flavour” and in another panel he is shown being poured into the pot and mixing with the other ingredients. Through this, it prevents any overloading of the visual aspect with heavy text where a balance of visual cues and brief explanations are used.

Dual Coding Theory

Dual coding theory demonstrates the idea that learners retain information when verbal and visual aspects are used when being taught any material. To introduce ingredients in my project, I used visual representations of characters and cooking actions while pairing them with play on words for the ingredient’s name along with short instructions and dialogue. This reinforces learning because the brain retains the information through image and words (Paivio & Clark, 2006). For example, the learners will not only learn about the ingredient but visualizing the garlic jumping into the pot allows for a memorable mental image that the learner must put the garlic in the pan and the visual metaphor of the Gigi the Garlic character demonstrating this.

Reducing Extraneous Load

Extraneous load is how the information is presented and not the content itself where the medium is discouraged from being cluttered, redundant, and unclear. In my project, I avoided clutter, unnecessary decorations and background details that do not directly contribute to the recipe. I minimized the extraneous load because it interferes with the learners working memory that is energy that can be used for understanding the content (Taylor et al., 2022). For example, I could have presented the panels with a very busy background filled with a kitchen with various pots, pans, and decorations, but I only presented what needed to be highlighted, which was the action and ingredient. By ensuring that each panel focused on these aspects, the design presents a clear guide on how to understand and re-create the dish without having to filter out the visual noise.

Personalization Principle

The personalization principle is when instructional texts are presented in a conversational style rather than a strict and formal style (Brom et al., 2017). In my comic, I made each ingredient into a character with their own personality and dialogue where I felt best suits their purpose. For example, Gigi Garlic boasts “I fight off blandness with my **BOLD** taste!” while Baymax the Bayleaf calmly says “I may be subtle, but without me, the Adobo feels incomplete.” This makes the comic more relatable and enjoyable, especially for new cooks who feel intimidated by traditional recipes. By using humour, character voices, and a conversational tone, the comic creates relatable and a connection with the learner.

Create and Share the Prototype

PEER FEEDBACK:

My peer feedback highlighted a few strengths of my comic which included the content, authenticity, and way of engaging the readers. Both peers pointed out that using characters with names for ingredients, along with the comic’s warm colors, helped make the comic feel more dynamic, fun, and easy to follow. They also pointed out that the planning process where I

showed the storyboard and discussed character introductions were detailed and cohesive. Additionally, the use of arrows allows for the readers to follow the panels which helped with flow and readability.

In terms of suggestions, my peers offered a few areas of improvement for my comic. One of my peers recommended incorporating more recipe details, such as portion sizes and timing in a recipe card or integrated in my panels. Another peer suggested adding a label for all the ingredients, specifically for Soy Sam, to match the way other ingredients were presented which could avoid confusion.

Both reviews indicated that the work was strong and visually appealing, though there is room for improvement for clarity and more detail regarding the recipe.

Reflect and Refine

REFLECTION:

One of the aspects that worked well in my prototype was the creative approach of turning recipe ingredients into characters. This design choice aligned with Mayer's (2014) personalization principle, which focuses on how relatability and a more conversation-like style can help learner engagement. My review from my peers noted how this approach with warm colors and arrows helped the comic feel more dynamic and easy to follow. The "meet the characters" section provided more context which helped the learning process be more cohesive and structured. These design strategies helped support cognitive engagement and helped present the recipe information in a way that was both educational and entertaining.

At the same time, the feedback highlighted areas where improvements could be made such as adding more specifications regarding the recipe, such as portion sizes and timing. In terms of the learning process, I thought it was intuitive to me and was unsure which of the principles applied the most based on little things such as font, color, and size when it came to making the comic because this process is where the modality and redundancy principles truly stand out and apply when it comes to multimedia instruction (Liu et al., 2023). Additionally, ensuring that consistency and completeness in terms of visual design can contribute to the learner's ability to process the information being presented without feeling confused (Bannert, 2002).

Upon revising my prototype, I addressed these issues by ensuring ingredient labels were consistent across the panels and characters and I also added a new panel which introduced a more detailed recipe card that shows portion sizes and timing. Also, initially I thought that personalization just meant adding dialogue and characterization of each ingredient, but I realized that tone and humor were equally important in reducing intimidation for beginners. I used Vanjo Merano's (2025) Filipino Chicken Adobo Recipe and followed his recipe and instructions for this panel. I think this addition allowed for the comic to retain its narrative and incorporate a more concrete reference point for beginner cooks. By adding this panel, it reinforces the dual coding principle where the text and visuals work together to help information information and comprehension (Wong & Samudra, 2021).

I think that some of the limitations with this comic was time and resources. In my initial storyboard, I included action words such as “wheel!” or “whoop!” where the characters are being thrown in the pot. I couldn’t find free words that had the exact format that I wanted on Canva so I decided to leave it out. Also, I wanted to include the ingredients in one pot and show that they were being mixed as one ingredient is added after another. However, I found that it was too difficult to demonstrate this all in one panel while also showcasing the next added ingredient. I believe with extra time, I could have made a new panel that focuses on every time a new ingredient was added into the pot and showed how they interacted with other ingredients.

The issues that were raised in the feedback were mainly focused on clarity and depth of information which are really helpful to my educational comic, especially when the over simplified visuals can truly trade-off the instructional precision and at the same time, too much detail can overwhelm the readers. I addressed this by balancing which information I should leave in the main comic such as the ingredients and which ingredient to mix one after another, while providing the reader a more concise recipe details outside of the story. This way, the learner can enjoy the story without having to lose the practicality of making this recipe.

Overall, multimedia for learning such as comics are powerful tools for learning because they use many aspects of how an individual learns. Multimedia uses imagery, text, and narrative in a way that reduces extraneous cognitive load and promotes engagement (Çeken & Taşkın, 2022). However, this limits the details and conciseness of certain topics where the oversimplification might confuse readers and the information might be insufficient. When used thoughtfully, however, multimedia can be an effective instructional medium that helps the learners stay more engaged and promote deeper comprehension while also reducing potential cognitive loads (Candido & Cattaneo, 2025).

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