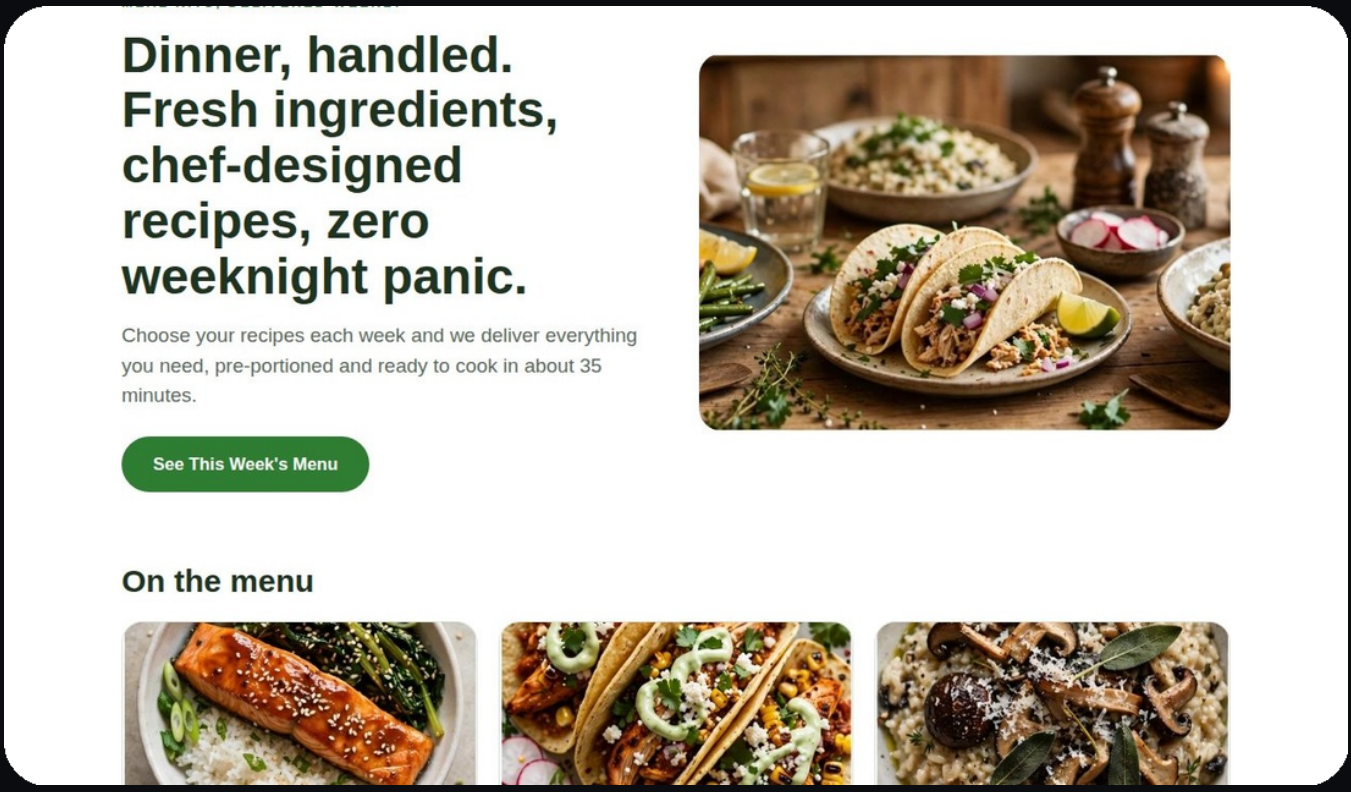
STEVE MOORE CONSULTING

Comparative Analysis

Harvest Crate

How one meal-kit company's website measures against ten others competing for the same subscribers, and exactly what to do about it



The subject's homepage, as evaluated for this report.

PREPARED FOR

Sample report. Harvest Crate is a fictional company, invented to demonstrate this service.

EVALUATION DATE

November 7, 2026

STATUS

Sample edition. Every company in this study is fictional; no real business is evaluated or depicted.

START HERE

What this report is, and how to read it

One thing first, because honesty is the product here: this is a sample. Harvest Crate does not exist. Neither do the ten companies it is compared against. They were invented, and their websites were built as exhibits, so that this report can show you exactly what a comparative analysis contains without publishing judgments about real businesses. In a client engagement, everything you are about to read is done against the client's live website and its real competitors, with the same method, the same rubric, and the same standard of evidence. The companies are fictional. The analysis is real.

What a comparative analysis is

A comparative analysis studies your website next to the websites of the companies competing for the same customers. It is not a design contest and it is not an opinion piece. Each site is examined the same way, on the same kinds of pages, against the same standard: the established laws and heuristics of user experience, the field's researched principles for how people actually read, decide, and act online. Where a competitor's pattern works better than yours, the report shows it, explains the principle that makes it work, and says what adopting it would take.

Why the signup path gets its own scrutiny here

For a subscription business, the website's hardest-working pages are the plans page and the signup flow, because that is where a visitor becomes a recurring charge on their own card. Shoppers judge those pages the way they judge the company: a price they have to hunt for, a plan chosen for them, a cancellation they have to dig out of settings. Those are not details. In this category they are the product's character, stated in interface. That is why this analysis walks every company's signup path end to end, including how each one treats a subscriber who wants to skip, pause, or leave.

Why the report is built this way

The format follows the competitive review practice of the Nielsen Norman Group, the most widely cited authority in user experience research. Its rules are simple and strict: describe strengths before problems; tie every problem to the specific, named principle it violates; attach a recommendation to every problem; and take your examples of what good looks like from the field itself, not from a single model. The scoring and the glossary exist for the same reason: a judgment you cannot check is just an opinion, and this report intends every one of its judgments to be checkable.

START HERE, CONTINUED

How the scoring works

Every site, including Harvest Crate, was reviewed on four stops: the homepage, the menu and plans pages, one full recipe or product story, and the signup path, walked end to end through plan selection to the point of payment, including the subscription management pages a subscriber lives with afterward. Each stop was judged against eight dimensions of pattern quality:

1 Positioning clarity
Can a first-time visitor tell, within seconds, what arrives, how often, and who it is for?

2 Navigation and information architecture
How the site is organized: the menu, the plans, how it works, and whether pricing can be found without a hunt.

3 Product storytelling
How the meals and the weekly menu are presented, and whether the story ends on appetite and proof.

4 Proof and trust patterns
The evidence a site offers that its claims are true: ratings, review counts, subscriber numbers, guarantees, sourcing specifics.

5 Interaction and motion patterns
How the site behaves: plan selectors, menu browsing, configurators, and whether that behavior helps or decorates.

6 Content patterns
How the writing is structured: recipe and menu writing, pricing copy, scannability, voice.

7 Conversion path design
The signup flow end to end, including price transparency, commitment clarity, and how skipping, pausing, and cancelling are treated.

8 Visual design system
Whether the site's look is a coherent system across homepage, menu, plans, and checkout, or a series of one-off pages.

What a dimension score means

Each company earns eight separate scores, one per dimension, and each score is a judgment about that one aspect of its website, made from the evidence on its four stops. A dimension score is not a measurement and it is not a grade against the other companies; it is a grade against the standard the dimension describes. A 5 on proof and trust means the site's evidence patterns are exemplary, the kind another company should borrow. A 2 means the patterns are missing or working against the company: on conversion, that the signup path itself is quietly making decisions for the customer. The eight scores are the real information in this report, because they show the shape of a company's strengths. The total ranks; the dimension scores diagnose. That is why this report shows the eight scores everywhere the total appears.

The scoring scale, in one table

Score	What it means	What it looks like on a website
5	Exemplary	The pattern is done so well that other companies should borrow it.
4	Strong	Above standard practice, with only minor gaps.
3	Competent	Standard practice. Nothing important is missing, nothing stands out.
2	Weak	The pattern is mostly absent, or present in ways that work against the company.
1	Absent or harmful	The pattern is missing entirely, or what is there actively hurts.

The math, spelled out. Each dimension is scored from 1 to 5. The eight dimension scores are then added together, and that sum is the company's total score. The most any company can score is 40, because eight dimensions times five points is forty. So when this report says Golden Hour Kitchen scored 37 out of 40, it means the sum of its eight dimension scores is 37. Harvest Crate's total, 25, is the sum of its eight scores, each of which is shown and explained on its grade page near the end of this report.

How to read the deep dives

Five companies get a closer look. Each deep dive opens with the company's score and the dimension-by-dimension evidence behind it, side by side. An annotated screenshot from the company's own pages follows: numbered markers point at the exact sections the analysis discusses, and the line under the image says what each marker shows. Where a pattern moves, the HTML edition of this report carries a short recording of it moving. The text follows a fixed order: what they do right, what they do wrong, why it matters (the principle behind the judgment), and a card explaining how Harvest Crate could implement the winning pattern itself.

What to do with it

Read in order if you can; the report is a story and it builds. If you are short on time, the executive summary carries the verdict, and the final two sections, the grade page and the action plan, carry every decision. The action plan is sequenced (this week, this quarter, then the differentiators) and each stage shows what it would do to Harvest Crate's score if the work were done to the standard the leaders in this report have already set.

THE SCORING, APPLIED

All eleven, dimension by dimension

This is the output of the system explained above: every company in the study, every dimension, in one place. Harvest Crate's row is highlighted. Keep this chart in mind through the company pages that follow; each deep dive opens with its company's row from this table, and Harvest Crate's full grade, with the reasoning behind every number, waits near the end, after you have seen the field it was judged against.

Company	Pos.	Nav.	Story	Proof	Inter.	Cont.	Conv.	Vis.	Total
Golden Hour Kitchen	5	4	5	5	3	5	5	5	37
Supper Society	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	35
MetroMeals	5	4	3	5	4	3	5	4	33
Stockpot	4	4	3	4	4	5	5	3	32
Verde Box	5	4	4	5	3	4	2	4	31
The Nightly Ladle	4	3	5	3	3	5	3	4	30
The Patient Kitchen	4	3	5	4	2	5	3	4	30
Farmstand Weekly	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	29
Harvest Crate	4	3	3	2	3	4	2	4	25
Quickfire Meals	5	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	20
Pantry Pilot	4	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	20

Columns, in order: positioning clarity · navigation and information architecture · product storytelling · proof and trust · interaction and motion · content patterns · conversion path · visual design system. Each scored 1 (absent or working against the company) to 5 (exemplary).

GLOSSARY

The terms in this report, in plain English

Every finding in this report is tagged with the principle behind it, so you can judge whether the finding is sound. These are those principles, translated. If a term appears anywhere in the report, its definition is here, and the sources section at the end shows where each one comes from.

Social proof
People trust what they can see others have already chosen. Ratings, review counts, and subscriber numbers are social proof; their absence is itself noticeable.

