

**Zainab Ghadiyali**

A READING ROOM · CURATED 2026

# Curiosity, *built into a career.*

Zainab Ghadiyali is a founder, engineer and product leader who has spent the last decade turning curiosity into companies — from co-founding **Wogrammer** (now part of AnitaB.org) to leading product at **Airbnb**, shipping for two billion people at **Facebook**, and now building **Eat Cook Joy** and **Stackbirds** in Austin. This is the unofficial reading room of her work, talks, podcasts and writing — gathered in one place.

FOUNDER · EAT COOK JOY

CO-FOUNDER · WOGRAMMER

EX-AIRBNB · EX-FACEBOOK

UW-MADISON ENGINEERING

READ THE FEATURED ARTICLE →

WATCH THE TALKS

DOWNLOAD PDF





*“Stay ignorant. Get curious. Persist.”*



**200+**

**2B**

PEOPLE REACHED · FACEBOOK INTERNET.ORG

WOMEN ENGINEERS INTERVIEWED ·  
WOGRAMMER

10+

YEARS IN PRODUCT & ENGINEERING

2

COMPANIES FOUNDED · EAT COOK JOY &  
STACKBIRDS

THE READING ROOM

## Explore the *Story*

Eight chapters across two decades — from Madison engineering classrooms to Airbnb product launches, a women-in-tech publication, and an AI-powered personal-chef startup.

CHAPTER 01 · BIOGRAPHY

## The Curiosity-Driven *Career*





A PORTRAIT IN IGNORANCE, PERSISTENCE &  
REINVENTION

CHAPTER 02

## The *Journey*



MADISON → FACEBOOK →  
AIRBNB → FOUNDER

CHAPTER 03

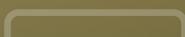
## First Round *Review*



DESIGNING A CURIOSITY-  
DRIVEN CAREER

CHAPTER 04

## Videos & *Talks*



CHAPTER 05

## Podcasts & *Audio*





WARF · YOUTUBE · INSIDE  
OUTSIDE



INSIDE OUTSIDE  
INNOVATION EP.191

CHAPTER 06

## What She's *Reading*



HBR · SPARK · YO SOY  
BETTY, LA FEA

CHAPTER 07

## Wogrammer *Story*



200 WOMEN ENGINEERS · I  
MOVEMENT

CHAPTER 08

## Eat Cook *Joy*





PERSONAL CHEFS & AI  
AGENTS · AUSTIN

## BIOGRAPHY

# A Founder Built on *Restless Curiosity*

Zainab Ghadiyali grew up moving between continents and disciplines. She studied chemistry and public health at the **University of Wisconsin–Madison**, expecting a career in medicine — and ended up in software. The translation, she has said, was simple: both fields ask you to look at a system, find the broken piece, and design the smallest intervention that fixes it.

She entered tech the long way around — through public-health work in Latin America, then a self-taught crash course in code. By 2014 she was an engineer at **Facebook**, working on Internet.org and shipping software that, at one point, was used by close to two billion people. The scale never quite stopped feeling absurd to her, and she has talked openly about the productive discomfort of not yet knowing what you're doing — what she calls the "ignorance advantage."

*“Most of the most interesting things I've worked on, I started without knowing how to do them. The trick is being honest about that — and then being willing to learn faster than the problem is moving.”*



In 2015, alongside Erin Summers, she co-founded **Wogrammer** — a journalistic project that interviewed and profiled more than two hundred women engineers across the



industry, deliberately reframing them as makers and inventors rather than tokens or trailblazers. Wogrammer was named to the **Foreign Policy Global Thinkers** list and was eventually acquired by AnitaB.org, where it continues today.

From Facebook she moved to **Airbnb**, leading product on growth and hosting teams during the company's pre-IPO sprint. She then stepped out into a portfolio life — speaking at WARF, Mind the Product, Product School and SXSW; advising founders; and serving as Chief of Staff for several leadership teams. Conversations from that period (the *First Round Review* feature, the *Inside Outside Innovation* podcast, the Alicia Diamond chiefs-of-staff piece) remain some of the clearest distillations of how she thinks about career design.

