

Bete'avon Y'all: *A Southern-Jewish Cookbook*

Peter Henig



Artist Statement

Peter Henig is a Jewish, transmasculine illustrator and artist originally from central Florida. He's a home baker/cook and lover of most all things creepy AND cute! Peter works both traditionally and digitally, playing with a variety of mediums. He enjoys food illustration, merch design, gouache painting, and printmaking!

Peter creates fun, colorful images that incorporate earthy elements and whimsical imagery alike. His work often showcases his identity, playing with subjects of Judaism, Queerness, and his own trans experience. He loves sharing his art in person and has shown at conventions like MetroCon Tampa. He's currently residing in Portland Oregon and is pursuing a BFA in Illustration at the Pacific Northwest College of Art. Peter will be graduating this spring!
(SP22)



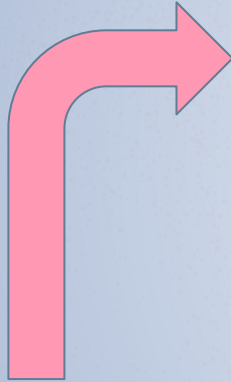
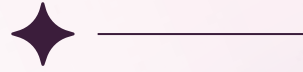
Thesis Proposal



“There’s something about the vivid memories of freshly baked pies wafting through my childhood kitchen, and the stretchy pull of dough of braiding challah at school. Nostalgia for these memories fuels my love for food, cooking, and baking. With a [48 page] zine-style cookbook, I will showcase my heritage with various Jewish and Southern recipes. By redeveloping 24 recipes from my childhood and cultural background, and compiling them into a fully illustrated cookbook, I will explore my connection to food, my deep love for it, and my own culture through the lens of colorful food illustrations.”

“This cookbook aims to be a compilation and overall exploration of my Jewish-Southern cultural upbringing, existing in a form that can be appreciated, and utilized by other folks. Shared recipes and food cultures have always been an integral part of my life and by creating a physical cookbook-zine, I can share recipes with a broader range of possible audiences. The zine format keeps costs lowered and raises accessibility of the end product. This cookbook will welcome people into my little corner of the food world, opening new doors for those with no experience with either Jewish or Southern food; if someone else can experience the childlike joy of folding hamantaschen or making homemade biscuits for the first time, of learning and feeling connected to a food culture through my illustrations and text, I would be delighted. That idea alone establishes a solid sense of need in me to flesh out this project in full. I hope for this cookbook to be a little piece of my love for food and culture that I can put out into the world and share with others.”

Thesis Proposal



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Abstract/Project Statement



Bete'avon Y'all is a 56 page, zine-style cookbook that contains 14 different illustrated recipes. Each of the recipes contain varying degrees of fusion between Jewish and Southern food cultures. The zine functions as a project that not only reflected what was my personal relationship with food but also something that can be shared with others in a physical format.

Oral Presentation



Shalom Y'all! My name is Peter Henig, and I use he/him pronouns. I'm an Ashkenazi Jewish, transmasculine, queer artist, originally from Casselberry Florida. I'm a home baker and cook, who's always had a connection to and love for being in the kitchen.

And without further ado, I'd like to welcome y'all to my thesis presentation; *Bete'avon Y'all: A Southern-Jewish Cookbook*.

My personal relationship with cooking and baking stems significantly from growing up in the South and being raised in a Jewish household, wholly immersed in my community at school/synagogue and food-centric culture regularly.

Judaism is a religion that generally focuses on the remembrance of the past and celebrating survival, and food plays into every celebratory event in one way or another. The small Jewish school I attended up until high school always encouraged hands-on participation in holidays, ceremonies, and other Judaic activities, especially those involving food and its preparation. I always found myself engaging with my culture, from learning Hebrew to all of the school-wide celebrations full of food and music.

I also happened to be lucky enough to grow up in a household that encouraged my interest in cooking and baking, as well as the often exciting and chaotic kinds of experimentation that came with it. I was often helping my family cook dinners and holiday meals, learning to work with various types of baked goods, and participating in food-focused religious activities in my home.

The concept for my cookbook project, *Bete'avon Y'all*, stems directly from this connection to my culture and all of the memories I associate with being in the kitchen as a child. So many of these memories involve cookbooks and physically written recipes. I can remember from a young age thumbing through shelves of cookbooks, dog-eared pages of recipes I wanted to try myself, planning Passover and Hanukkah dinners with my parents, and spending each time in the kitchen learning something new. My favorite cookbooks always were the ones containing exciting photography, bright imagery, and bold design; just never quite enough drawings of food, I always wanted to see even more visuals. This project for me is a reflection of what I wanted to see in a cookbook as a child.