Dark pattern
An interface choice that steers people into decisions they did not set out to make: a plan selected for you, a price revealed only after commitment, a cancel button that is hard to find. The term is used in this report for practices, not intentions; a pre-selected plan is a dark pattern whether or not anyone meant it as one.

Per-serving price
The honest unit of this category: what one person's one meal actually costs. Weekly totals flatter large plans; the per-serving price is the number a shopper can compare across companies.

Retention flow
The screens a company shows a subscriber who tries to cancel: discount offers, pause suggestions, surveys. A retention flow is legitimate. Burying the exit behind one is not.

Peak-End Rule
People judge an experience mostly by its most intense moment and by how it ends, not by its average. A signup that ends on a surprise total is remembered as a surprise, whatever came before it.

Tesler's Law
Every process has a fixed amount of complexity; the only question is who carries it, the company or the customer. A plan builder that computes the total for you carries the complexity. A checkout that reveals it makes you carry it.

Fitts's Law
The bigger a target is, and the closer it sits to where the user already is, the faster and more reliably it gets used. A Manage Subscription link in the navigation passes this law; the same link inside Account Settings fails it.

Hick's Law
The more choices a person faces at once, the longer they take to choose, and the more likely they are to choose nothing. Eleven near-identical plans fail this law; three clear ones pass it.

Miller's Law
Working memory holds only a handful of items at a time, about seven, plus or minus two. A pricing page that makes a shopper hold servings, recipes, discounts, and shipping in mind at once creates errors and abandonment.

Recognition over recall

People are far better at recognizing the right option when they see it than at remembering it unaided. Good navigation shows people their options instead of making them remember yours.

Minimalist design
A usability heuristic: every element on a page competes for attention, so anything that does not help the visitor decide or act dilutes the things that do.

Von Restorff Effect
The item that stands out from its surroundings is the one that gets remembered. One distinctive number on a page of prose is the thing a shopper repeats at the dinner table.

Aesthetic-Usability Effect
People perceive attractive design as easier to use, and forgive minor flaws in it. Beauty is not decoration; it changes how usable a site feels, which is why this report separates it from honesty: a beautiful site can still hide its price.

Heuristic
A researched rule of thumb for how people use interfaces. Judging a site against heuristics is what turns an opinion into a finding someone else can check.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Good cooking. Nothing to prove it, and a signup that decides for you.

Harvest Crate's website looks the part: warm, appetizing, competently built, mid-field on craft. It finishes ninth of eleven (25 of 40) because of two holes, and neither hole is an absence. The first is proof: nine of the eleven companies in this study put at least one hard number, a rating, a review count, a subscriber total, somewhere prominent. Harvest Crate puts none, anywhere on its homepage. The second is practice: Harvest Crate is the only company in the field whose plan selector arrives with the largest box already chosen, and one of only three whose per-serving price cannot be seen until checkout. The food may be excellent. The website asks visitors to take that on faith, then makes their first decision for them.

The three findings that drive this report

1 Proof is the category's table stakes, and Harvest Crate holds none

Golden Hour prints four specific numbers in a band under its hero. MetroMeals leads with scale: 11 cities, 1.2 million meals a month. Verde Box names 27 farms and a B Corp score. Harvest Crate's homepage carries no rating, no count, and no number of any kind; its one gesture at a press band is a joke at its own expense. (Social proof)

2 The pre-selected plan is the field's only one, and the price hides until checkout

Every other company in the study lets the shopper make the first move. Harvest Crate pre-selects its largest, most expensive plan ($159.84 a week) and defers the per-serving math to checkout, which puts it in the company of Pantry Pilot's intro-price framing, the cautionary pattern of this study. (Dark pattern; Peak-End Rule)

3 Subscription management is a product at the leaders and a settings page at Harvest Crate

Stockpot gives skip, pause, and cancel one tap each, in plain words, on one page. Golden Hour promises skip or cancel in its hero. Harvest Crate routes all of it through Account Settings, disclosed in fine print under its plan selector. (Fitts's Law; Tesler's Law)

What to do first

- Un-default the plan selector. No plan chosen until the shopper chooses one.
- Print the per-serving price on the plans page and under the homepage call to action.
- Put one honest proof line on the homepage: a rating, a review count, or a household count.
- Move Manage Subscription into the navigation, next to the menu it manages.

The full sequence, with what each stage does to the score, is in the action plan at the end.

METHOD & SELECTION

How this analysis was built

Two tiers keep the work honest. All eleven sites received the identical scored scan (homepage, menu and plans, one recipe or product story, and the signup path walked end to end), scored against the rubric before any site was evaluated. A shortlist of five then received the deep treatment in the pages that follow. The per-finding format in the deep dives (the pattern, the problem, and which competitors already do it well) follows the example of Baymard Institute's benchmark reporting as well as Nielsen Norman Group review practice.

Why these eleven

The comparator set was selected and documented before any scoring, to keep the analysis honest. A comparator earns its place by doing a relevant pattern more effectively, not by matching the subject exactly. The set mixes seven direct rivals for the same subscribers, two aspirational beacons, and one indirect pattern source:

Company	Tier	Why it is in the set
Harvest Crate	Subject	The company under evaluation: a mid-market, family-positioned meal-kit subscription.
Golden Hour Kitchen	Direct	Premium chef-led kits; the field's craft and proof leader, and the standard for pricing stated in the open.
Supper Society	Direct	Dinner-for-two kits; included for the field's best conversion flow, a plan builder that shows its total before asking for an email.
MetroMeals	Beacon	Prepared-meal delivery at city scale; the benchmark for scale proof and per-meal pricing on the plan tile itself.
Stockpot	Indirect	A broth and soup subscription, included for one reason: its subscription management is the best in the study, one tap for skip, pause, and cancel.
Verde Box	Direct	Plant-based kits with the field's most specific values proof, and a checkout-deferred price that costs it dearly here.
The Nightly Ladle	Direct	Comfort-food kits; Harvest Crate's closest mirror in positioning and voice, and the field's best storyteller.
The Patient Kitchen	Beacon	A slow-food subscription run on restraint: a capped membership, no discounts, proof by scarcity and patience.
Farmstand Weekly	Direct	A farm-box and recipe hybrid; included for how it recognizes its CSA audience inside the first screen.
Quickfire Meals	Direct	15-minute kits with laser positioning over almost no proof; the study's clearest case of a promise with nothing under it.
Pantry Pilot	Direct	Budget kits built on intro pricing; the cautionary mirror, the pattern Harvest Crate's own pricing practices lean toward.

The deep dive shortlist (Golden Hour Kitchen, Supper Society, Stockpot, The Nightly Ladle, Pantry Pilot) was fixed from the scan: the field's leader, its best converter, its subscription-management exemplar, the subject's closest mirror, and its cautionary mirror.

THE FIELD

Eleven companies, one rubric

Each total below is a sum: eight dimension scores of 1 to 5, added together, out of a possible 40 (the scoring is explained step by step in the Start Here section). Harvest Crate's own dimension-by-dimension breakdown is held for its grade page near the end of this report, after you have seen the field it was judged against.

Company	Tier	Total / 40
Golden Hour Kitchen	Direct	37
Supper Society	Direct	35
MetroMeals	Beacon	33
Stockpot	Indirect	32
Verde Box	Direct	31
The Nightly Ladle	Direct	30
The Patient Kitchen	Beacon	30
Farmstand Weekly	Direct	29
Harvest Crate	Subject	25
Quickfire Meals	Direct	20
Pantry Pilot	Direct	20

Read the table as a map, not a verdict. The five companies examined closely in the next sections were not chosen because they top it (Pantry Pilot finishes joint last and earns its place anyway); they were chosen because each one demonstrates, or warns against, a pattern Harvest Crate's own score turns on. Note also what the bottom of the table says: the two lowest scores in the field belong to the two companies whose pricing practices ask the most trust while offering the least evidence. Harvest Crate sits five points above them, and the distance is made of practices, not talent.

CROSS-CUTTING PATTERNS

What the field is doing, as a field

Proof is printed, not promised

Golden Hour runs a four-stat band under its hero (4.9 across 61,000 reviews; 38,000 households; 12 resident chefs; 92% still cooking at six months). MetroMeals states its scale outright. Verde Box names farms and a certification score. Patient Kitchen proves by restraint, a 400-member cap stated as policy. When nine of eleven companies print at least one hard number in a prominent place, the tenth company's silence is not neutral; shoppers read it as the number being unflattering. A pattern in four or more competitors is a standard; deviating from it needs a reason. (Social proof)

The total is the headline at the leaders, and a reveal at the laggards

Supper Society's builder recomputes its total live, in large type, before any email is requested. MetroMeals prints the per-meal price on the plan tile. Against that: Verde Box, Harvest Crate, and Pantry Pilot all defer the real per-serving number to checkout, and they hold conversion scores of 2, 2, and 2. The correlation in this small field is exact. (Peak-End Rule; Tesler's Law)

Managing the subscription is part of the product

Stockpot treats skip, pause, and cancel as first-class features with their own page, their own plain-words copy, and buttons as large as its subscribe button. Golden Hour makes the promise in its hero. Farmstand puts swap and skip in its weekly rhythm. The companies that hide management in account settings (Harvest Crate) or behind office hours (Pantry Pilot) are teaching subscribers that joining is easier than leaving, which is precisely the lesson that makes the next visitor hesitate. (Fitts's Law)

Nobody else pre-selects the biggest box

Of eleven plan selectors examined, exactly one arrives with a choice already made, and it is the subject's, and the choice is the most expensive plan on the page. Defaults are decisions: a shopper who does not notice has not chosen the family plan; the family plan has chosen them. Every rival, including the budget cautionary tale, leaves the first move to the customer. (Dark pattern)

Storytelling ends on appetite plus evidence

The Nightly Ladle structures its week in four beats and lets each dish carry a name with a history. Patient Kitchen's restraint is itself a story. Harvest Crate's menu cards are competent and warm, but the story stops at the dish: no cook's name, no farm, no number, nothing for a visitor to repeat to a partner at the moment of decision. The dish that gets repeated is the dish that gets ordered. (Von Restorff Effect)