Today she is the founder of **Eat Cook Joy**, an Austin-based service that pairs busy households with vetted personal chefs, and **Stackbirds**, an AI-agents company building tools to keep founders out of platform lock-in. Both ventures are unmistakably hers: small, ambitious, design-led, and hand-built around real problems she has lived through. She still reads three books at a time. She still recommends a Colombian telenovela transcript as a Spanish-learning hack. And she still answers her own LinkedIn DMs.

*“Curiosity is a muscle. If you stop using it for a year, you’ll feel the atrophy in your work — and even more in your career.”*

THE JOURNEY

## From Madison to *Austin*

An unconventional path through chemistry, public health, software, billion-user products, and back into founding.



UNIVERSITY · MADISON, WI

## UW–Madison · Chemistry & Public Health

Studied at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Recognized in 2018 as a **Forward Under 40** award recipient and featured in the College of Engineering's **alumni spotlight**.

2013 – 2015 · PUBLIC HEALTH

## Field work in Latin America · Bolivia, Honduras

Worked on community health programs before pivoting to tech — a transition she has said taught her to listen before designing solutions.

2014 – 2017 · FACEBOOK

## Software Engineer · Internet.org & Free Basics

Shipped products reaching audiences in the hundreds of millions. Featured in the original "**Meet the Wogrammers**" Engineering at Meta post.

2015 · CO-FOUNDED

## Wogrammer · with Erin Summers

200+ profile interviews of women engineers, named to **Foreign Policy's 2015 Global Thinkers**. Acquired by AnitaB.org. Read her own **LinkedIn essay** on what they learned.

2017 – 2020 · AIRBNB

## Product Lead · Growth & Hosting

Featured by **Product School** and as a **Mind the Product speaker**.

2020 – PRESENT · SPEAKER & COACH

## Career & Founder Coaching · chiefs-of-staff, product leads

Featured in **First Round Review** and **Alicia Diamond's blog** with frameworks now used widely by emerging operators.

2022 – PRESENT · FOUNDER

## Eat Cook Joy · personal chefs · Austin, TX

Pairs busy households with vetted personal chefs. **Austin Inno: Startups to Watch (2025)**.



2024 — PRESENT · FOUNDER

**Stackbirds** · AI agents · platform-independent founders

Featured in Crunchbase News' "the AI founder stopping platform ransom" piece.

FIRST ROUND  
REVIEW

*The Secrets to Designing a Curiosity-Driven  
Career*



FEATURED ARTICLE · RECOMMENDED READ

## Designing a *Curiosity-Driven* Career

First Round Review's profile of Zainab is one of the clearest articulations of how she thinks about career design — built around three deceptively simple ideas: stay ignorant on purpose, follow real curiosity (not performed ambition), and persist long after the novelty fades.

She walks through the moves that took her from public-health field work to a Facebook engineering org of thousands, the framework she used to evaluate jumps (skill stretch, scope stretch, network stretch — pick two), and the questions she asks before saying yes to a role. Her advice for early operators: **chase the work that makes you ask one more question, not the work that lets you give one more answer.**

*“The career you can defend in a job interview is rarely the career that ends up mattering. Build the one you can defend to yourself at 2 a.m.”*