I had a desire to create a project that not only reflected what was my personal relationship with food but also something that can be shared with others in a physical format. Initial questioning around the idea of, 'How can I explore my heritage through the lens of food, recipes, and cookbooks?' led to the decision that physicality was hugely important to this project. Being able to hold my cookbook in my hands, share it with the people in my life, and have it live as an item that could be sold or shared with so many others motivated my creative ideation.

Oral Presentation



The importance of the cookbook living in a zine-style format ties into this; being printed as a 'booklet' rather than a perfect bound or hardcover book allows for cheaper costs for both me as the artist when getting my final prints and those purchasing a cookbook. Hardcover cookbooks are generally expensive, averaging anywhere from \$25-70 ish!!!, but a zine-style cookbook allows me to get more copies made for less, and sell them for a little less, making them accessible to a lot more people. The final outsourced zine will be 7" x 9", full color, and printed 'booklet' style. The inside pages will be printed on a satin 80 lb. paper, and the cover will be on 100 lb. paper and printed with a 'matte lamination' finishing.

In terms of how my final project diverged from my original proposal and ideation; My original proposal consisted of a "[48 page] zine-style cookbook, that I will showcase my heritage with various Jewish and Southern recipes. By redeveloping 24 recipes from my childhood and cultural background, and compiling them into a fully illustrated cookbook, I will explore my connection to food, my deep love for it, and my own culture through the lens of colorful food illustrations." My current book currently consists of now 56 pages and just 14 recipes, so yall can do the math on that one. The zines content itself has not changed significantly though. The actual design elements, visual language, and recipes I kept stayed mostly the same and grew with the project as I completed the actual illustrations. Most of my edits of the original proposal came down to debating what recipes held the most impact and importance when I looked at the recipe list together. I wanted there to be a balance of sorts between the variety of dishes/level of fusion occurring in each.

The audience for my zine was also in the back of my brain the entire time I was ideating, writing, and finalizing the written recipes specifically for my cookbook. I wanted this project to be something that could allow other Southern-Jewish to feel like they have something that speaks to their niche little corner of food culture, but it was also important to me that this project could also be accessible to a larger audience. A project such as a cookbook is something that can ideally be shared with any number of people, and will hopefully create a different experience for each person. Something that can be familiar and comforting to one person, but exciting, new, and different for someone else. Creating a cookbook allows me to introduce aspects of my culture into my art, through the lens of cooking and food, something that can speak to a broader variety of people.

Oral Presentation



So now I'm going to take yall through the entire process that was creating this zine, after finishing the initial ideation needed to kickstart this project, the rest of the project was broken up into 3 main parts: text, visuals, and layout.

The physical process for this project really initially started with just the /most/ overwhelming list of recipes in my sketchbook to narrow down and edit to my liking. I started by listing categories and specific recipes from both southern and Judaic cultures, taking into account my personal favorites, family recipes, and what felt integral to the overlapping themes of the recipes themselves. (Elaborate a little further in-person about dissecting family recipes and deciding which ones would translate best to this small format cookbook.) It was also important that I was able to have certain trial and errors worked out in the recipes before I went forward with any other part of the book. So a huge part of my writing process also involved getting into the kitchen and tweaking as I cooked, and doing my research to see what others had done. Ideally reaching an end product that I liked and fits what I needed for the fusion aspects of certain recipes.

The choice I had made over winter break to move forward with 14 recipes gave me the space to give each illustration the attention and time it needed to be finished to my liking. The finished written document, after being edited and tweaked to be more personal and fun, allowed me to immediately begin placing things into a more physical and visual space. I laid the entire book out on my bedroom wall, all on large multi-colored index cards that I laid out to mimic my spreads. All color-coded to keep things organized for me while I sketched directly onto them so I could essentially see the entire book all at once (ALL the time lol). I aimed to rough layout every single spread to know where text would live on each page, how many spreads I needed for each recipe to fit, and where my spreads of diagrams would go. It gave me something I could reference easily while setting up other parts of my book, and the actual files for the illustrations. Once everything felt settled, that's when I finally took them down off of my wall, and compiled them into a little, janky, mock-up for myself to reference and to show how the process work looks visualized in a book format.

While beginning to sketch all of my spreads in Procreate, I also began to work on my font that's being used throughout the book in specific titles/headings. I wanted to tweak and re-work a font that combined the swooping letterforms that often accompany a lot of Hebrew fonts, with an all caps font to create a bold title font to be used on the cover and various other spreads throughout the book.

Oral Presentation



The next large chunk of the project was dedicated solely to rendering out each illustration. My process for fully digital food illustrations follows the same steps generally: starting with a semi-detailed sketch, placing in all of my flat colors, slowly building up layers of rendering, shading on top of this, adding lines afterward, and hitting each spread with the necessary analog elements and textures I wanted. I play a lot with blending modes, especially with my lines, to better emulate the textures I often like to bring to my entirely analog work. Adding analog scrapbook-like elements such as the use of tape scans, paper scraps, textures, and sticky notes, gave me the hand in the project type feel I wanted in the zine.

