Structured Vision-Language Pretraining for Computational Cooking

Mustafa Shukor    Nicolas Thome    Matthieu Cord
Sorbonne University
{firstname.lastname}@sorbonne-universite.fr

Abstract

Vision-Language Pretraining (VLP) and Foundation models have been the go-to recipe for achieving SoTA performance on general benchmarks. However, leveraging these powerful techniques for more complex vision-language tasks, such as cooking applications, with more structured input data, is still little investigated. In this work, we propose to leverage these techniques for structured-text based computational cuisine tasks. Our strategy, dubbed VLPCook (Structured Vision-Language Pretraining for Computational Cooking), first transforms existing image-text pairs to image and structured-text pairs. This allows to pretrain our VLPCook model using VLP objectives adapted to the structured data of the resulting datasets, then finetuning it on downstream computational cooking tasks. During finetuning, we also enrich the visual encoder, leveraging pretrained foundation models (e.g. CLIP) to provide local and global textual context. VLPCook outperforms current SoTA by a significant margin (+3.3 Recall@1 absolute improvement) on the task of Cross-Modal Food Retrieval on the large Recipe1M dataset. Finally, we conduct further experiments on VLP to validate their importance, especially on the Recipe1M+ dataset. The code will be made publicly available.

1. Introduction

Vision-Language Pretraining (VLP) [6, 14, 27, 62, 66] has become the general recipe to attain SoTA results on downstream unimodal and multimodal tasks, with the key success is learning a shared latent space where all modalities are aligned. This paradigm generally helps to overcome the human labor associated with designing a task or domain customized approaches, and pushes towards more simplification, by unifying the model, training objective and input/output format [5, 70, 72]. As going large scale is an important ingredient to push the performance limits, we have witnessed recently a lot of work going in this direction, leading to what so-called foundation models [1, 5, 19, 26, 48, 80].

However, these approaches are still evaluated on simple downstream tasks, to the detriment of more complex albeit important tasks. The current evaluation schema considers tasks such as VQA [2], Visual entailment [74], Image-Text Retrieval [47], Image Classification and other general benchmarks that highly resemble the pretraining data, in terms of image distribution, text format, length and structure, where some work spend significant effort [5, 19, 80, 82] to remove near duplicate images and avoid any leaks between the pretraining data and test set of downstream tasks. Similarly, existing Foundation models have shown great transfer capabilities to several downstream tasks, however, it is still also unclear how they perform beyond common tasks.

Beyond that, many other important tasks are glossed over, as the key stumbling block is their complex input that is hard to digest. In particular the tasks with image distribution significantly different from the pretraining one, and with associated text that goes beyond simple image caption, to more richer, longer and structured text.

Computational Cooking or Food applications [16, 41, 43, 51] are one of the important applications that fit very well in this marginalized list, with no existing work to bridge the gap with VLP. In particular, Cross-Modal Food Retrieval [4, 50, 51, 59] which has gained a lot of attention in the recent years and is the current main benchmark to assess the model performance on computational cooking. The images are of different food plates with high inter and low intra category similarity. The text, consists of the corresponding recipe that is composed of 3 entities; title (global description), ingredients (local descriptions, objects or entities that might be seen or not) and instructions (events that we generally see only their effects or final results).

In this work, we question how to leverage VLP and existing Foundation models for Cooking tasks, and focus on Cross-Modal Food Retrieval, aiming at bridging the gap between VLP and Computational Cooking.

As the main hurdle to enable VLP for food models is the input data, we choose to adapt the input data to be compatible, structurally and semantically, to some extent, to fit in these models. In addition, and pushing on the environmen-
We propose a new approach for transforming existing large scale Vision-Language Models (VLMs), to guide the vision encoder with structured context. This guidance is through region-level or local context (e.g., ingredients), and image-level or global context (e.g., titles). Our approach, dubbed VLPCook, consists of 2 stages; (1) Structured VLP of the model on the created structured text, then (2) Cross-Modal Finetuning guided by foundation models. The approach is illustrated in Fig. 1.

Our main contributions can be summarized as follows:

- We propose a new approach for transforming existing datasets of image-text pairs to datasets of image and structured-text pairs, and show that VLP on such datasets gives significant improvement.
- We propose a new model that leverages existing pre-trained foundation models to inject structured local and global textual context to guide the visual encoder.