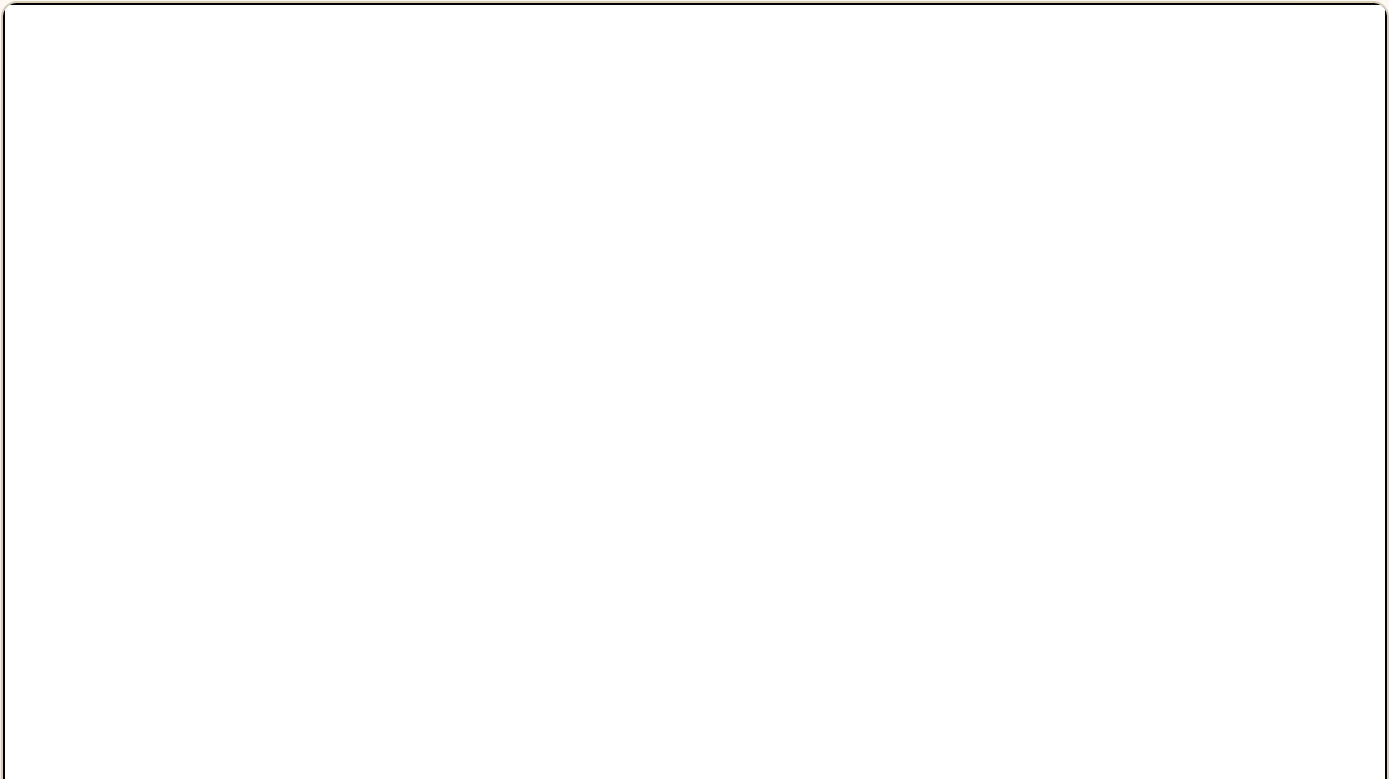
The piece also surfaces her advice on managing managers, when to leverage a Chief of Staff role, and why she thinks the most overlooked move in a tech career is **changing functions inside the same company** rather than changing companies inside the same function.

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE ON FIRST ROUND →](#)

TALKS & VIDEOS

## Watch the *Conversations*

Embedded talks, interviews and feature stories — playing right here in the reading room.



INSIDE OUTSIDE INNOVATION · EP. 191

### **On Ignorance, Curiosity, and Persistence**

The full long-form conversation with Brian Ardinger on the moves that defined her career.



EAT COOK JOY · FOUNDER STORY

## Building a Personal-Chef Network in Austin

Origin story of the company and the operating philosophy behind a service business that scales like a software one.

EAT COOK JOY · BEHIND THE KITCHEN

## From Idea to Launch in San Antonio

How the chef vetting and matching system was designed — and what early customers taught the team.



WARF · INNOVATION ROADMAP · SEPT 20, 2018

## Lessons in Entrepreneurship

Zainab's keynote at the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation Innovation Roadmap series — speaking as Co-founder of Wogrammer and Product Manager at Airbnb.

