

/website build-off

Recipe sites

We challenge three leading designers to find cool ways to present recipes online

See the pages in full! >
View the designs at:
netm.ag/kitchen-218
netm.ag/bbq-218
netm.ag/steak-218

The brief

Mock up the homepage for a recipe site. This can be a general site or covering a particular cookery niche: the choice is yours! The homepage should make people's mouths water, and give them the confidence that they'll be able to find something to suit their palate, quickly and simply. Think about the search functionality, and how you can introduce some interactivity.

Designers



Name Claire Nichols
Company Alniro
URL alniro.com

Claire is a senior designer for Alniro, a digital design agency based in Winchester. Major clients include B&Q, Screwfix, Hybris, Norwegian Cruise Line and the Ministry of Defence.



Name Josh Sullivan
Company Centresource
URL centresource.com

Josh is a senior designer at Centresource, a Nashville-based interactive agency. He's also co-creator of Designers.MX, a website for designers to share the music that inspires them.



Name Nick Fearnley
Company HGA Creative
URL hgacreative.com

Nick is a digital designer at HGA Creative, an award-winning marketing and communications agency whose clients include AG Barr, Phones 4u and Kellogg's.

Claire Nichols' solution

When I heard the brief was for a recipe site, I immediately decided to design it with a retro housewife theme (think Bree Van De Kamp from *Desperate Housewives*). My site is for a fictional company called Mrs Smith's Kitchen. My objective was to create a fun, easy-to-use website that enabled visitors to find recipes quickly. The site uses quirky video to demonstrate how to make the recipes.

As part of my research I visited sites such as deliaonline.com and jamieoliver.com, and produced some wireframe sketches for the layout and content of the homepage. The initial look and feel came together very quickly; it was adding the extra little touches, such as textures, that took time.

The website fits to a 960px-width three-column grid. Aesthetically, the colour scheme was kept to quite a muted palette to reflect the retro feel. I also looked at retro posters online to identify font styles that would work. The site would use CSS3 @font-face to implement these non-standard web fonts. Within the site, there could also be a 'use up what's in your larder' feature. This would be pretty useful in the current economic climate.

As with any design work, it's always great to bounce ideas off other designers, so a quick thank you to the team at Alniro (@AlniroDesign), Drew Jones (@andij) and Ben Andrews (@badenwrens) for their feedback. The ironic part of this project is that I'm the world's worst cook! ●

Expert info



Clare Nichols' month

What have I been doing?

I've just finished several multichannel projects for Hybris, including a new way to shop with tablet devices. Currently I'm working on the visuals for Europe's largest online retailer of yo-yos. I never knew how cool they could be: netm.ag/yoyo-218.

Sites I've visited

I regularly look at smashingmagazine.com and bestwebgallery.com as a starting point for inspiration, and I also love the Carsonified and Amazee Labs sites.

What have I been watching?