To validate the work, we conduct an extensive experimental study on the challenging task of Cross-Modal Food Retrieval, which leads to the following interesting outcomes:

- VLPCook outperforms significantly other SoTA on the Recipe1M dataset, with absolute improvement of +3 and +3.3 of R@1 on the 1k and 10k setups respectively.
- The first work showing the effectiveness of VLP in the cooking context, after experimenting with different kinds of existing food approaches.
- Despite what was reported [40] on the poor generalization from Recipe1M+ to Recipe1M, we show that pretraining on this large dataset can unlock its potential, and lead to large improvement of +2.4 R@1 on Recipe1M test set.
- Contrary to recent findings showing that foundation models can attain SoTA on standard benchmarks (e.g., VQA v2, COCO retrieval), we show that finetuning these models lag significantly behind SoTA on the underlying task of Cross-Modal Food Retrieval.

2. Related Work

Food Applications and Learning from Structured Data

Many work have been proposed in the recent years for food tasks, such as food categorization [3], calorie estimation [42], image generation [86] and cross modal retrieval [51]. Since the inception of large scale food datasets such Recipe1M [51] followed by Recipe1M+ [40] the task of cross-modal retrieval have gained a lot of attention. In terms of performance and architectural designs, cross modal food retrieval work can be divided into transformer-based [18, 46, 50, 59] or transformer-free [4, 15, 51, 68, 69, 87] approaches, with a significant improvements of the former. Specifically, on the vision side, ViT [11] is used as an image encoder, and on the recipe side, standard [18] or hierarchical transformers [50, 59] are adopted. In terms of training objectives, almost all approaches use triplet loss [10, 53, 73] in addition to some regularization such as semantic triplet [4, 59], embedding classification [51], adversarial losses [68] and multimodal regularization with image-text matching objective [59]. In addition to food applications, learning from structured texts and images has been investigated in several
domains and tasks. Multimedia Event extraction is one of such tasks that aims to extract events and the associated arguments \cite{33,34,71,83}. Another interesting task is Situation Recognition, where the model should extract several elements, such as the main activity, participants actors and their roles \cite{7,64,79}. In the context of VLP, few work have been recently proposed \cite{32,36}, however their contribution is limited to the learning side, and mainly focused on aligning the modalities on different structural level. These approaches leverage the textual structure, based only on the caption that does not contain a rich description. On the image side, they rely on object detectors to extract visual objects, which are, heavy, with limited number of objects, and consider only seen objects. In our work, we focus on enabling VLP for models that consume structural texts, by relying on both the image and the caption to extract the textual structure.

**Vision and Language Pretraining (VLP)** Vision and Language Pretraining (VLP) \cite{6,62,66} aims at learning vision-language representation by pretraining on datasets of images and texts \cite{1,45,48,54,56}. The model is then evaluated on several downstream tasks such as VQA \cite{2}, NLVR2 \cite{65}, image-text retrieval \cite{47} and image captioning \cite{37}. This line of research has shown promising success in the last few years, leading to state of art (SoTA) results \cite{14,26,27} compared to task-customised models, and providing modular encoders that are seamlessly used in a variety of ways. Besides several other improvements, the major ones have been either in the architectural design, or the pretraining objectives. On the model side, we have models with separate vision and language encoders, without significant cross modal interaction (e.g., CLIP \cite{48}, ALIGN \cite{20}). Despite their fast inference, they are data hungry and perform poorly on tasks that need deeper reasoning. To overcome these limitations, heavy fusion models use a cross modal interaction module \cite{6,22,25,31,38,62,84} which is added on top of unimodal encoders \cite{13,27,58,78} leading to hybrid models. These hybrid approaches have succeeded to get SoTA results while training on reasonably sized datasets. On the learning side, the main training objectives can be categorised into contrastive (ITC \cite{48}, ITM \cite{6}) and masked predictions (MLM \cite{9}, MIM \cite{14,58}). The models that work best are those that combine several objectives, however, at large scale, there are many attempts to unify pretraining tasks.

**Leveraging Foundation Models** Foundation models \cite{1,48,60,70,72,80} draw some similarity with VLP, however here the objective is to develop a general model that can be adapted to many unimodal and multimodal tasks. Here there is more emphasis on large scale, in terms of training data \cite{48}, and model size \cite{80} and on unification of the architectural design and training objectives \cite{70,72}. In spite of being successful, due to the need for huge resources to training these models from scratch, researchers and practitioners have leveraged them, without the burden of retraining; such as initialization and finetuning \cite{57,59}, as frozen modules \cite{8,49,63}, enriching the input \cite{52} and extracting visual concepts \cite{58}. In our work, we leverage existing pretrained foundation models to extract different aspects of textual contexts to enrich the visual representation.