DEEP DIVE 1 OF 5

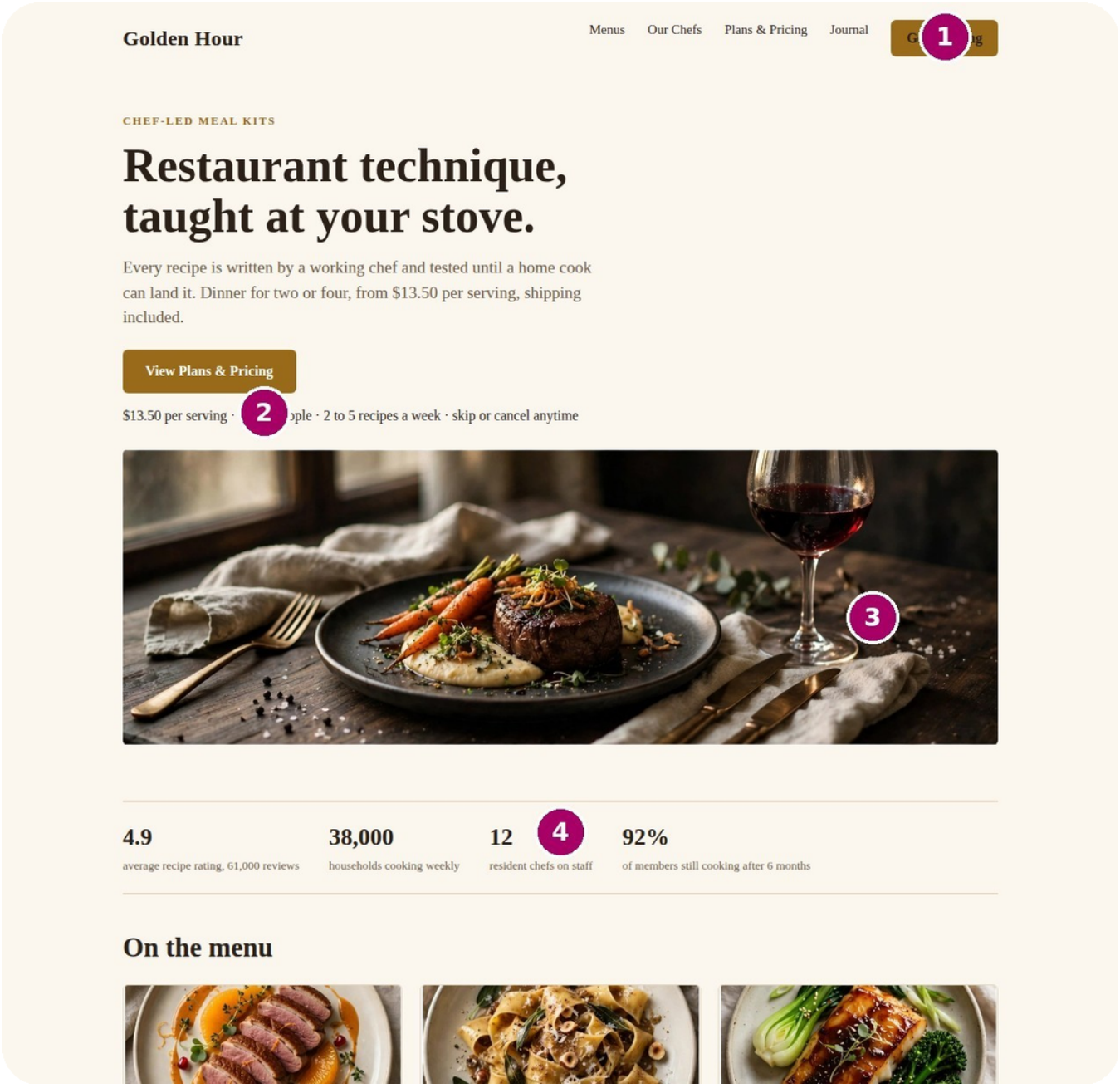
Golden Hour Kitchen 37/40

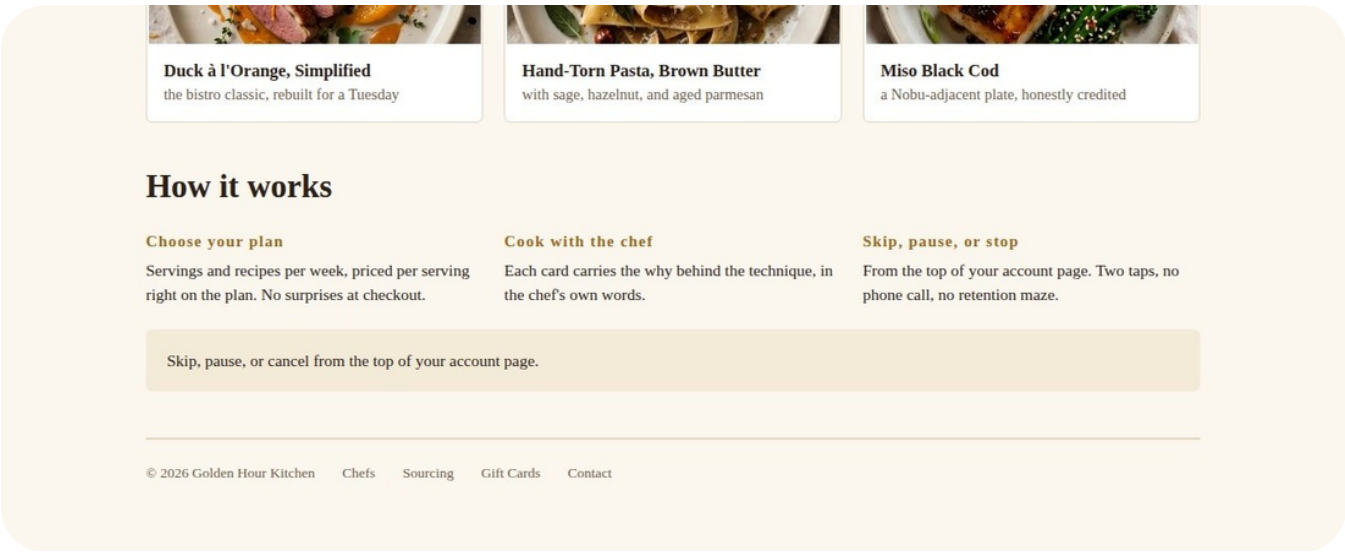
premium chef-led kits · direct rival · the field's leader

37 / 40	Positioning	Navigation	Story	Proof	Interact.	Content	Conversion	Visual
	5	4	5	5	3	5	5	5

Dimension by dimension: the evidence behind the score

Dimension	Score	The evidence behind it
Positioning	5	Offer, audience, and price are all legible in the first screen; the per-serving price sits in the subhead itself.
Navigation	4	Menus, chefs, and plans and pricing each get a named door; pricing is a navigation item, not a destination you earn.
Storytelling	5	Chef-voiced cards that credit their inspirations honestly; technique is the story, and it is told by cooks.
Proof	5	The four-stat band under the hero, every number specific and of a checkable kind.
Interaction	3	Nothing richer than competent browsing was observable; the craft is in restraint, not widgets.
Content	5	The chef's voice carries the whole page; even the flexibility terms read as hospitality, not legal.
Conversion	5	Full price and full flexibility terms are stated before any commitment is requested.
Visual	5	Serif display, gold, and restraint sustained across every page type without a seam.


Golden Hour
Menus
Our Chefs
Plans & Pricing
Journal
1
CHEF-LED MEAL KITS
Restaurant technique, taught at your stove.
Every recipe is written by a working chef and tested until a home cook can land it. Dinner for two or four, from $13.50 per serving, shipping included.
View Plans & Pricing
$13.50 per serving ·
2
· 2 to 5 recipes a week · skip or cancel anytime
3
4.9
average recipe rating, 61,000 reviews
38,000
households cooking weekly
12
resident chefs on staff
4
92%
of members still cooking after 6 months
On the menu



1 · The door in the navigation: Get Cooking sits top right, one click from anywhere on the site.

2 · The whole offer in one line under the button: $13.50 per serving, for 2 or 4 people, 2 to 5 recipes a week, skip or cancel anytime.

3 · The food, photographed like the promise: restaurant plating, shot for appetite.

4 · Four numbers, all specific: 4.9 across 61,000 reviews, 38,000 households cooking weekly, 12 resident chefs, 92% still cooking after six months.

Screenshot: Golden Hour Kitchen's homepage as evaluated for this report, markers added by this analysis.

What they do right

Pricing honesty as a first-screen feature: the per-serving price is in the hero subhead and repeated in a terms line directly under the call to action, alongside the flexibility promise, skip or cancel anytime. Proof with specifics: a four-stat band (a rating with its review count, households cooking weekly, resident chefs on staff, six-month retention) placed where a stat band does the most work, immediately after the hero. And storytelling in a named human voice: dishes credited to their inspirations without embarrassment (a Nobu-adjacent plate, honestly credited), technique taught rather than listed (Restaurant technique, taught at your stove).

What they do wrong

Interaction is merely competent. Nothing in the browsing or selecting experience matches the ambition of the food or the copy, and the plan choice itself, one click past this homepage, is a plain page that spends none of the homepage's craft. A small gap, recorded because everything around it is excellent.

Why it matters

Golden Hour understands that in a subscription category, the price and the exit are part of the product's character. Stating both in the first screen converts the shopper's two biggest hesitations into reasons to trust, before a single dish has been considered. (Social proof; Tesler's Law, carried by the company)

HOW HARVEST CRATE COULD IMPLEMENT IT

Harvest Crate can copy the terms line in structure tomorrow: per-serving price, plan range, and skip, pause, cancel terms in one sentence directly under its homepage call to action. The sentence costs nothing and answers the three questions every visitor arrives with.