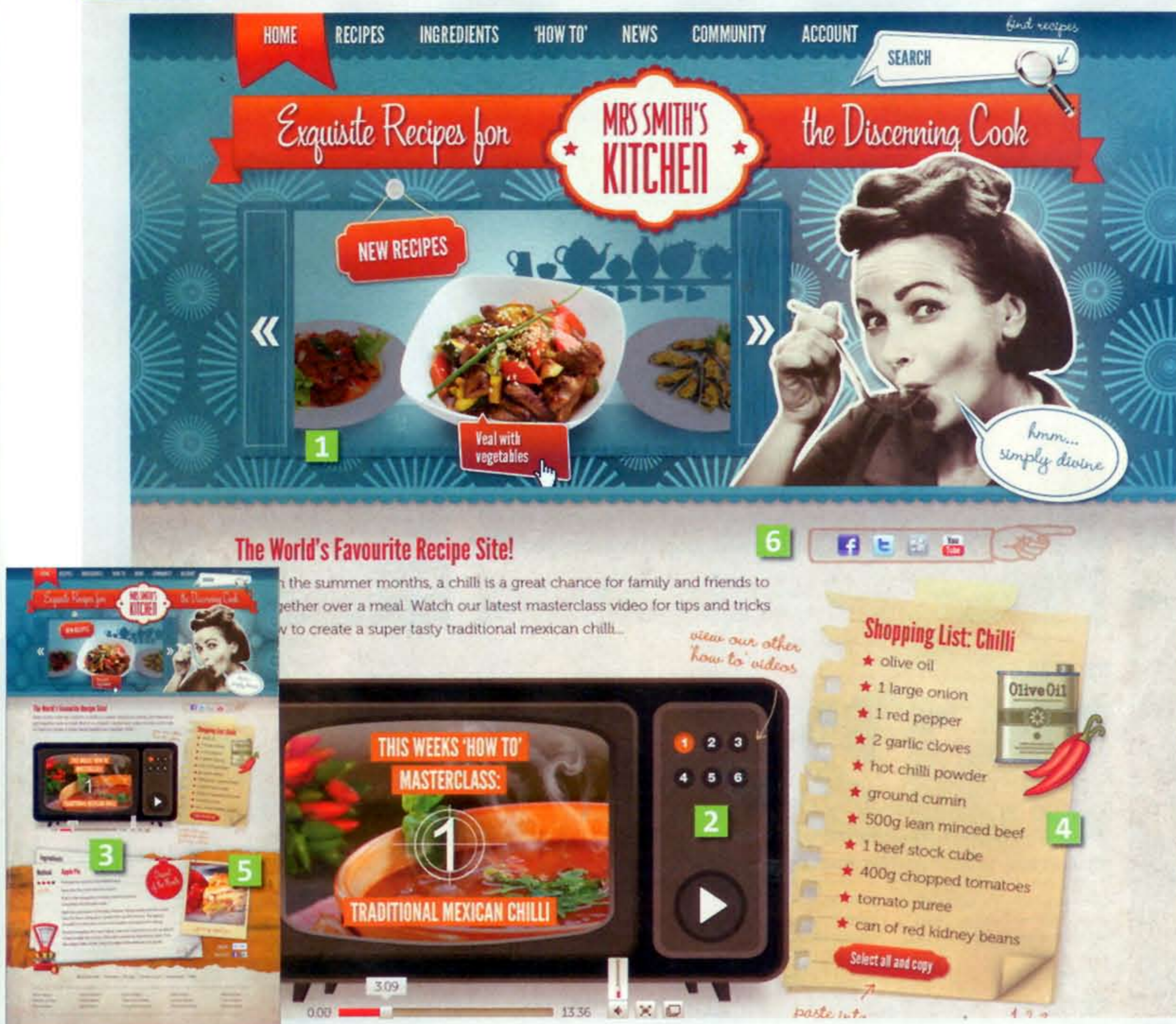
I'm usually too busy to watch TV, but I do enjoy the odd dose of *EastEnders* and *Desperate Housewives*. I've also recently watched *The King's Speech*.

What have I been listening to?

We listen to Radio One in the studio, the highlight being trying to guess the Golden Hour every Friday. I'm not admitting to what I listen to on my iPod!

Turn over to see solutions from [Josh Sullivan and Nick Fearnley >>](#)

Close up



1 Hero carousel Built using jCarousel, with some minor customisation, to enlarge the pictures and display the tool tips when you hover over a dish. We'd use jQuery to make the 'New Recipes' sign swing too.

4 Shopping lists To make shopping for ingredients easier, we'd create a 'copy and paste list' function, helping our readers to quickly paste ingredients into their favourite online supermarket.

2 Video guides To stay iOS friendly, we'd use HTML5 for video. The video could easily be watched full screen on an iPad while in the kitchen, which is where you want it most when you're cooking, after all.

5 Dessert of the month We'd bring these to life with some clever jQuery transitions to make the cards 'flip' over, and automatically animate the dessert Polaroid so the pudding in production can be shown.

3 Text We'd use CSS3 techniques to rotate the HTML text on the shopping lists and recipe cards, and we'd prefer to use the @font-face CSS method to embed our non-standard web fonts (font licence permitting!).

6 Social networking The ability to share the website (or individual recipes) with friends using Facebook's 'Like' and social network sharing functionality will help increase awareness of the site.

Expert info



Josh Sullivan's month

What have I been doing?

During my free time, I've been working hard to take Designers.MX to the next level. This month at Centresource, I designed my first iPad app and have been working on websites for the healthcare industry. All of this while getting to know my new baby boy.

Sites I've visited

I visit dribbble.com daily to see what other designers are working on. It's a great source for inspiration. Twitter is also a daily go-to. It allows me to quickly see what's going on around the internet.

What have I been watching?