### 3. VLPCook

**Overview:** We introduce VLPCook, the first work trying to bridge the gap between VLP and the Computational Cooking domain. VLPCook proposes a novel pretraining pipeline that solves the issues of complex cooking inputs, and a fine-tuning framework that leverages this pretraining and foundation models for cooking tasks, such as the task of Cross-Modal Food Retrieval. VLPCook consists in 2 stages: (1) Structured VLP (Sec. 3.1); to perform VLP relevant to complex cooking recipes, we transform the image captions (in existing image-text pairs datasets) to structured text, and form new datasets of image and structured text pairs. This allows us to benefit from a large-scale structured VLP adapted to the specificity of cooking datasets. (2) Cross-Modal Fine-tuning (Sec. 3.2); on the downstream cooking task, where we leverage existing foundation models, without any retraining, to contextualize the visual encoder with local and global textual context. The approach is illustrated in Fig. 1.

**Background on VLP:** VLP consists of pretraining Vision-Language models on large datasets of image-text pairs, then finetuning on several multimodal downstream tasks. Several pretraining objectives are used in VLP. Here we focus only on 2 of them; Image-Text Contrastive (ITC) and Image-Text Matching (ITM):

- **ITC:** several ITC losses have been proposed, such as InfoNCE \cite{44,61,85} and triplet loss \cite{10,73}. In this work, we use a triplet loss on top of the unimodal encoders. On one hand, we pull the image embedding to be close to the corresponding recipe embedding, and vice versa, and on the other hand, we push far away the embeddings of different recipes. ITC is used to globally align both modalities, which is important for tasks such as cross-modal retrieval.

- **ITM:** is a binary classification loss to train the model to predict matched image-text pairs \cite{6}. This loss is applied on top of the multimodal module (e.g., transformer decoder) and aims to learn more fine-grained interaction between modalities.

#### 3.1. Structured Vision-Language Pretraining

Existing VLP approaches use image captions; usually a one sentence describing a general event, or the scene in the image. Despite being easily scraped from the internet,
and successful in many general downstream tasks, image captions are not directly aligned with some domains (e.g., Food applications) that need longer, richer and structured text, with global and local elements and their interaction.

Here we focus on computational cooking tasks that require such complex text input. The text or the recipe consists of different elements, forming a hierarchical structure; global information about the image (e.g., title), local information (e.g., ingredients) and the interaction between different entities (e.g., instructions). The text is long (e.g., more than 10 ingredients/instructions) and rich, as it contains very specific details (e.g., ingredients name and quantity). Recent food models have dedicated recipe encoders to exploit such structure. They use several stages of transformers: one for each ingredient/instruction, another for the list of ingredients/instructions [50], and the last stage with transformer decoders that take the tokens of one entity as query and the tokens of other ones as keys and values [59] (Fig. 2).

To bridge this gap between VLP and the food domain, we propose first to create datasets of structured image-text pairs, then use them to pretrain food models. This stage is illustrated in Fig. 2.

**From Image Captions to Structured Text (Recipe-fying the captions):** we propose a new approach to transform existing image captions, in existing datasets of image and text pairs, to richer and structured text. Transforming existing datasets helps us to leverage large scale ones, which is cheaper than creating large scale datasets of image-recipe pairs from scratch. We make the analogy between the obtained text and recipes and detail the process in the following:

**Global information (Title):** we assume that the caption describes either the global scene or the main event in the image, and use it to extract the title. However, as it may also include some unnecessary details to be considered for the title, we extract only the objects using Scene Graph Parsing (SGP) [55] techniques and assemble them with a simple “and” (e.g., title: Woman and Piano and stage).

**Local information (Ingredients):** here, local entities or objects in the image should be included. Relying on the caption alone is not optimal, as it contains only few seen objects, besides referring to global aspects of the scene. On the other hand, we do not want to be limited to seen objects and include unseen but relevant objects, which is the case for ingredients in food tasks (e.g., salt, sugar). This motivates us to leverage additional sources of information to extract all relevant, seen or unseen, objects. To this end, we use existing foundation models, without retraining them, as they enjoy good generalization capabilities on different domains and tasks, to retrieve the closest entities. Specifically, these entities are retrieved from a database that contains all objects extracted from the captions of several image-text datasets (e.g., COCO, SBU). To get the local entities of an image, the image is fed to a CLIP visual encoder [48], then a cosine similarity is applied to compute the distance between the image and all textual embeddings of local entities, to select the closest k ones.