WARF INNOVATION ROADMAP (SEPT 2018) ↗

PODCASTS & AUDIO

## Listen to the *Long-Form*

Embedded audio players for the conversations that go past the soundbite.

INSIDE OUTSIDE INNOVATION · EP. 191

**Zainab Ghadiyali of Airbnb & Wogrammer — On Ignorance, Curiosity and Persistence**





INSIDE OUTSIDE INNOVATION • EPISODE 191

## Ep. 191 - Zainab Ghadiyali of Airbnb & Wograz



1X



00:00 | 17:59

SUBSCRIBE SHARE MORE INFO



Show Notes ↗

Apple Podcasts ↗

Spotify ↗

Stitcher ↗

VOYAGE SA • COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

READ ↗

## Meet Zainab Ghadiyali of Eat Cook Joy

A long-form interview from the Voyage San Antonio community series — the personal-chef thesis, what Austin gets right about service businesses, and how the company recruits.

ALICIA DIAMOND • CHIEFS OF STAFF

## Advice from Zainab Ghadiyali for Current & Future Chiefs of Staff

READ ↗

Practical playbook for the role — how to scope, how to pair with a principal, when to push back, when to absorb, and how to leave on a high note.

ON THE NIGHTSTAND

## What She's *Reading Now*

Zainab tends to read multiple books at once. The current rotation:



BUSINESS · COMMUNICATION

## HBR's 10 Must Reads on Communication

Harvard Business Review

The classic anthology of HBR's most-cited essays on persuasion, executive presence, and clarity under pressure — a staple of senior operating leaders.

SCIENCE · HEALTH

## Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain

John J. Ratey, MD

The Harvard psychiatrist's case that physical movement is the single most underrated intervention for cognition, mood and learning. Required reading for founders.

LANGUAGE · STORYTELLING

## Yo Soy Betty, La Fea (transcripts)

Fernando Gaitán

Yes, the original Colombian telenovela — read as text. Zainab uses the transcripts as a Spanish-learning shortcut, and as a study in how serialized character writing actually works.



## Wogrammer: Breaking Stereotypes, One Story at a Time

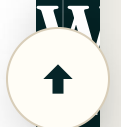
Wogrammer is on a mission to break stereotypes and inspire women and girls to pursue careers in STEM. Our stories profile diverse women, offering an authentic perspective while celebrating and acknowledging their accomplishments. We make an impact in through telling powerful stories, empowering women to tell their stories through our workshops and our Journalism Fellowship.

## Sharing Powerful Stories

Each week we share an inspiring story of a woman in engineering who is doing amazing work. By focusing on her accomplishments and professional points of pride, we are building a positive narrative around what it means to be a woman in tech. The diverse women we profile are role models for girls and young women around the world, inspiring them to pursue and persist in STEM fields. Read and share one of our many stories on [Medium](#).

## Women's Empowerment Workshops

27080540.jpg



# Wogrammer — *making the makers visible.*

Wogrammer started as a side project at Facebook in 2015 and grew into one of the most cited journalistic projects about women in engineering. Instead of profiling the same handful of high-profile leaders, Zainab and Erin Summers went deep — interviewing more than **200 women engineers** about the actual technical work they do.

The project was named to **Foreign Policy's 2015 Global Thinkers**, profiled by **Engineering at Meta**, and eventually **acquired by AnitaB.org**, where it continues today. The original wogrammer.org has been retired — the snapshot above is from the Internet Archive.

[OPEN ARCHIVE SNAPSHOT ↗](#)

[VISIT ANITAB.ORG](#)



• PRIVATE CHEFS · FROM \$29 / PERSON

# a *private chef* in your kitchen — without the eye-watering bill.

Real chefs. Real groceries. Cooked fresh in your home, on your night. We bundled the boring parts — sourcing, prep, cleanup — into one flat price so a chef-cooked dinner is finally a Tuesday thing, not a birthday thing.