DEEP DIVE 2 OF 5

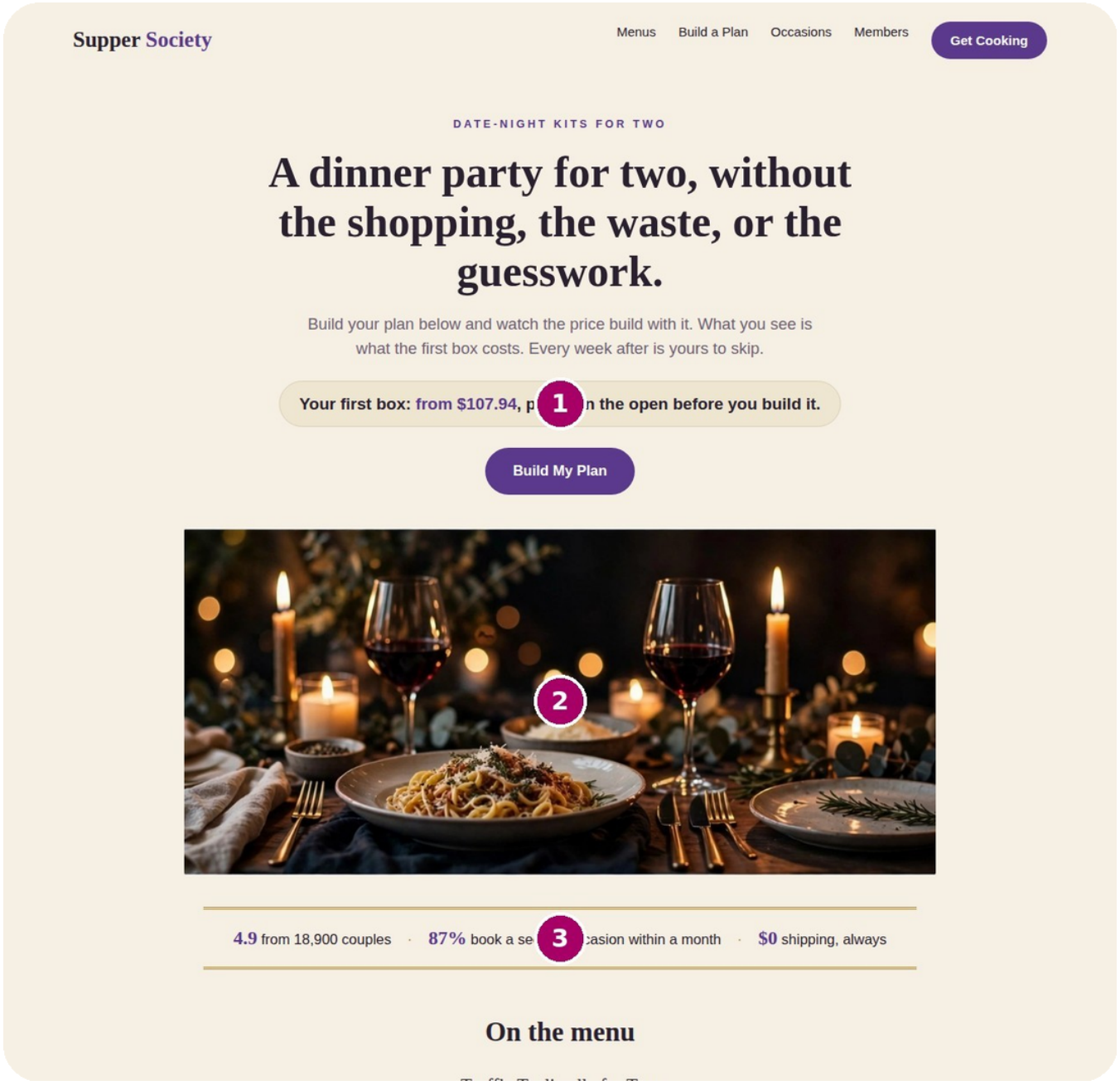
Supper Society 35/40

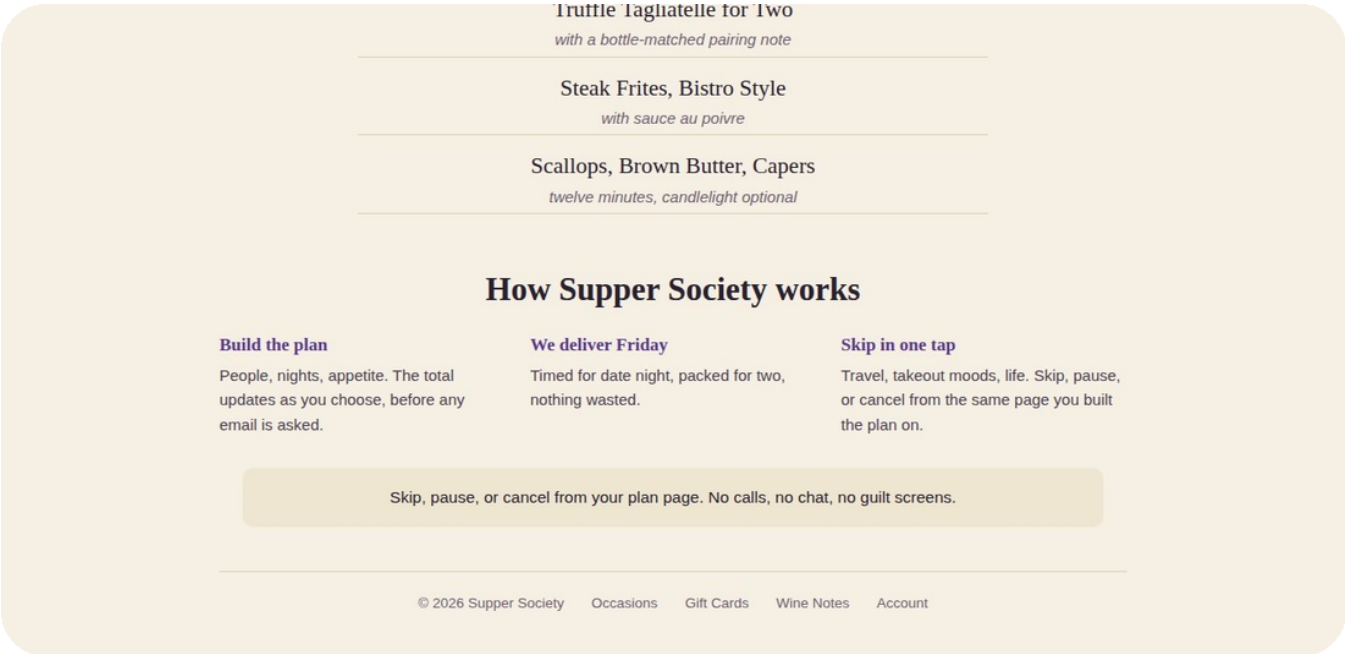
dinner-for-two kits · direct rival · the field's best conversion design

35 / 40	Positioning	Navigation	Story	Proof	Interact.	Content	Conversion	Visual
	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	4

Dimension by dimension: the evidence behind the score

Dimension	Score	The evidence behind it
Positioning	4	The occasion is unmistakable, dinner for two as an event, not a chore; assembling the practical offer takes a scroll.
Navigation	4	Occasion-led doors (menus, the builder, occasions) match how its buyers actually think.
Storytelling	4	Menus written as evenings, not ingredients; a notch below the field's best structure and voice.
Proof	4	Review count and repeat-occasion rate printed on the homepage; thinner than the leader's band.
Interaction	5	The live builder is the field's best interaction: every choice reprices instantly, in large type.
Content	4	Warm, occasion-first copy; what is included and what is not are plainly written.
Conversion	5	The total exists before the email field does. Commitment is asked only after the number is known.
Visual	4	A candlelit palette and type sustain the occasion from homepage to builder without breaking character.


Supper Society
Menus
Build a Plan
Occasions
Members
Get Cooking
DATE-NIGHT KITS FOR TWO
A dinner party for two, without the shopping, the waste, or the guesswork.
Build your plan below and watch the price build with it. What you see is what the first box costs. Every week after is yours to skip.
Your first box: from $107.94, p
1
n the open before you build it.
Build My Plan
2
4.9 from 18,900 couples
87% book a se
3
asion within a month
$0 shipping, always
On the menu

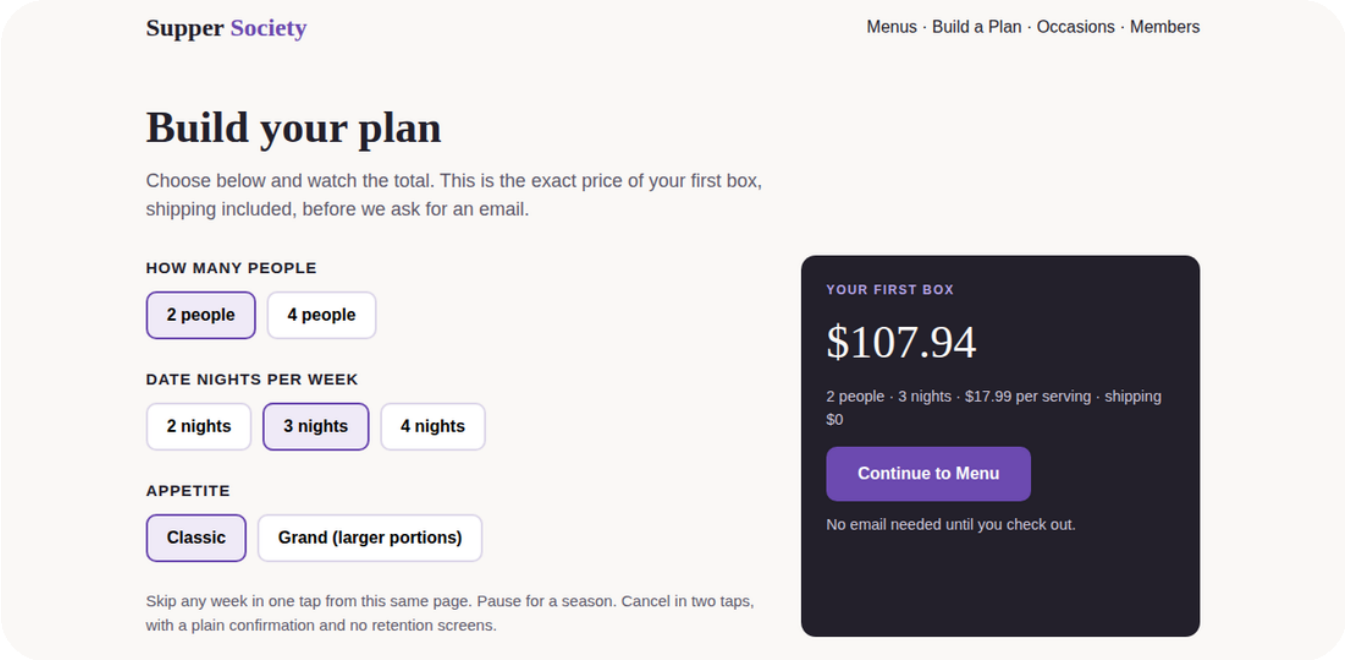


1 · The first box's price, stated on the homepage: what a first box costs is printed before the builder ever opens.

2 · The occasion, photographed: candlelight sells the evening the kit is really for.

3 · The proof band: a review count and a repeat-occasion rate, the two numbers a date-night buyer actually weighs.

Screenshot: Supper Society's homepage as evaluated for this report, markers added by this analysis.



The builder: servings, recipes, and a wine add-on each recompute the total live, from $107.94 to $329.80, before any email is requested. The HTML edition of this report carries a recording of this builder in motion.

Screenshot: Supper Society's plan builder as evaluated for this report.

What they do right

The plan builder is the conversion exemplar of this study: servings, recipes per week, and a wine add-on, each choice recomputing a large-type total instantly, from $107.94 at its smallest sensible configuration to $329.80 fully loaded, all of it before an email address is requested. The homepage does its share: the first box's price is stated in the open rather than discovered in the builder, and the occasion positioning (this is an evening, not a meal kit) is carried consistently from headline to photography to menu writing.

What they do wrong

The hero sells the occasion so completely that the practical offer, what arrives and how often, takes a scroll to assemble. And the proof, while present, is thinner than the leader's: two numbers where Golden Hour prints four, on the page of a company whose whole pitch is a special occasion a buyer cannot afford to have go wrong.