**Event (Instructions):** To describe the event, we consider the caption. Even though the caption might describe only one event in which some of the objects participate, we found that using additional captions does not help significantly.

**VLP with Structured Text:** Once we create datasets of images and structured-text pairs, we can feed such data to the hierarchical text encoder and pretrain our model (Fig. 2) using standard VLP objectives. We use both ITC and ITM objectives. For text-to-image ITC loss (similarly for the image-to-text ITC), the triplet loss is fed with the text (t) and image (v) embeddings:

\[
I(t_a, v_p, v_n, \alpha) = \left[ d(t_a, v_p) + \alpha - d(t_a, v_n) \right]_{+}, \tag{1}
\]

\[
t = E_t(G, L, E), \quad v = E_v(I),
\]

where \( t_a, v_p \) and \( v_n \) are the anchor, positive and negative embeddings respectively, \( \alpha \) is the margin and \( d(\cdot, \cdot) \) is a distance function. The image embedding is obtained after processing the image (I) with the image encoder \( E_v \). The text embedding is obtained after processing the structured text, with the extracted local (L), global (G) and event (E) elements. Specifically, \( E_t \) first encodes each entity independently using transformer encoders, then exploits their
interactions with cross attention [59]. We then compute ITC loss ($\mathcal{L}_{\text{itc}}$) by summing the triplet losses over the batch and weight the loss by the inverse of number of active triplet as done in Adamine [4]. All examples in the batch are considered negatives, except the images that correspond to the recipe and vice-versa. The ITM loss can be written as:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{itm}} = -E_{T,I \sim D}[y \log(s(T,I)) + (1 - y) \log(1 - s(T,I))],$$

(2)

where $y$ is the label (i.e., 1 for matching pairs and 0 otherwise) and $D$ is the set of structured text ($T = \{L, G, E\}$) and image (I) pairs, and $s()$ is the score on top of the multimodal module. The total loss becomes:

$$\mathcal{L} = \mathcal{L}_{\text{itc}} + \lambda \mathcal{L}_{\text{itm}},$$

(3)

On the image side, to ease the pretraining, and leverage the initial visual representation, we follow LiT [82] and keep the vision encoder frozen, we also find that this gives better results. We use a general vocabulary (used in BERT) and change the embedding layer during this stage.

**Figure 3. Illustration of our contextualized vision encoder (stage 2 of VLPCook).** The ViT is contextualized by the context module, which extracts local and global context (CExt), then project them using a light-weight module (CEmb) to obtain the context tokens. Local context tokens are concatenated to the image tokens at the input of the ViT, and the global context token (CLS token) is concatenated at the output.

### 3.2. Leveraging Foundation Models for Structured Downstream Tasks

We propose to leverage foundation models (CLIP [48]), without any retraining, for cross modal food retrieval. The approach is based on injecting local and global textual contexts in the image encoder, to enrich the visual representation and steer it towards the textual embedding space. This context inherits the features and biases in the pretrained CLIP, which excels in general cross-modal retrieval tasks. We adopt a vision transformer (ViT [11]) on the image side. We elaborate first on how we contextualize the ViT, then we detail the finetuning step. The model is illustrated in Fig. 3.

**Contextualized Visual Representation:** We inject different types of contexts during the image encoding; global and local. For global context, we inject different titles, while for local one, we inject different ingredients. The titles and ingredients are extracted from the image using our CLIP-based retrieval approach (Sec. 3.1). During training, we inject different titles, ingredients and different combination of them for each batch to add more variability and some regularization during training.

To obtain the context tokens, we concatenate all context elements (all titles for global context or all ingredients for local one) to form one sentence that is embedded using the Context Embedding (CEmb) module (Fig. 3). CEmb consists of a light-weight text encoder and a linear projection layer to project the textual tokens to the space of the visual tokens. We inject the local context early, in the input of the ViT (concatenation to the image tokens), and the global one, later in its output (concatenation of CLS token before the linear projection), where we have higher abstraction level and more global representation. The forward pass of the contextualized ViT can be expressed as follows:

$$x = ViT(Concat(i_1, ..., i_k, c_1^l, ..., c_p^l))$$

$$x = F(Concat(x_{cls}, c_0^g))$$

(4)

Where $i_j$, $c_j^l$ and $c_j^g$ are the tokens of the image ($k$ tokens), local context ($p$ tokens) and global context respectively. The $cls$ means the class token and $F$ is a linear layer.