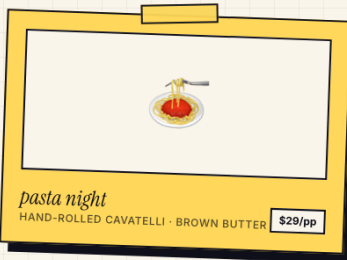
BOOK A CHEF →

SEE THIS WEEK'S MENUS


*no subscription · no surge pricing · no soggy delivery bag*



*weeknight braise*  
SHORT RIB · POLENTA · GREMOLATA **\$34/pp**



*pasta night*  
HAND-ROLLED CAVATELLI · BROWN BUTTER **\$29/pp**



*coastal supper*  
MISO COD · CHARRED GREENS · RICE **\$38/pp**

flat pricing ★ groceries included ★ kitchen left spotless ★ allergy-friendly ★ same-week booking ★ no tipping

HOW IT WORKS

## four steps. zero stress.

We took the parts of hiring a chef that felt fancy and scary, and replaced them with a flow that feels closer to ordering takeout.

**01**  
*pick your night*  
Tell us when, how many guests, and

**02**  
*choose a menu*  
Browse this week's menus from

**03**  
*we shop & prep*  
Your chef sources groceries, preps

**04**  
*you eat. we clean.*  
Sit down, pour the wine, enjoy the

Eat  
Cook  
Joy  
eatcoo  
kitchen



# Eat Cook Joy — *chefs in the kitchen, joy at the table.*

**Eat Cook Joy** pairs busy households with vetted personal chefs who shop, cook and stock a week's worth of meals on-site. The business is unmistakably a Zainab company: small ops team, hand-crafted matching, and an obsession with the customer's actual Tuesday-night problem.

Named one of **Austin Inno's "Startups to Watch"** in 2025, profiled across local press, and increasingly the case study being cited in conversations about **AI-augmented service businesses**.

VISIT [EATCOOKJOY.COM](https://eatcookjoy.com) ↗

AUSTIN INNO FEATURE



crunchbase news

Type here to search...

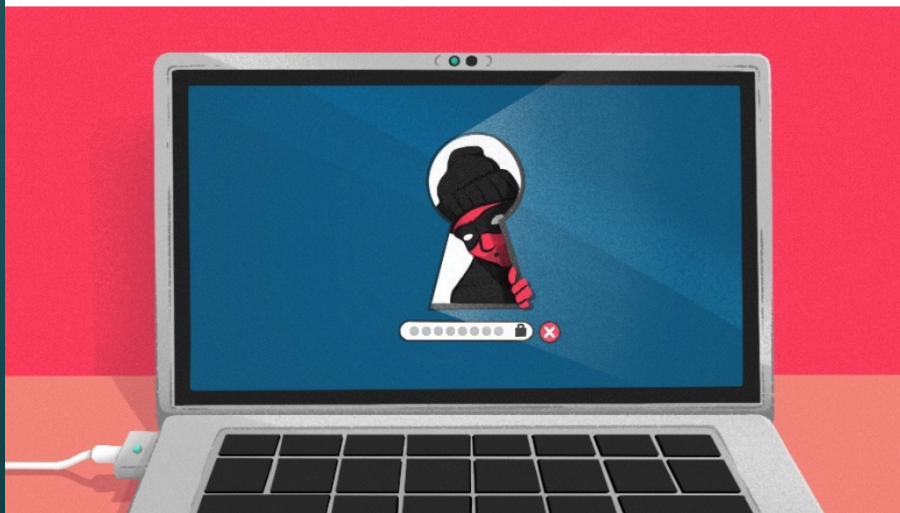
Unicorn Board Emerging Unicorn Board Tech Layoffs Tracker Megadeals Board Web3 Tracker Billion-Dollar Exits Tracker VC Funding Reports

SaaS Artificial intelligence Cybersecurity Cloud computing Fintech Clean tech Health Tech IPO news Diversity Seed funding

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE • CYBERSECURITY • POLITICS AND REGULATION • STARTUPS

# How I Stopped A Platform Ransom Against My Startup

Guest Author September 16, 2025



8 Shares

- Email
- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn

Guest Author

By Zainab Ghadiyali

Earlier this year, on a morning in January, I walked into a founder's nightmare.