Why it matters

A configurator moves the arithmetic onto the company. The shopper plays; the total keeps up; by the time commitment is requested, the number has been on screen for a minute and holds no surprise. Surprise at the payment step is what kills subscription signups, and Supper Society has engineered it out. (Tesler's Law; Peak-End Rule)

HOW HARVEST CRATE COULD IMPLEMENT IT

Harvest Crate's plans page needs the same contract: a live weekly total and a per-serving figure that update as plan choices change, on screen before any account field appears. Its current page shows static weekly totals and reserves the per-serving math for checkout, the exact inversion of this pattern.

DEEP DIVE 3 OF 5

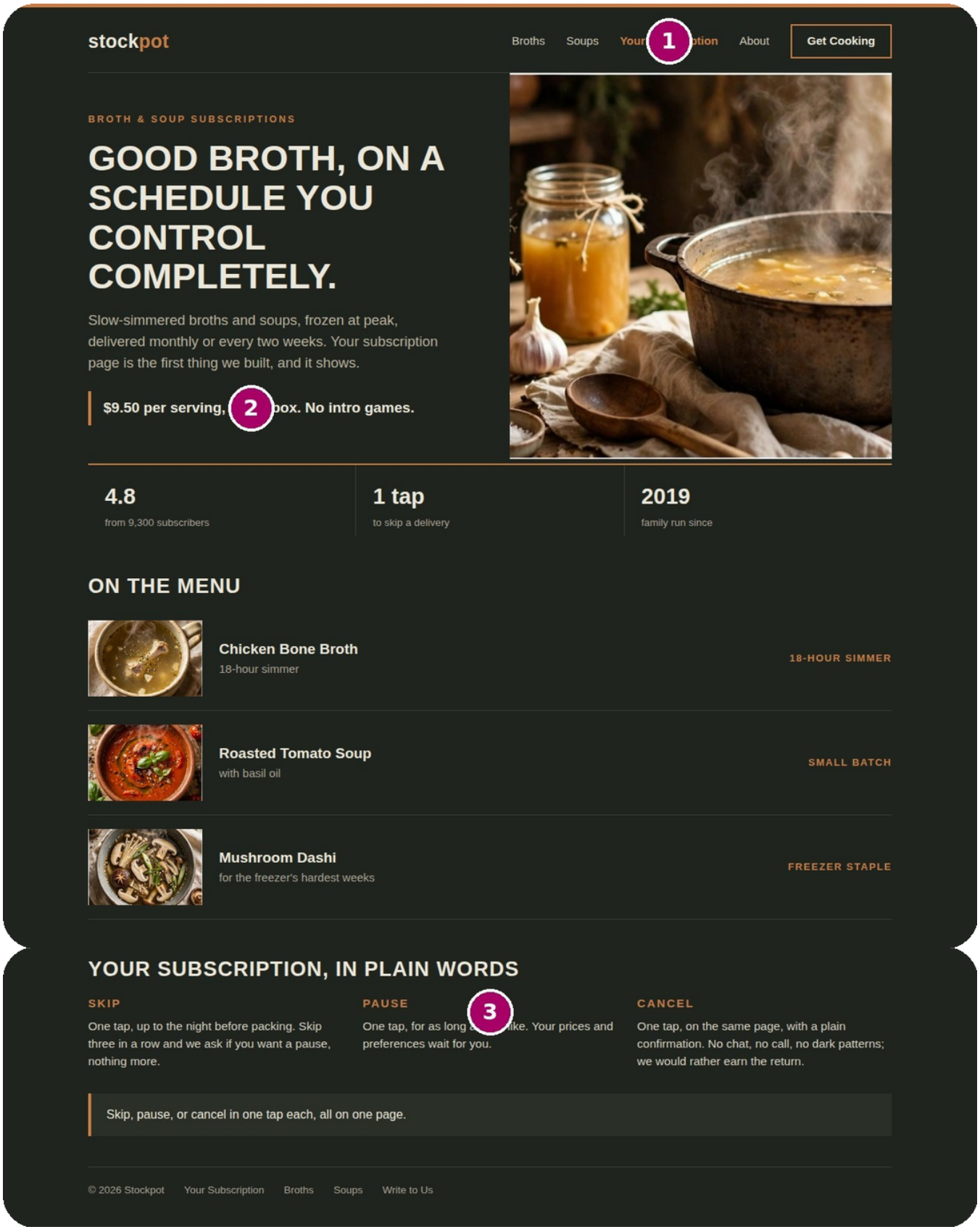
Stockpot 32/40

broth and soup subscription · indirect · the subscription-management exemplar

32 / 40	Positioning	Navigation	Story	Proof	Interact.	Content	Conversion	Visual
	4	4	3	4	4	5	5	3

Dimension by dimension: the evidence behind the score

Dimension	Score	The evidence behind it
Positioning	4	Broth and soup by subscription, stated plainly; a niche offer made legible in one screen.
Navigation	4	Manage is a top-level item; the subscription's own pages are one click from anywhere.
Storytelling	3	Utility writing; the product story is the schedule, not the soup. Competent, not memorable.
Proof	4	The no-intro-games price pledge, repeated at the point of management, where it is worth most.
Interaction	4	The management controls are the interaction story: one tap each, state visible at a glance.
Content	5	The best subscription copy in the study: plain words for consequential actions, and a philosophy stated in one sentence.
Conversion	5	Joining and leaving are designed to the same standard, and the symmetry is itself the sales pitch.
Visual	3	Plain, warm, and dated at the edges; coherent, and carrying no ambition.

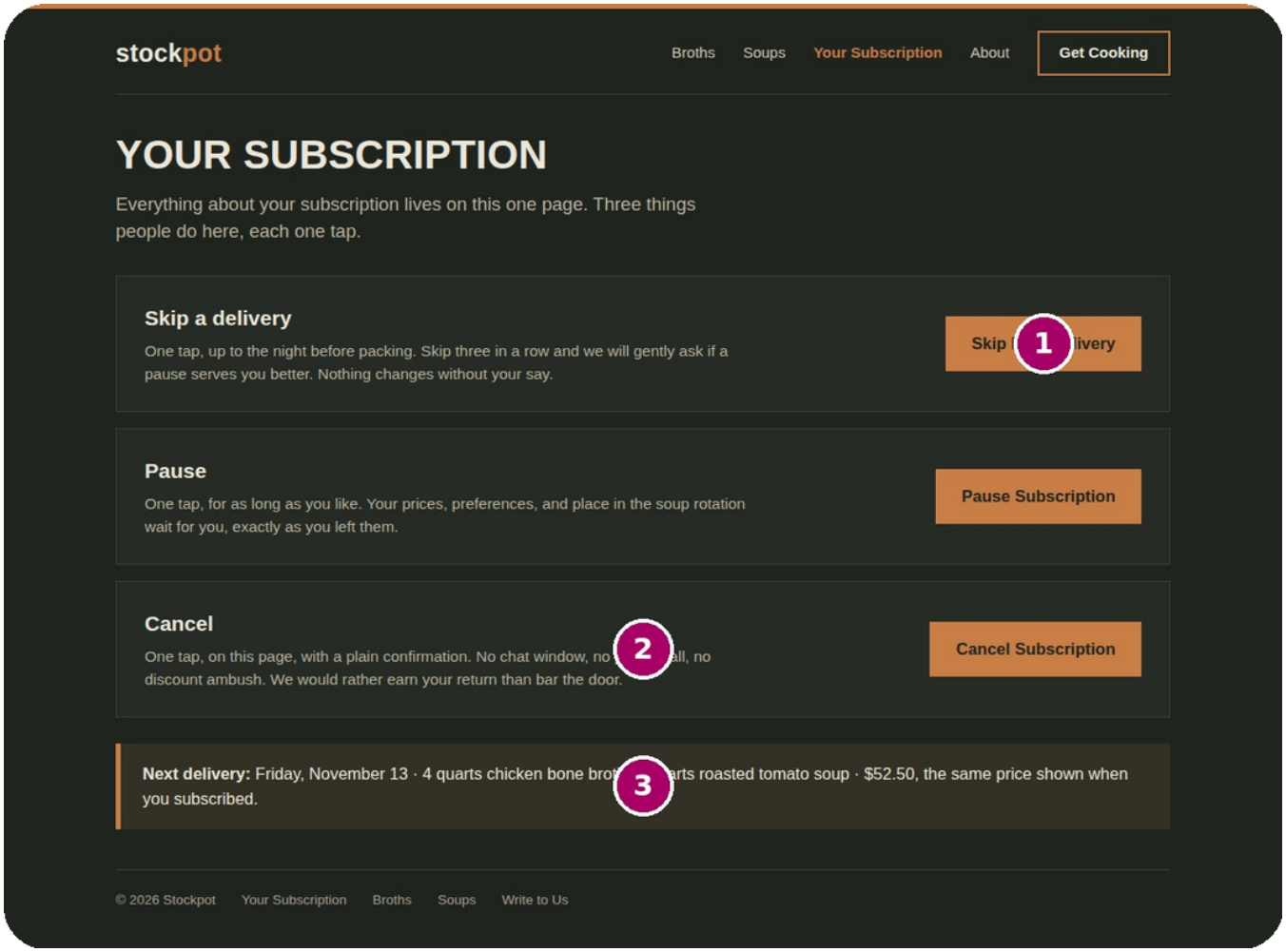


1 · Manage, in the navigation: the subscription's controls are a top-level destination, not a settings subpage.

2 · The price line: $9.50 per serving, every box, no intro games, stated as policy.

3 · The flexibility section: skip, pause, and cancel described on the homepage, in the same type size as the selling.

Screenshot: Stockpot's homepage as evaluated for this report, markers added by this analysis.



1 · Skip, one tap: up to the night before packing, with a gentle suggestion after three skips in a row.

2 · Cancel, given the same size, placement, and dignity as Skip and Pause: no chat window, no phone call, no discount ambush.

3 · The next delivery, restated with its price: the same number quoted at signup, repeated at the moment of management.

Screenshot: Stockpot's subscription management page as evaluated for this report, markers added by this analysis.

What they do right

Subscription management treated as a designed product: one page where skip, pause, and cancel each get a card, a plain-words explanation, and a button of equal size and dignity. The cancellation copy refuses the standard traps by name, no chat window, no phone call, no discount ambush, and states the philosophy outright: it would rather earn a return than bar the door. The next-delivery strip repeats the subscriber's price at the moment of management, the same number quoted at signup. Even the homepage sells the flexibility in selling-size type, and the pricing carries a pledge: $9.50 per serving, every box, no intro games.

What they do wrong

The visual system is plain to the point of under-selling the product, and the storytelling is schedule-deep: a visitor learns exactly how the subscription behaves and almost nothing about why this soup, from these makers, is worth a standing order.