I've been watching a lot of Netflix. Who needs cable when you can watch every episode of MacGyver in a week? I also watch Modern Family and The Office.

What have I been listening to?

I listen to mixes from Designers.MX all day while working. There's new music every week, and it's from all over the world. While in the car I can't listen to anything but NPR.

Josh Sullivan's solution

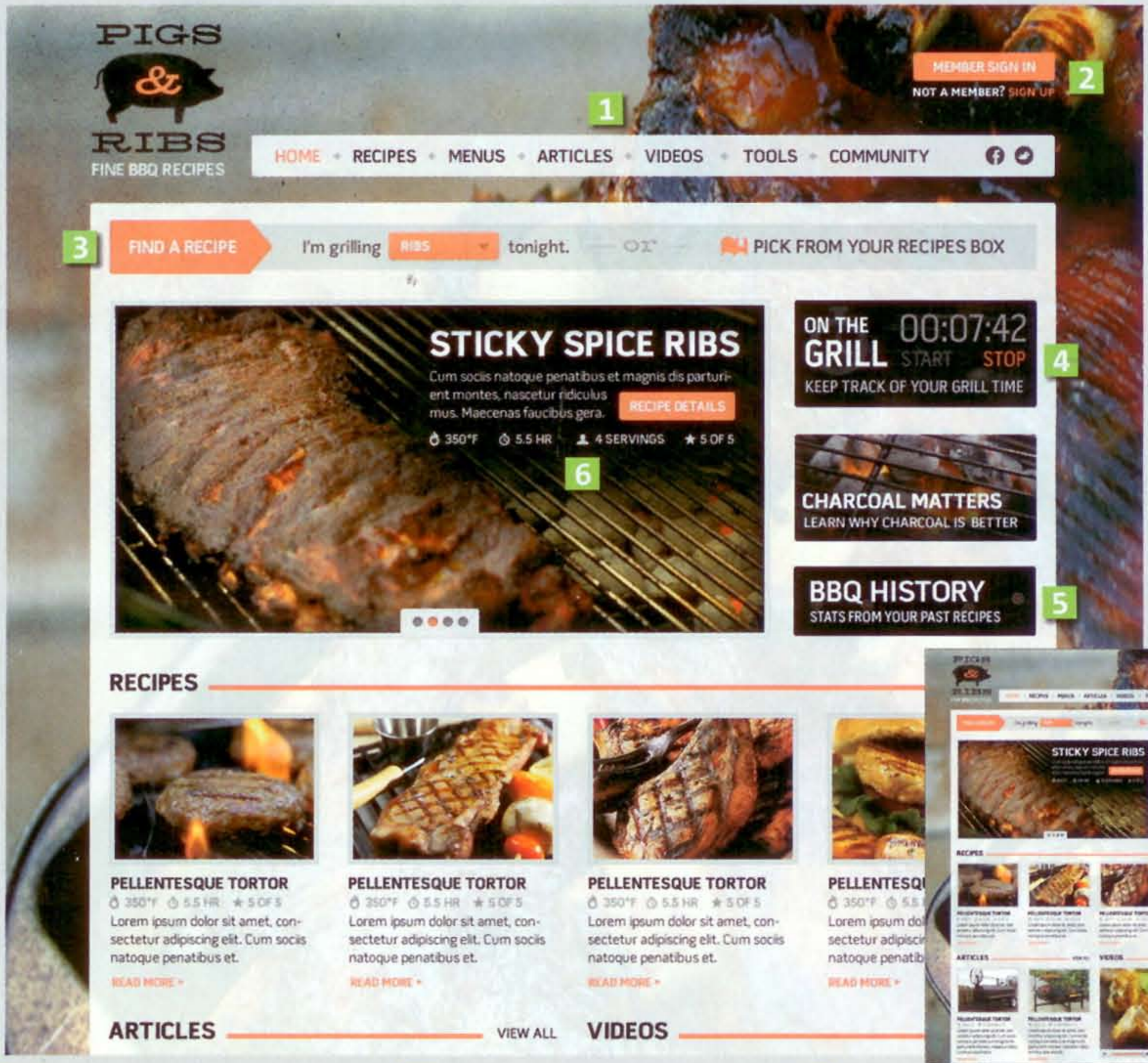
When thinking about the design for a recipe website, I wanted to create something I'd happily go to myself. I'm not one for cooking in the kitchen, but like any bloke I love a good barbecue. I wanted this website to be different and something that might appeal to the male population. And I can't deny that this hot summer heat has got me wanting to fire up the grill.