Laying everything out in Adobe InDesign was the final step in the main process chunks of the book. Making sure each spread fit the way I was hoping, making sure each page was numbered correctly, and laying out all of my written recipe text onto each page became the main focus. I tried to make sure nothing was cut off, and that each recipe was spaced properly. It was after the first pass of the placed text that it became evident that I'd need to make adjustments to a handful of spreads to make the text fit better altogether. By shrinking and adjusting my diagrams, but still keeping them bold and legible, I was able to move more text around and avoid any issues with the diagram-recipe spreads when printed.

Visually, I have always found myself influenced and inspired by the presentation of food, the wide range of colors created by these dishes, and how they're then documented in cookbooks. Both vintage and modern cookbooks offer varying types of inspiration for this project. The delightfully kitschy design of the 1950's *Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook* perfectly captures the playful energy that I associate with Southern cooking. I was lucky enough to happen upon a copy of my own, and have ever since been carefully reading through the fragile, rubber-banded together pages. Getting to appreciate and analyze the beautiful, textural vintage food illustrations has influenced the ways I consider analog textures and elements in my own food illustrations. More modern cookbooks focus on artfully photographing the dishes and thoughtfully designing their books. *The Pie and Pastry Bible (1998)* by Rose Levy Beranbaum, while a little less artistically designed than my other main sources of modern cookbook inspiration, has been a personal favorite and trustworthy go-to forever. The book itself, like many of the others she has written, is almost comically large and is a brick of recipe text interspersed with high gloss photographs of some of the pies and pastries. The book contains hyper-detailed instructions, diagrams, and charts, all aiming to teach the basics of pies and pastries before delving into over 300 recipes. Beranbaum's writing style is pretentious and meticulous, but I've always gravitated towards her recipes for inspiration.

Oral Presentation



Fully illustrated cookbooks are far and few between, so finding a project like *They Draw & Cook* has opened up so many doors for me in the world of food and cookbook illustrations. The project was started by food illustrator Salli Swindell and her brother Nate Padavick, creating an illustrative 'playground' for artists to share food and travel-themed illustrations. The illustrated recipe spreads from all kinds of illustrators have been printed as multiple cookbooks already, the first in the collection containing over 100 recipes. All of the other books play into specific themes and offer a variety of dishes and illustrative styles to experience, cook by myself, and gather inspiration from. I've also finally been able to be gifted and purchase a couple more illustrated food works and cookbooks since starting this project and they've all influenced me throughout the process of creating this all.

In terms of where I want this project to live after this, I intend as I mentioned before, am going to be getting printed copies of my book that I can have to show as a portfolio piece, proof of concept, and that I can create a large scale project in a set amount of time. The physical copies I intend to sell online, with the sticker designs I have here today with me! These copies I order first besides being available on my online shop will also be coming with me to the first convention I'll be tabling at after graduation. Allowing me to have an in-person event to show the project and sell to a variety of folk.

Discuss various avenues I'd like to not only take this project but also in my art career in general. (ie. food illustration, publishing, merchandising, editorial.) The way it functions in my portfolio shows emphasis on my ability as a food illustrator, but also shows my capacity to expand my skills in design, by working with larger bodies of text, laying out book compositions, and working with a lot of images in a shorter timeline. Emphasis on the fact that this is something that hasn't been done before, and that it's something I've always wanted to see in both the art world and the food world. Being able to create this overlap and fusion of it all allows me to share it with others and allow fellow Jewish Southerners to have a little piece of content for them to feel like they can relate to. Because it's for them as much as it's for me.

Oral Presentation



This project grew from what was just my initial excitement to make just a cookbook. That's all I knew when I had first begun attending thesis presentations freshman year, it was in the back of my brain brewing so I could finally understand what it was that I wanted this cookbook to focus on. This project allowed my love for food illustration to grow and develop so much and has also given me an opportunity to hone how my once only analog practice of food illustration has found its place mixing with the way I work digitally and bringing those aspects of my work closer together.

At this time I want to address how important this project is to me as a Jewish artist, the discomfort I've experienced creating art in an academic space about my identity, and how this project is a huge step in an important direction for me.

Thank y'all for taking the time to come to my thesis defense. I hope that this cookbook will welcome people into my little corner of the food world, opening new doors for those with no experience with either Jewish or Southern food; if someone else can experience the childlike joy of folding hamantaschen or making homemade biscuits for the first time, of learning and feeling connected to a food culture through my illustrations and text, I would be delighted. I hope for this cookbook to be a little piece of my love for food and culture that I can put out into the world and share with others.