Why it matters

Every subscription business is judged twice: once at signup, and once at the first moment of friction, a busy week, a travel week, a tight month. Stockpot designs for the second judgment, and the design is visible at the first, which is why it converts: a shopper can see the exit is honest before walking in. (Fitts's Law; Peak-End Rule)

HOW HARVEST CRATE COULD IMPLEMENT IT

This is the single most borrowable page in the study. Harvest Crate's skip, pause, and cancel belong on their own page, reachable from the navigation, one tap each, written in Harvest Crate's own warm voice. The engineering is trivial. The decision is the whole work.

DEEP DIVE 4 OF 5

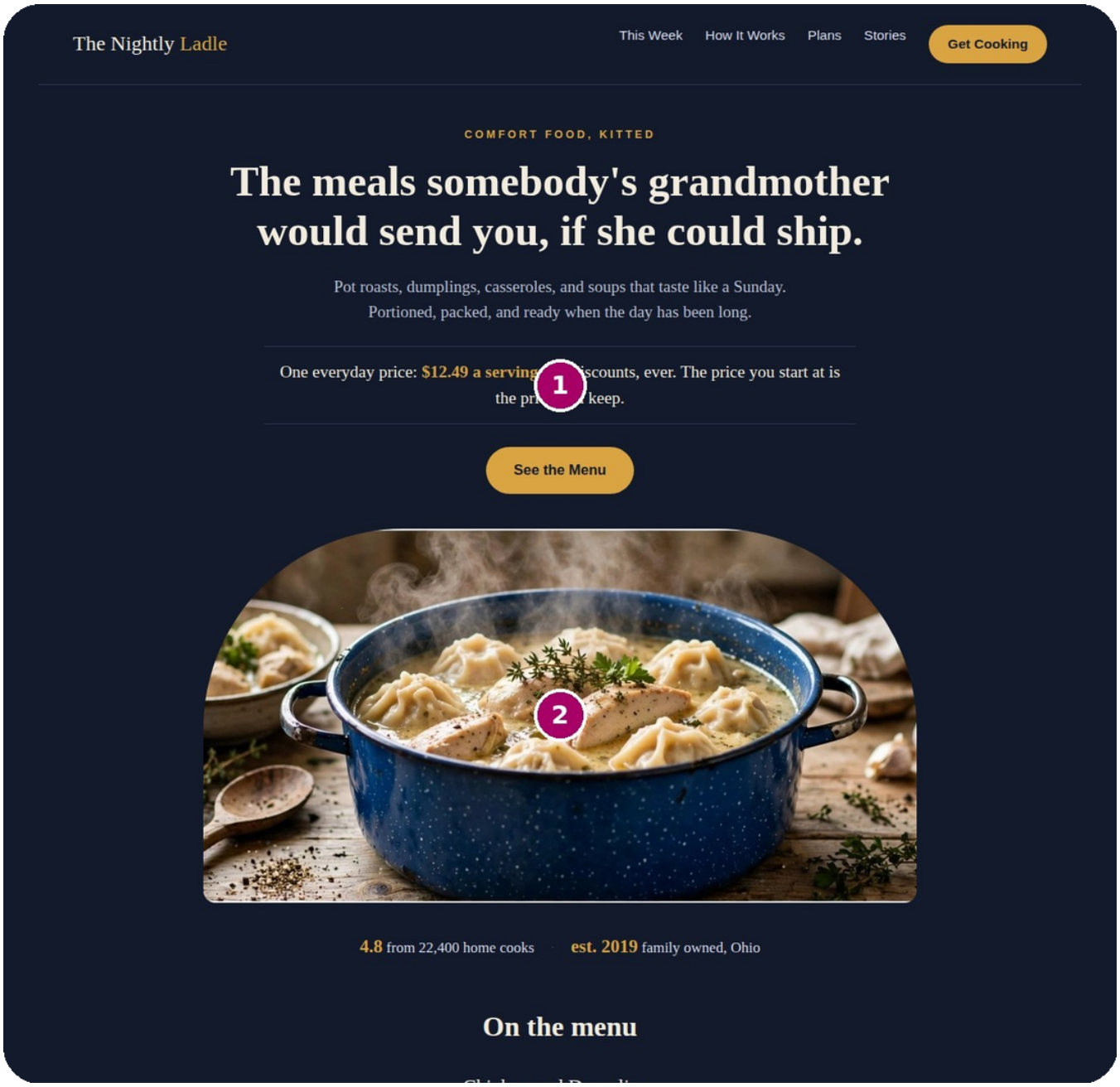
The Nightly Ladle 30/40

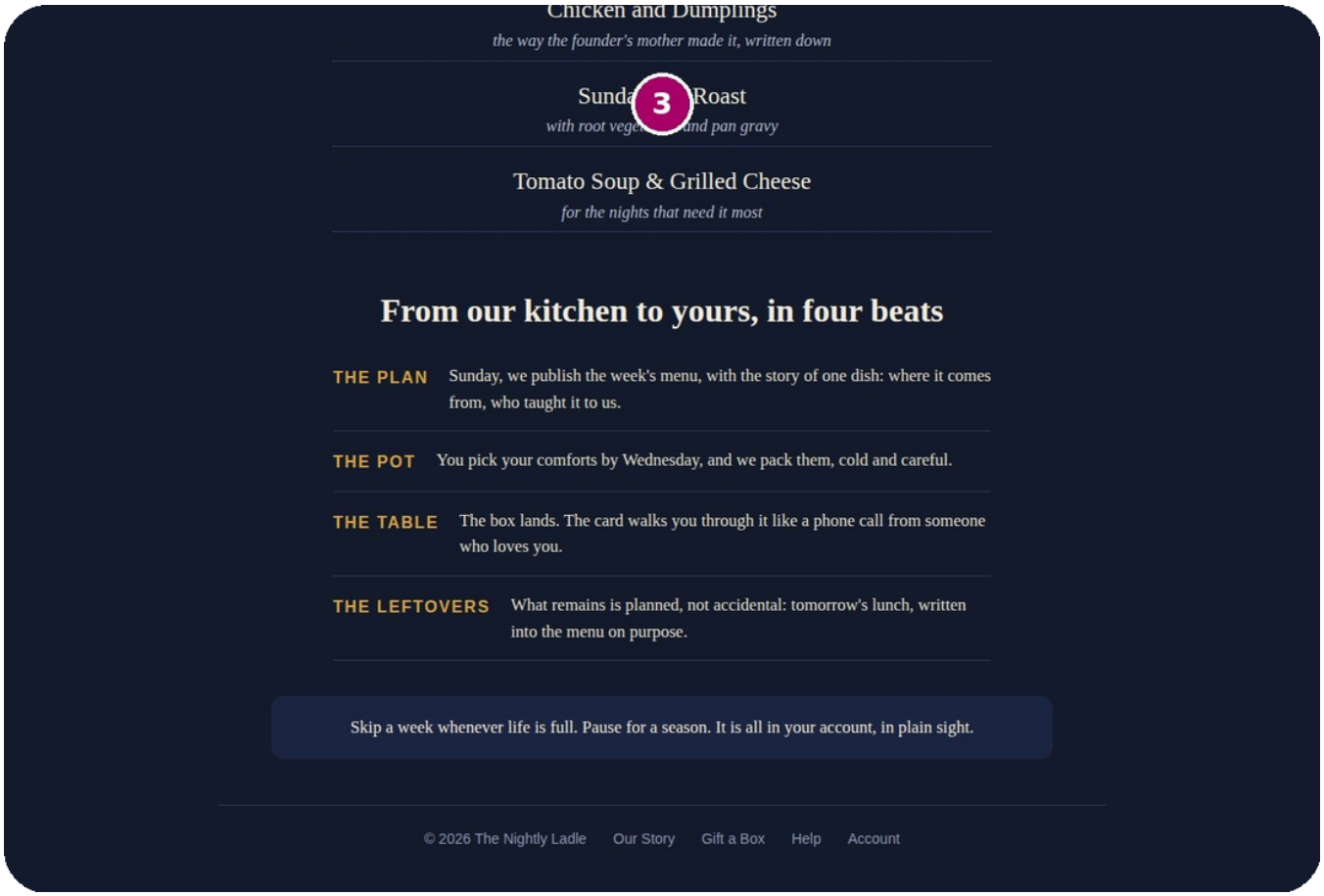
comfort-food kits · direct rival · Harvest Crate's closest mirror

30 / 40	Positioning	Navigation	Story	Proof	Interact.	Content	Conversion	Visual
	4	3	5	3	3	5	3	4

Dimension by dimension: the evidence behind the score

Dimension	Score	The evidence behind it
Positioning	4	Comfort food for weeknights, unmistakable; the premium-over-grocery math takes a paragraph to land.
Navigation	3	The story leads and the plans follow at a distance; a ready buyer scrolls the narrative to find the offer.
Storytelling	5	The week in four beats; dish names carry histories. The field's best structure.
Proof	3	One rating and a founding date carry the whole load; warm claims, few numbers.
Interaction	3	Conventional browsing; nothing harms, nothing helps.
Content	5	A voice so consistent it reads as one person's editorial policy; pricing copy honest and unhurried.
Conversion	3	Pricing is honest, but the path is unhurried to a fault; little guidance at the plan choice itself.
Visual	4	Checked cloth and enamel warmth sustained across pages; photography and type in full agreement.


The Nightly Ladle
This Week
How It Works
Plans
Stories
Get Cooking
COMFORT FOOD, KITTED
The meals somebody's grandmother would send you, if she could ship.
Pot roasts, dumplings, casseroles, and soups that taste like a Sunday.
Portioned, packed, and ready when the day has been long.
One everyday price: $12.49 a serving
iscounts, ever. The price you start at is
the pr
keep.
1
See the Menu
2
4.8 from 22,400 home cooks
est. 2019 family owned, Ohio
On the menu



1 · The price line, with the pledge: the everyday price and a promise of no discounts, ever, stated as a point of pride.

2 · The pot, photographed like a memory: comfort food shot the way its buyers remember it.

3 · The menu as a story: dishes named for the people and the Sundays behind them.

Screenshot: The Nightly Ladle's homepage as evaluated for this report, markers added by this analysis.

What they do right

Storytelling as structure: the week is told in four beats, the plan, the pot, the table, the leftovers, and every dish name carries its history with it (Sunday pot roast, moved to Tuesday). The pricing stance is a story too: one everyday price, and a stated refusal to discount, ever, which turns the absence of promotions into a character trait a customer can quote. Content and visual systems are in complete agreement; the page feels like one person's kitchen, remembered well.

What they do wrong

Proof is the thin spot: a single rating and a founding date are asked to carry a premium price, and the navigation subordinates the plans to the story, so the buyer who arrives ready to order must still walk the whole narrative to reach the offer.