With this site, I decided to flip the recipe site on its head. I went with a niche food and created a brand that's tailored to barbecue and grilling. I was able to escape the traditional layout by introducing a large background image of some mouthwatering ribs. Not only are they mouthwatering, but the image really sets the style for the rest of the site. The

name came from a conversation I had with some co-workers at Centresource. I ran with the idea and created a simple logo that leaned on a few nice typefaces.

The site's users must log in to benefit fully from many of its community and interactive features. Key among them are a built-in timer, a user-friendly way to search the contents and a mobile version of the site. From your phone you can input live stats from your grill and keep track of cooking time. Members of the site can also save any recipes they like, comment on and rate recipes, log their grilling history and even share recipes of their own. It's like a barbecue fan's biggest dream! All of the fonts I used in the design are from TypeKit, and the site is all standard HTML and CSS.

Close up



1 Overall look and feel Using a large background image and subtle grunge layers, I captured the essence of the barbecue. A neutral colour palette that resembles sweet pork finishes the style.

2 Become a member After you become a member you can participate in the site at a whole new level. Key community features come alive, enabling you to have discussions on recipes and rate them.

3 Find a recipe What are you grilling tonight? The recipe finder is easy to use. Click the drop-down to select the food item you'd like to cook, and you'll be presented a results page with additional sort options.

4 Grilling timer The recipe tells you how long you need to let your steak sit on each side to be cooked to perfection. To help you get that perfect char, use the built-in timer. You can even use it on the mobile site.

5 Barbecue history So, you've really outdone yourself and cooked the perfect ribs. What did you do differently this time? Using the mobile site, via input cooking data, you can keep track of the details.

6 Recipe information I know how many mouths to feed, now I need a recipe. Using the at-a-glance details, you can determine the best recipe based on cooking temperature, total time, size and ratings.

Nick Fearnley's solution

The Steak Club is a fictitious organisation for steak lovers to find new recipes, and to share their own with the community. With the varieties of steak available I thought a site dedicated to them could be justified. I think cooking is fun and wanted the site to reflect that.

The colour theme selected follows a typical steak dish – browns as the main theme with greens as supporting colours. I originally wanted to base the design around a slate texture but it proved slightly too dark. Instead, my inspiration was thinking back to my mum's handwritten, food-stained paper recipes that she keeps in the kitchen.

It's important for users to be quickly able to access the right recipe for them. This is why I made the search form a prominent

feature on the homepage. The text fields included are used to gather a clear and specific idea of the scenario in which the user will be cooking. Using tags on each recipe means the data could be pulled quickly and easily, which in turn will help return a more precise search.

Along with the more obvious features that you'd expect to see on a recipe website, I thought it would be important to provide entertainment to fill the minutes spent waiting for the food to cook, and keep users on the site. This is why I included interactive games that involve the online community, such as Rate My Steak. This is where users can upload pictures of their cooked steak and have other users rate it. The prize could be that the top-rated steak is the featured recipe for that week.

Expert info



Nick Fearnley's month

What have I been doing this month?

I've been doing a lot of work on the new company website to get it up for next month. I've started work on several social media campaigns for different clients, finished off a site for a drinks company and am trying to figure out where to go on holiday.

Sites I've visited

[behance.net](#) is my favourite website by far. It's excellent for gaining inspiration from all different areas of the creative industry. I also like to keep up to date with news and videos on [ted.com](#).

What have I been watching?

I've been enjoying *Secrets of the Superbrands*, catching up on *30 Rock* and sneaking in a bit of *The Apprentice*.

What have I been listening to?