My company, [Eat Cook Joy](#), which builds AI-powered tools for private chefs, was two weeks away from its public launch. For two and a half years, I had been preparing and collecting the most sophisticated and comprehensive data set for the private chef industry.

But as I sat down at my computer, I was locked out of my site. Access to the platform I had painstakingly assembled and worth millions of dollars vanished.

Thanks to intelligence from the [FBI](#), I quickly learned that the attack on my company's site showed all the signs of a sophisticated international crime group that targets early-stage startups for ransom.

## Featured

Illustration of a guy watering plants with a blocked hose - Global [Dom Guzman]

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE • CRYPTO • M&A • REGIONAL • SEED FUNDING • STARTUPS • VENTURE  
**Q1 Global Startup Funding Posts Strongest Quarter Since Q2 2022 With A Third Going To Massive OpenAI Deal**

April 3, 2025 7 Min Read

67.1K Followers

- Follow us on Facebook 33.4K Followers
- Follow us on Twitter 29K Followers
- Follow us on LinkedIn 4.7K Followers

Discover and act on private market opportunities with predictive company intelligence.

[GET STARTED](#)



# Stackbirds — *tools so founders never get field ransom by a platform.*

Stackbirds is Zainab's newer bet — an AI-agents company aimed squarely at **platform lock-in**, the silent tax on founders who build their entire business on top of one app store, one payments rail, or one ad network. The thesis: agents that automate the boring work of staying portable.

Zainab's own first-person account in **Crunchbase News** — "*How I Stopped a Platform Ransom Against My Startup*" — is the founding story.

[READ ON CRUNCHBASE NEWS ↗](#)

## PRESS & FEATURES

### On the *Public Record*

Selected coverage and features across business, founder, and women-in-tech publications.

#### FIRST ROUND REVIEW

##### The Secrets to Designing a Curiosity-Driven Career

The definitive long-form feature on her career framework.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

#### CRUNCHBASE NEWS

##### The AI Founder Stopping Platform Ransom

Stackbirds launch coverage and the thesis behind it.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

#### AUSTIN INNO · BIZ JOURNALS

##### Austin Startups to Watch — Eat Cook Joy

#### ENGINEERING AT META

##### Meet the Wogrammers — Women in Engineering



Local startup feature on the personal-chef company.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

The original 2015 feature that introduced the project.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

FOREIGN POLICY

## 2015 Global Thinkers

Named alongside Erin Summers for Wogrammer.

[VIEW LIST →](#)

UW-MADISON ALUMNI

## 2018 Forward Under 40 Award Recipient

Wisconsin Alumni Association recognition.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

UW COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

## Alumni Spotlight: Zainab Ghadiyali, Tech Founder

UW Engineering blog feature.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

PRODUCT SCHOOL

## Zainab Ghadiyali — Airbnb Product Lead

Featured product leader interview.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

WOMEN 2.0

## Wogrammer · Facebook · Airbnb

Career-arc feature on the Wogrammer co-founder.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

THE FULL INDEX

# Every Verified *Link*

60+ unique links — profiles, alumni pages, articles, podcasts, ventures and directories — grouped for fast lookup.



## CORE PROFILES & SOCIAL

[linkedin.com/in/zainabg](https://www.linkedin.com/in/zainabg)



[clay.earth/profile/zainab-g](https://clay.earth/profile/zainab-g)



[about.me/breaking-stereotypes-consulting](https://about.me/breaking-stereotypes-consulting)



[weekday.works/people/zainab-ghadiyali](https://weekday.works/people/zainab-ghadiyali)



[contactout.com/Zainab-Ghadiyali](https://contactout.com/Zainab-Ghadiyali)



[twitter.com/zainabg](https://twitter.com/zainabg)



[facebook.com/zainab.ghadiyali](https://facebook.com/zainab.ghadiyali)



[github.com/zainabg](https://github.com/zainabg)