This is different from other food approaches that add only global information (food category or class) later by concatenating it to the visual embedding [75] or other approaches that concatenate object tags (OSCAR [35]) or visual concepts (ViCHA [58]) only at the input, without any distinction between local and global contexts. Our approach is also inspired by prompt tuning techniques [21, 24, 39] where a couple of learnable tokens are concatenated before the main text to adapt the frozen model to a given task.

**Finetuning:** We finetune the model on cross-modal food retrieval. During this stage, we inject the local and global contexts (Sec 3.2). The model consists of a ViT, hierarchical recipe encoder and a multimodal module [59], mainly we train the model using Adamine triplet loss [4] with incremental margin, in addition to the ITM loss as a multimodal regularization at the output of the multimodal module. During test, we only use the unimodal encoders for fast retrieval. The context is injected also during test.

### 4. Experiments

In this section we detail the experimental results.

**Datasets:** We use several datasets; such as Recipe1M [51] (239 k, 51 k, 51 k pairs as training, validation and test set)
where each example consists of a recipe (title, ingredients, instructions) and image pair. Recipe1M+ \cite{40} that is an extension of Recipe1M with 13M images and 1M recipe, and Image and Structured Text pairs (IST), which is our dataset constructed with the STE module from 3 public datasets; COCO \cite{37}, Visual Genome \cite{23} and SBU \cite{45} to form a total of 2M pairs including around 1M different images.

**Implementation details:** following recent approaches \cite{59}, the model consists of hierarchical transformer encoders and decoders on the recipe side, a ViT-B/16 on the image side and a multimodal module. For VLP, we start by pre-training (with frozen ViT) with learning rate (lr) of 1e-5 and total batch size of 200 on 4 GPUs (50 per GPU) for 30 epochs. In the second finetuning stage on Recipe1M, we follow the same implementation details as Tfood. We associate each image to 5 titles and 15 ingredients. During training, we sample only 2 titles and 4 ingredients randomly in each batch. The context is embedded by the first 2 layers of the BERT \cite{9} encoder, followed by linear projection. We follow other work and report recall@{1, 5, 10} (R@k) and their sum (RSUM), in addition to the median rank (medR) on the 1k and 10 setups, averaged over 10 and 5 runs respectively (more details in the appendix).

|                      | image-to-recipe | recipe-to-image |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                      | R@1 | R@5 | R@10 | R@1 | R@5 | R@10 |
| Adamoue \cite{4}     | 14.8 | 34.6 | 46.1 | 14.9 | 35.3 | 45.2 |
| R2GAN \cite{87}      | 13.5 | 33.5 | 44.9 | 14.2 | 35.0 | 46.8 |
| MCEN \cite{17}       | 20.3 | 43.3 | 54.4 | 21.4 | 44.3 | 55.2 |
| ACME \cite{68}       | 22.9 | 46.8 | 57.9 | 24.4 | 47.9 | 59.0 |
| SN \cite{81}         | 22.1 | 45.9 | 56.9 | 23.4 | 47.3 | 57.9 |
| IMHF \cite{28}       | 23.4 | 48.2 | 58.4 | 24.9 | 48.3 | 59.4 |
| Wang et. al \cite{67} | 23.4 | 48.8 | 60.1 | 24.6 | 50.0 | 61.0 |
| SCAN \cite{45}       | 23.7 | 49.3 | 60.6 | 25.3 | 50.6 | 61.6 |
| HF-ICMA \cite{29}    | 24.0 | 51.6 | 65.4 | 25.6 | 54.8 | 67.3 |
| MSJE \cite{76}       | 25.6 | 52.1 | 63.8 | 26.2 | 52.5 | 64.1 |
| SEJE \cite{77}       | 26.9 | 54.0 | 65.6 | 27.2 | 54.4 | 66.1 |
| M-SIA \cite{30}      | 29.2 | 55.0 | 66.2 | 30.3 | 55.6 | 66.5 |
| DaC \cite{15}        | 30.0 | 56.5 | 67.0 | -    | -    | -    |
| X-MRS \cite{18}      | 32.9 | 60.6 | 71.2 | 33.0 | 60.4 | 70.7 |
| H-T (ViT) \cite{50}  | 33.5 | 62.1 | 72.8 | 33.7 | 62.2 | 72.7 |
| T-Food (ViT) \cite{59} | 40.0 | 67.0 | 75.9 | 41.0 | 67.3 | 75.9 |
| T-Food (CLIP-ViT) \cite{59} | 43.4 | 70.7 | 79.7 | 44.6 | 71.2 | 79.7 |