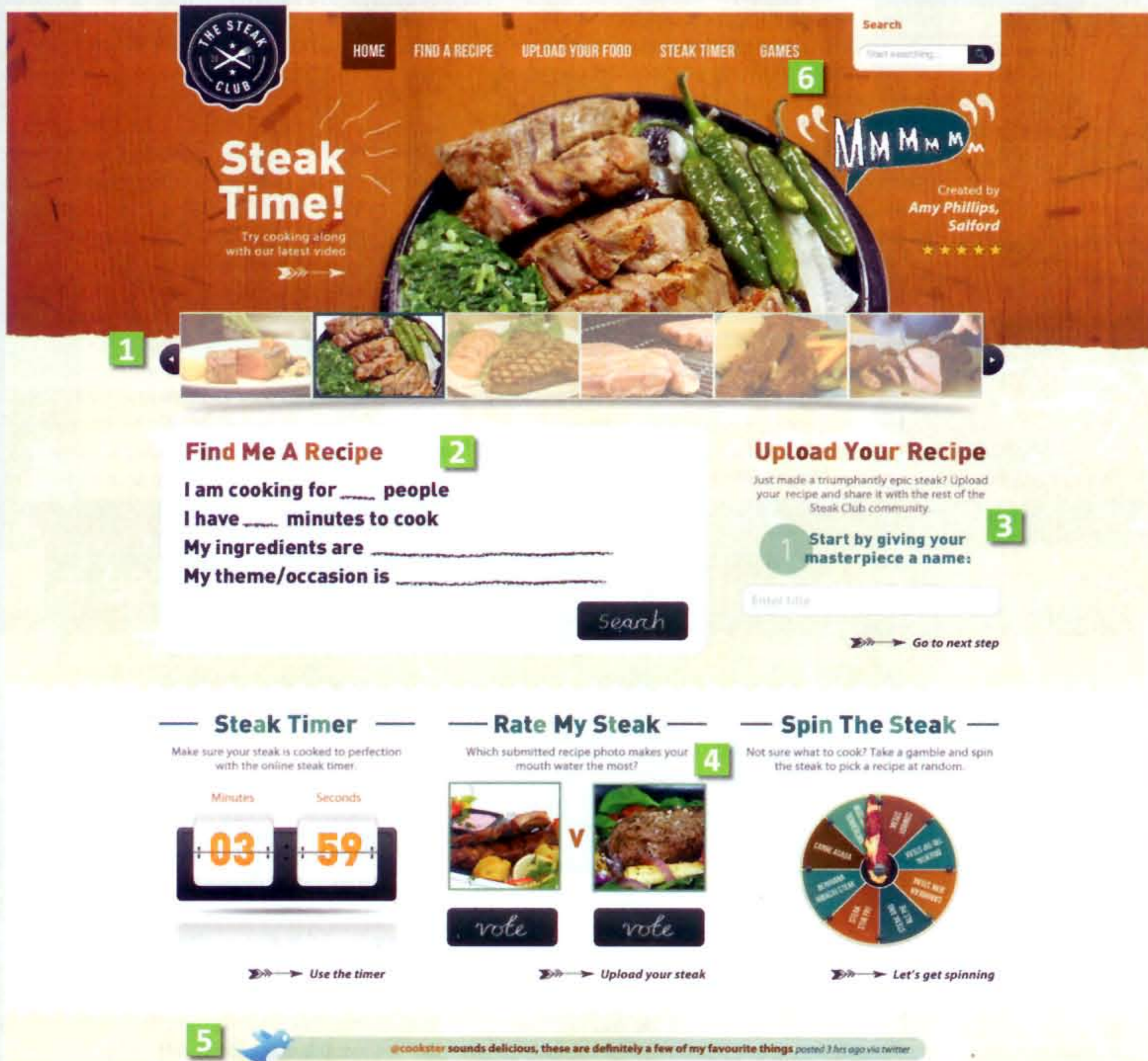
The music in the studio is a bit of a mix. Most of it revolves around Michael Jackson and Mark Morrison.

Have your say ...

Got a build-off suggestion? Let us know at feedback@netmagazine.com



Close up



1 Featured recipes It's better to have all of the images included in the featured recipes slideshow visible. This way the user can quickly see if there's anything on offer that catches their eye.

4 User rating Allowing recipes to be voted and commented on, as in the site's Rate My Steak feature, encourages a sense of community, where users can share their cooking experiences with others.

2 The lettering The site's brown and green colour theme extends to the type. Lettering.js (letteringjs.com), made by Paravel, is used to enable each character to be styled individually, without tedious amounts of code.

5 Twitter feed Having a Twitter feed linked into the website can help to raise awareness of the Steak Club via the social networking site and, again, encourages a sense of community.

3 Upload form As well as being able to find recipes easily, it's important that users can upload their own. The first stage of the form is already visible to entice users to participate and share their recipes.

6 Games Allowing user interaction straight from the homepage increases the ability to engage, and give users more of a reason for return visits. It also encourages them to stay on the site.