Why it matters

The Ladle is Harvest Crate's mirror: the same warmth, the same family table, the same mid-market shelf. The difference is that the Ladle's story has a structure a visitor can repeat, the week in four beats, and a

pricing stance with a name. Repeatable stories are the ones retold at the moment a household decides. (Von Restorff Effect; recognition over recall)

HOW HARVEST CRATE COULD IMPLEMENT IT

Harvest Crate does not need a new voice; it needs its existing warmth given a repeatable structure and one named stance. If its pricing honesty, the per-serving price in the open, were stated as a pledge the way the Ladle states its no-discount rule, the fix for Harvest Crate's worst pattern becomes its most repeatable story.

DEEP DIVE 5 OF 5

Pantry Pilot 20/40

budget kits · direct rival · the cautionary mirror

20 / 40	Positioning	Navigation	Story	Proof	Interact.	Content	Conversion	Visual
	4	3	2	2	2	2	2	3

Dimension by dimension: the evidence behind the score

Dimension	Score	The evidence behind it
Positioning	4	Budget family feeding, unmistakable in one glance; the one thing this site does without reservation.
Navigation	3	Sections are findable; the consequential destinations, renewal terms and cancellation, are findable only in the fine print.
Storytelling	2	Shouting is not a story; dishes are presented as deals, not dinners.
Proof	2	Savings percentages against unstated baselines; no rating, no count, nothing checkable.
Interaction	2	A pressure countdown and pre-toggled add-ons do the interacting; the customer's role is to keep up.
Content	2	The persuasive copy is large and the consequential copy is small; the ratio is the finding.
Conversion	2	Intro price in the headline, renewal price in the fine print, cancellation by phone in business hours.
Visual	3	Loud and coherent; the system works, in service of the wrong hierarchy.

LIMITED TIME: 60% OFF YOUR FIRST 3 BOXES · LIMITED TIME: 60% OFF YOUR FIRST 3 BOXES

PANTRYPILOT

MENU DEALS PLANS WINNERS GET COOKING

LIMITED TIME: 60% OFF YOUR FIRST 3 BOXES

MEAL KITS FROM $5 1 9!! FEED THE FAMILY FOR LESS THAN TAKEOUT.

America's most affordable meal kit. New deals every week. Sign up in 2 minutes and dinner is DONE.

CLAIM 60% OFF

As low as $47.92/week for 4 people (reg. $119.80). Per-serving price calculated at checkout after plan selection. Shipping $10.99/box.



$5.99
PER SERVING, INTRO OFFER

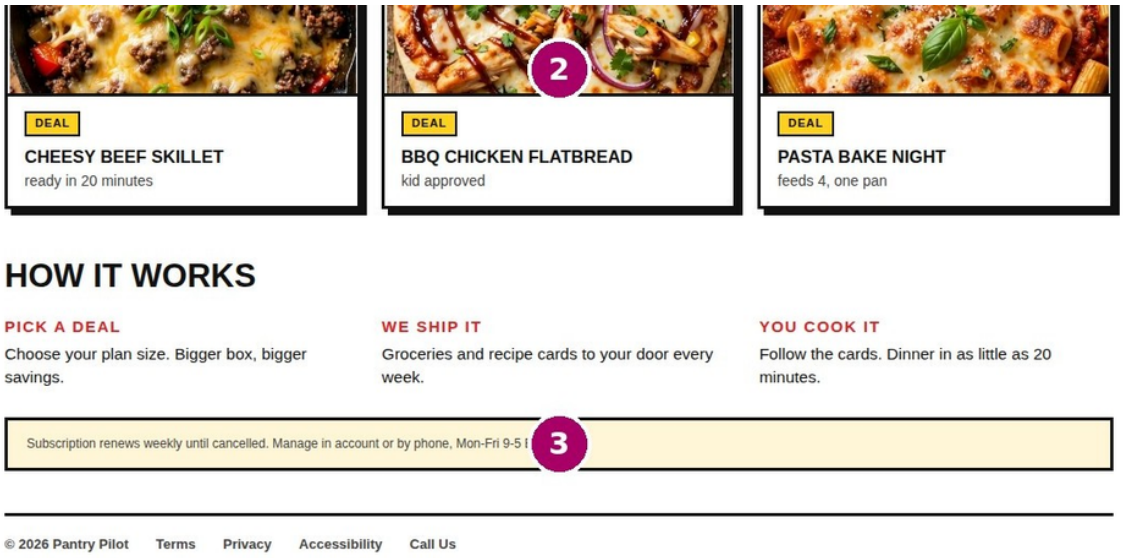
60% OFF
FIRST 3 BOXES, NEW MEMBERS

2 MIN
TO SIGN UP

ON THE MENU







1 · The headline price: $5.99 a serving, the largest type on the page, true only of the introductory box.

2 · The menu cards: appetite without information; no times, no servings, nothing to plan a week on.

3 · The fine print: where the renewal price, the shipping, and the cancellation hours live, at the bottom, in the smallest type on the page.

Screenshot: Pantry Pilot's homepage as evaluated for this report, markers added by this analysis.

What they do right

Clarity of audience and offer, of a kind: nobody who lands here wonders what this is or who it is for, and the budget promise is impossible to miss. As positioning, the first screen works. It is everything the first screen is standing on that fails.

What they do wrong

The headline price belongs to the introductory box; the renewal price is roughly double and lives in the fine print at the foot of the page. Cancellation runs through a phone line in business hours. A countdown presses the decision. Pre-toggled add-ons ride along unless removed. Each practice is legal, and common in the category's discount tier, and corrosive in the same way: the customer learns what the company thinks of them from the gap between the large type and the small. (Dark pattern; Peak-End Rule)

Why it matters

Pantry Pilot is in this study because it is where deferred pricing ends. Harvest Crate's practices are milder, a pre-selected plan and a per-serving price held to checkout, but they are the same shape, and shoppers burned by the strong version pattern-match the mild one instantly. Category trust is spent by whoever spends it, and rebuilt by whoever visibly refuses to.

HOW HARVEST CRATE COULD IMPLEMENT IT

The implementation here is a refusal, made visible: state on the plans page, in selling-size type, that the introductory price and the renewal price are the same number. Pantry Pilot's fine print marks the exact spot where the market's trust is unclaimed. Harvest Crate can stand in it.

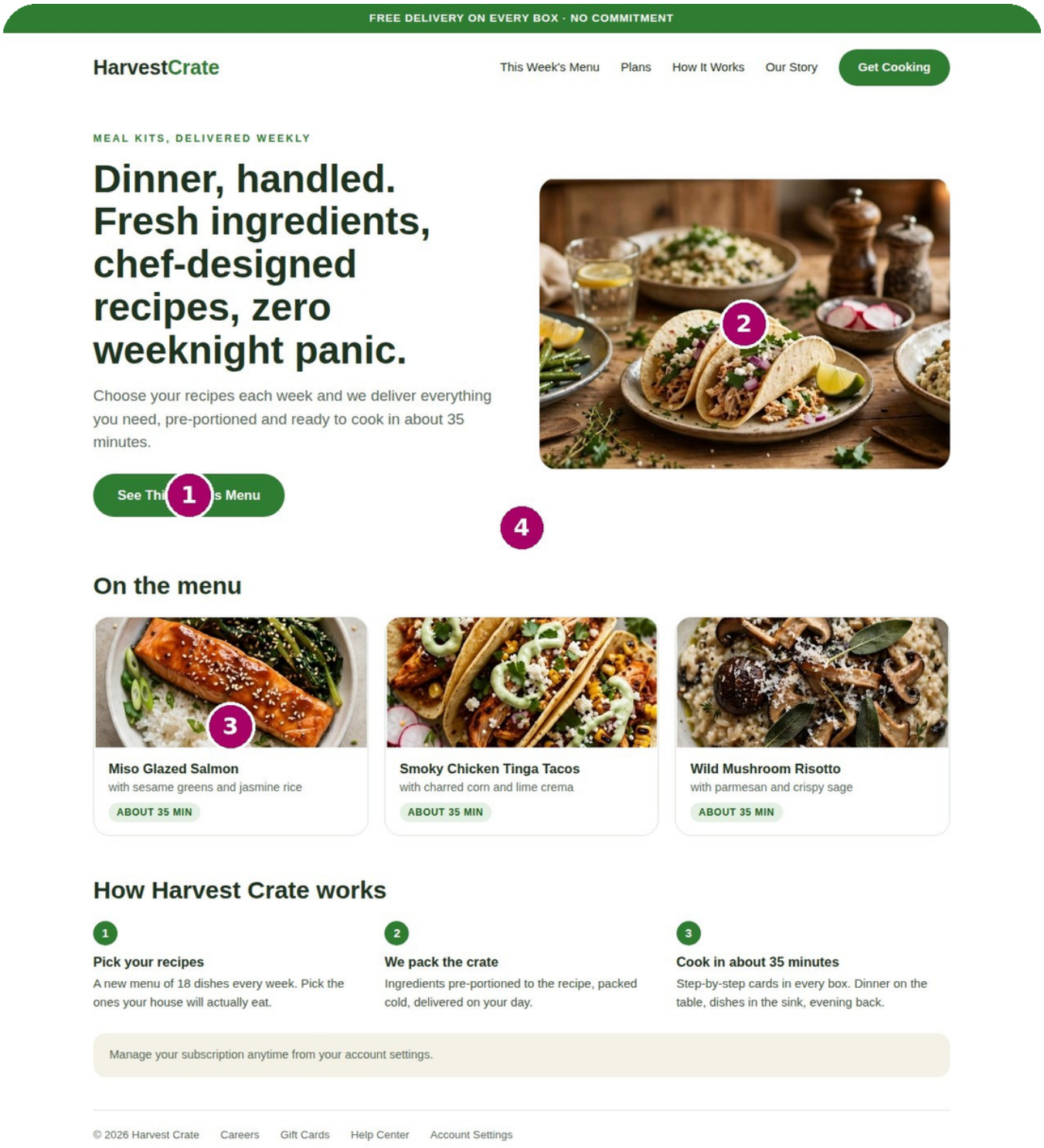
THE GRADE

Harvest Crate, graded

25

of 40
ninth of eleven

This is a respectable grade with two specific holes in it, and the holes are the story of this report. On craft, Harvest Crate is mid-field and genuinely pleasant: a coherent visual system, a warm voice, food photography that sells dinner. What a visitor never meets is a reason to believe any of it, or a signup path that treats them as the decision-maker. Harvest Crate is one of only two companies in the field with no proof of any kind on its homepage, and the only one whose plan selector makes the first decision, the most expensive one, before the shopper touches it.