[producthunt.com/@zainabg](https://producthunt.com/@zainabg)



[stackoverflow.com/users/zainabg](https://stackoverflow.com/users/zainabg)



[goodreads.com/user/show/zainabg](https://goodreads.com/user/show/zainabg)



[angel.co/u/zainab-ghadiyali](https://angel.co/u/zainab-ghadiyali)



[crunchbase.com/person/zainab-ghadiyali](https://crunchbase.com/person/zainab-ghadiyali)



[slideshare.net/zainabg](https://slideshare.net/zainabg)



## UNIVERSITY & ALUMNI

[uwalumni.com](https://uwalumni.com) · 2018 FUF Award



[engineering.wisc.edu](https://engineering.wisc.edu) · Alumni Spotlight



[winthrop.edu/mwe](https://winthrop.edu/mwe)



warf.org · Innovation Roadmap



uwmadison.edu · Wogrammer Profile



## FIRST ROUND REVIEW & CONNECTED WRITING

---

review.firstround.com · curiosity-driven career



linkedin pulse · 200 women engineers



aliciadiamond.com · chiefs of staff



## WOGRAMMER ECOSYSTEM

---

wogrammer.org



facebook.com/wogrammer



twitter.com/wogrammer



instagram.com/wogrammer



medium.com/@wogrammer



anitab.org · acquisition release



engineering.fb.com · meet the wogrammers



## EAT COOK JOY

---

eatcookjoy.com



eatcookjoy.com/about-us



eatcookjoy.com · founder profile



[eatcookjoy.com/archive](https://eatcookjoy.com/archive)



[linkedin.com/company/eat-cook-joy](https://linkedin.com/company/eat-cook-joy)



[instagram.com/eatcookjoy](https://instagram.com/eatcookjoy)



[facebook.com/eatcookjoy](https://facebook.com/eatcookjoy)



[austin inno · startups to watch](#)



[voyagesanantonio.com · interview](#)



[austinbusinesswoman.com · feature](#)



[austinstartup.com · personal chefs & AI](#)



[startupdigest.com · founder profile](#)



## STACKBIRDS & AI AGENTS

[crunchbase news · platform ransom](#)



## TALKS, PODCASTS & INTERVIEWS

[insideoutside.io · ep 191](#)



[youtube · ep 191 video](#)



[transistor.fm · audio share](#)



[apple podcasts](#)



[stitcher.com](#)



[spotify episode](#)



youtube · all videos →

productschool.com · airbnb pm →

mindtheproduct.com · speaker →

women2.com · feature →

foreignpolicy.com · global thinkers →

sxsw schedule →

eventbrite · WARF talk →

winwisconsin.org · speaker →

austinbusinesswoman.com · directory →

Sourced from [clay.earth](#), [LinkedIn](#) and verified press. If a link drifts, use the search engine of your choice with the title shown.

#### CONNECT & FOLLOW

## Where Zainab *Shows Up*

Verified channels — DMs welcome on the public ones, especially LinkedIn.



LinkedIn



X / Twitter



linkedin.com/in/zainabg

@zainabg



**Crunchbase**

Person profile



**Clay.earth**

Aggregated profile



**Product Hunt**

@zainabg



**Instagram**

@eatcookjoy



**Facebook**

zainab.ghadiyali



**GitHub**

github.com/zainabg

# Zainab *Ghadiyali*

Founder · Engineer · Coach

Eat Cook Joy & Stackbirds

Austin, Texas — and the open internet.

A reading room curated for [azizsaif.com/Zainab](https://azizsaif.com/Zainab).

Unofficial · all materials credit their sources.

READ

Biography

Journey

Featured Article

Currently Reading



WATCH & LISTEN

Videos

Podcasts

Press

BUILD

Wogrammer

Eat Cook Joy

Stackbirds

All Links

TOP

LINKEDIN

EAT COOK JOY

FIRST ROUND

✦ CURIOSITY, PERSISTENTLY PRACTICED ✦ © 2026 · CURATED READING ROOM — UNOFFICIAL ✦