Creative Brief

1. PROJECT VISION

Bete'avon Y'all is a zine-style, Southern-Jewish cookbook that explores 14 different recipes from both aspects of my heritage and cultural upbringing. This fully illustrated cookbook delves into my connection to food, my deep love for it, and my own culture through the lens of colorful food illustrations. The cookbook has a variety of recipes that best encapsulate my love for both food cultures and the dishes that come from each. Judaic gingham patterning, quirky hand-designed type, and scrapbook-like elements all accompany the food illustrations.

2. AUDIENCE

I can see *Bete'avon Y'all* existing as a zine that can be shared with anyone who has a shared love for food and cooking, and their desire to try something new. The project stems from personal experience and a love for my own culture, but I enjoy that the project can also exist in a space, where even someone with no connection to either culture, can enjoy both the visuals and the content of my zine. This cookbook will welcome people into my little corner of the food world, opening new doors for those with no experience with either Jewish or Southern food.



Creative Brief

3. METHODS + MATERIALS

The zine format keeps costs lowered and raises the accessibility of the end product. The food illustrations I chose to render digitally, allowed me more room to experiment with composition and keep continuity between a variety of food drawings. A hand-designed, Hebrew-inspired font, is featured throughout the book in section titles, headers, and the cover font; the body font of the recipes themselves will be a legible sans serif font for best results with printing. Analog textures, scanned tape, sticky notes, and other scrapbook-like additions will help create an even more homey and personable feeling to it.

4. MARKETPLACE APPLICATION

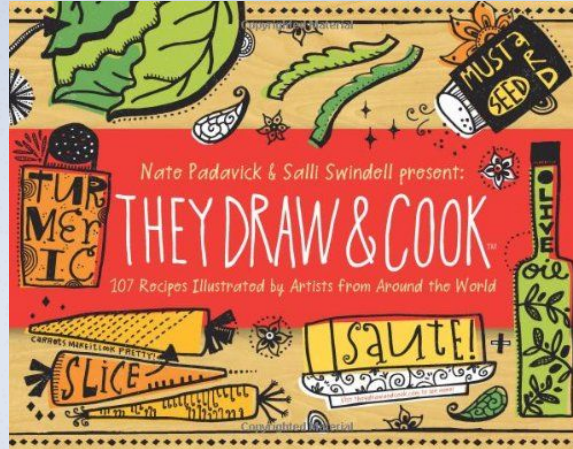
I intend to sell copies of the zine on my online shop, as well as present it on my portfolio page site for possible clients to be able to view the project. This project allows me to showcase my ability to illustrate food, create zines/combine food, and more narrative work, as well as fit into my portfolio nicely.



Creative Brief

5. COMPARATIVE MEDIA

Similar media in the cookbook realm would be books published through the *THEY DRAW AND COOK* website and more fully illustrated cookbooks such as *Let's Make Dumplings!* By Hugh Amano & Sarah Becan.



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Documentation



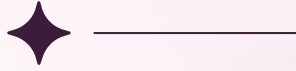
Documentation



Documentation



Thesis Journal



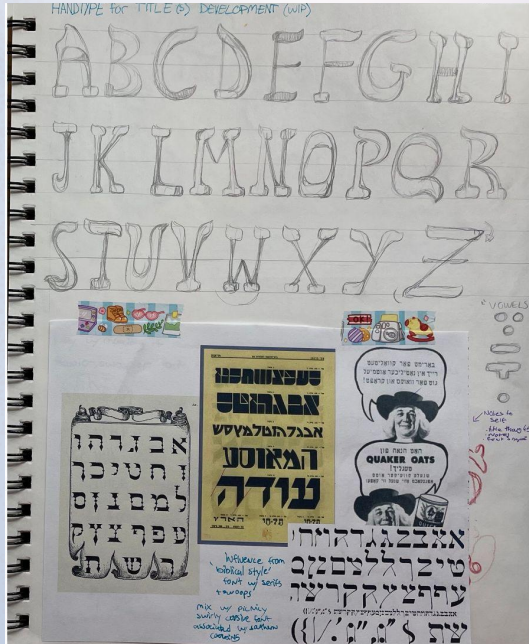
Question #3

What are the possible connection points between content + context that begin to create a compelling idea/narrative or concept?

- Food + cookbooks vs. southern + jewish heritage/context
- connecting overlap w/ jewish + southern food
 - importance of 'specific dishes/food items'
- Combining flavors, recipes etc. thru these 2 cultural lenses.
 - importance of food/ceremony etc.
 - storytelling, passing of recipes (both verbal + cookbooks)

Openings, Recipes, etc. w/

- | breaks | eggs | appetizers | desserts | meat | fish | sides |
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Thesis Journal