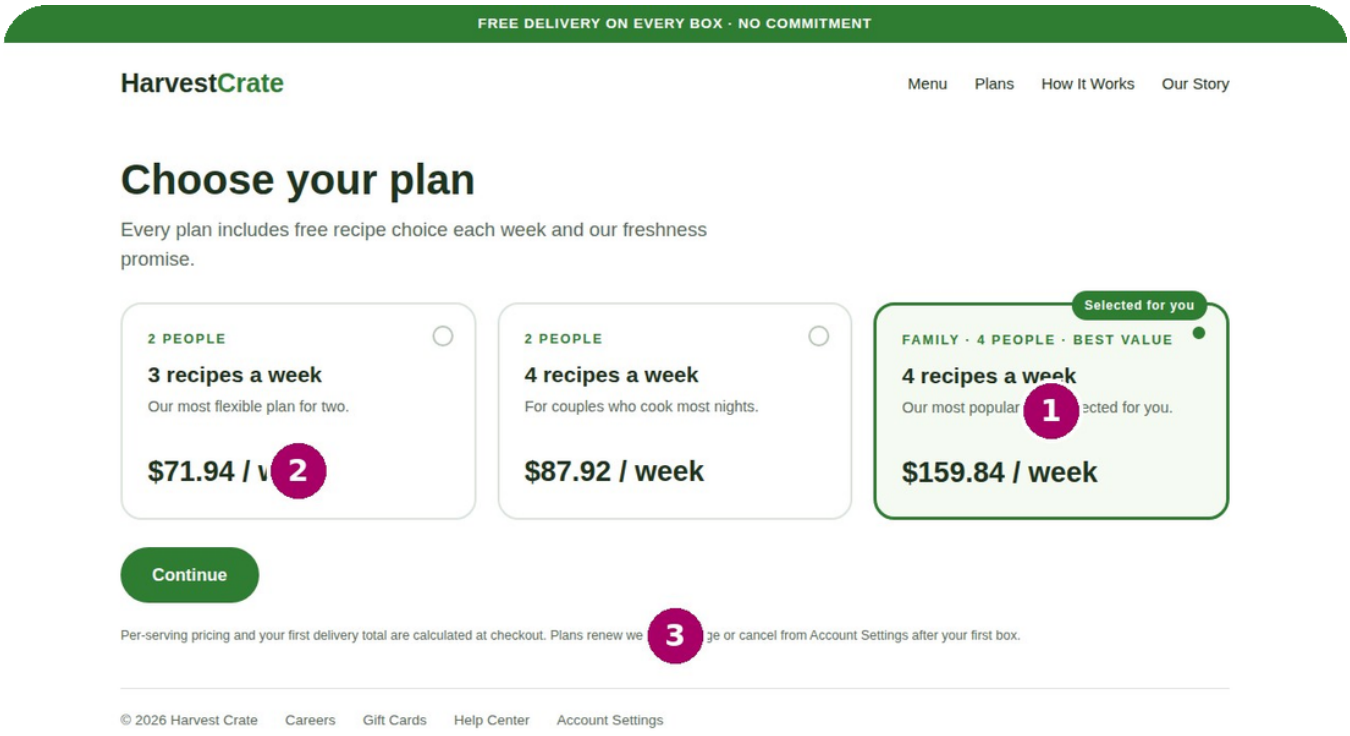
1 · The invitation: friendly, clear, and the only action the first screen asks for.

2 · The food, beautifully shot: the craft is real, and it is carrying the entire first impression alone.

3 · The menu cards: warm, appetizing, and anonymous; no cook, no farm, no number.

4 · Where the proof band should be: a joke line stands where every leader in this study prints its numbers.

Screenshot: Harvest Crate's homepage as evaluated for this report, markers added by this analysis.



1 · The family plan, pre-selected: the largest box on the page arrives already chosen, helpfully marked as selected for you.

2 · Weekly totals only: the smallest plan reads $71.94 a week; what that means per person is nowhere on the page.

3 · The fine print: per-serving pricing and the first delivery total are calculated at checkout, and managing or cancelling waits inside Account Settings, after the first box.

Screenshot: Harvest Crate's plans page as evaluated for this report, markers added by this analysis.

Dimension	Harvest	Best		Why this score
Positioning clarity	**4**	5		What arrives, how often, and for whom are legible within seconds. What it costs per person never appears, which costs the last point.
Navigation and IA	**3**	4		Menu, plans, how it works, and the story are findable and ordinary. Pricing has no door of its own, and subscription management lives inside Account Settings.
Product storytelling	**3**	5		Warm, competent menu cards that stop at the dish: no cook, no farm, no repeatable structure. The Ladle shows what the same warmth does with one.
Proof and trust	**2**	5		No rating, no review count, no household number anywhere on the homepage; the one press-band gesture is a joke at the company's own expense. The field's standard, unmet.
Interaction and motion	**3**	5		Browsing is pleasant and conventional. The one interactive moment that matters, the plan selector, is where the pre-selection lives.
Content patterns	**4**	5		A friendly, consistent voice with real headline craft, undermined only where the copy goes quiet: exactly at the numbers.
Conversion path	**2**	5		The field's only pre-selected plan, and its largest; per-serving price deferred to checkout; management behind settings. Tied for the field's lowest.
Visual design system	**4**	5		A coherent, appetizing system sustained across homepage, menu, and plans. The craft was never the problem.

What the score means. A total in the mid 20s describes a site that presents well and trusts poorly. The gap between Harvest Crate (25) and the leader (37) looks wide, but it is not spread evenly across the report card: six of the twelve points sit in two dimensions, proof and conversion, and both are matters of practice rather than talent. That concentration is the good news. The food, the voice, and the design system do not need to change. The decisions do.

SYNTHESIS & ACTION PLAN

What to protect, what to fix, in what order, and what it is worth

Strengths to protect

The visual system (warm, appetizing, coherent across every page type); the editorial voice and headline craft; the menu photography; and a positioning a visitor understands in seconds. None of the fixes below requires touching any of that, and several of them consist of saying, in the open, things the company already believes.

The two structural gaps

- Evidence. No ratings, no counts, no numbers of any kind where shoppers look for them.
- Practices. A plan chosen for the shopper, a per-serving price held to checkout, and subscription management kept in settings.

Neither gap is a talent gap. Both are decision gaps, which is why they are fixable in days rather than quarters.

Quick wins, this week

- Un-default the plan selector (the field's only one). No plan is chosen until the shopper chooses it.
- Print the per-serving price on the plans page and in a terms line under the homepage call to action, following the Golden Hour pattern.
- Add one honest proof line to the homepage: a recipe rating, a review count, or a household count, whichever is true and strongest.
- Move Manage Subscription into the navigation, labeled in plain words.

Required standards, this quarter

- Build the management page to the Stockpot standard: skip, pause, and cancel on one page, one tap each, equal dignity, priced restated.
- Replace the static plans page with a live-total builder to the Supper Society standard: the total and the per-serving price update with every choice, before any account field.
- Grow the single proof line into a proof band: rating and count, households, and one retention or sourcing number with specifics.

Differentiators, when the basics hold

- State the honesty pledge as the brand's named stance, the way the Nightly Ladle names its no-discount rule: the price on the plan is the price at checkout, and the renewal price is the introductory price.

- Give the menu a repeatable story structure (a week in beats, dishes with named origins) so visitors leave with something to retell.
- Add a pricing door to the navigation, so the economics of the offer are a destination, not a discovery.

What the fixes are worth, in points

Modeled on this report's own rubric: each stage assumes the work is done to the standard set by the competitor cited for it. These are projections, not promises; the same rubric that produced 25 would produce these numbers from the patterns described.

After this stage	What moves	Score	Field position
Today	As evaluated	25 / 40	9th of 11
Quick wins	Proof 2 to 3 · Conversion 2 to 3	27 / 40	9th of 11, clear of the bottom tie
Required standards	Proof 3 to 4 · Conversion 3 to 4	29 / 40	Tied 8th of 11
Differentiators	Storytelling 3 to 4 · Navigation 3 to 4	31 / 40	Tied 5th of 11

Six points separate ninth place from a tie for fifth, and every one of them sits in evidence and practice, not in craft. That is the whole opportunity, stated as plainly as the rubric allows.

SOURCES

Where the principles in this report come from

Every law and heuristic used in this analysis traces to a published source. The standard references are listed here so any judgment in the report can be checked against the material it rests on. The term dark pattern was coined by Harry Brignull (2010) to name deceptive interface practices; the taxonomy maintained at deceptive.design catalogs the patterns this report checks for, including pre-selection and hidden costs.

Nielsen Norman Group. The competitive review format, and Nielsen, J. (1994), 10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design, the source of the heuristic tags used here, including recognition rather than recall and minimalist design. nngroup.com

Yablonski, J. (2020), Laws of UX. O'Reilly Media; companion reference at lawsofux.com. The working summaries used for Fitts's Law, Hick's Law, Miller's Law, Tesler's Law, the Peak-End Rule, the Von Restorff Effect, and the Aesthetic-Usability Effect.

Fitts, P. M. (1954). The information capacity of the human motor system in controlling the amplitude of movement. Journal of Experimental Psychology, 47(6). The original statement of Fitts's Law.

Hick, W. E. (1952). On the rate of gain of information. Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, 4(1). The original statement of Hick's Law.

Miller, G. A. (1956). The magical number seven, plus or minus two. Psychological Review, 63(2). The working-memory limit behind Miller's Law.

Kahneman, D., Fredrickson, B. L., Schreiber, C. A., and Redelmeier, D. A. (1993). When more pain is preferred to less: Adding a better end. Psychological Science, 4(6). The Peak-End Rule's experimental basis.

Von Restorff, H. (1933). Psychologische Forschung, 18. The isolation effect now called the Von Restorff Effect.

Baymard Institute. E-commerce usability benchmark reporting, the model for this report's per-finding format: the issue, the severity, and which sites in the field already solve it. baymard.com

APPENDIX

Limitations, stated plainly

- This is a sample. Harvest Crate and all ten comparator companies are fictional, and their websites were built as exhibits for this report. In a client engagement, the identical method, rubric, and standard of evidence are applied to the client's live website and its real competitors; nothing else about the report changes.
- This is an expert review of pages, not user research. Scores are disciplined judgments against the rubric, each backed by observed evidence, not measurements.

- Interaction and motion were judged from the working pages themselves, including operating the plan selectors and builders where they exist.
- One evaluator scored all eleven sites with a second consistency pass. Identical method and rubric were applied to every site, including the subject.
- Accessibility and ADA conformance are excluded from this analysis by design. They are covered by the separate audit service, and the two offers are kept deliberately distinct.
- Screenshots and the recording in this report show the exhibit pages built for this sample, captured for this analysis. Numbered markers on the screenshots were added by this analysis and are keyed in the line beneath each image.
- The score projections in the action plan are modeled on this report's rubric. They state what the rubric would award for the patterns described; they are not a guarantee of commercial outcomes.

Sample comparative analysis prepared by Steve Moore Consulting. All companies are fictional, created for this sample; no real business is evaluated or depicted. Method: NN/g competitive review format; eight-dimension pattern rubric fixed before evaluation; all findings tied to cited UX laws and Nielsen heuristics. The PDF edition of this sample is the companion to the HTML edition published on the consulting site; the two carry identical analysis.