**Table 1. Comparison with other work.** Recall@k (↑) is reported on the Recipe1M test set. Our approaches (VLPCook) significantly outperform all existing work. Best metrics are in bold, and next best metrics are underlined.

|                      | image-to-recipe | recipe-to-image |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                      | R@1 | R@5 | R@10 | R@1 | R@5 | R@10 |
| Marin et al. \cite{40} | 17.0 | 38.0 | 48.0 | 17.0 | 42.0 | 54.0 |
| VLPCook*             | 45.2 | 75.9 | 84.0 | 47.3 | 77.6 | 85.3 |

**Table 2. Comparison with other work.** Recall@k (↑) is reported on the Recipe1M+ test set (1k setup). Best metrics are in bold. VLPCook* here is without VLP.

**Results on Recipe1M+:** in Tab. 2, we show the first fine-tuning results on Recipe1M+ with interesting scores (more details in the appendix). Due to the large dataset size, we report the results of VLPCook without VLP (only with the context module). The scores are almost multiplied by 3 compared to the baseline \cite{40}. However, there is a big gap between the scores on this dataset and those on Recipe1M, which makes it more challenging and more interesting to devise more complex approaches in the future.
4.2. Ablation Study of VLPCook

Here we present the ablation study for some design choices, on the 1k setup of Recipe1M test set:

**VLPCook (Sec. 3):** In Tab. 3, we show the effect of our contributions, mainly VLP and Context injection. We can notice that each one brings significant improvement as well as the combination of them.

**Local and Global Context (Sec. 3.2):** In Tab. 4, we do an ablation on the type and the position of the injected context. We notice that using only the ingredients (Ing) or titles (Ttl) (lines 2 and 3 Tab. 4) outperforms the baseline (line 1) without any context. Moreover, using both contexts is always better, regardless of their position. We also show that the best configuration is by injecting the ingredients at the input to the visual encoder and the titles at the output (line 5).

**VLP (Sec. 3.1):** In Tab. 5, compare different choices for VLP. Our baseline (B) is our implementation of TFood. We show the effectiveness of structured VLP, especially the transformed datasets, by the superiority of B+VLP (ours) compared to B+VLP (w/o structure), which is a baseline that takes the same caption as title, ingredients and instructions, without extracting any structure. We also compare with pretraining all modules (B+VLP (+Unfreeze Vis. Enc.)) and show that this degrades the performance. Finally, we use an object detector (VinVL [84]) to extract the objects or local entities in the image, instead of our CLIP-based approach and show that both are competitive in the pretraining stage.

**4.3. VLP of Existing Food Models**

We now validate that VLP consistently improves a wide variety of existing food models. We experiments with 2
VLP for cross-modal food retrieval and shows the effectiveness of our approach to transform captions to structured text. We show the superiority of our VLP with structured text extracted using the STE module and by freezing the vision encoder.

kinds of approaches; with standard transformer (e.g., BERT) such X-MRS [18] and TFood-BERT (our reimplementation of TFood where we replace the recipe encoder by a BERT) and with hierarchical transformers such as Tfood and TFood (CLIP-ViT). We do not change the training procedure for these methods, the only difference is in the pretraining stage, or initialization. We follow the same implementation detail as Sec. 4.1 and train on the 2M pairs. The BERT-based models are trained with image captions (training on IST can be found in the appendix) and those with hierarchical transformers with our transformed datasets (structured text). Results are reported in Tab. 6, that shows a consistent improvement for all SoTA with VLP. This validates the benefit of using VLP for cross-modal food retrieval and shows the effectiveness of our approach to transform captions to structured text.

Table 5. Ablation study on VLP.

| Model | VLP | image-to-recipe | recipe-to-image |
|-------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|
|       | R@1 | R@5  | R@10 | R@1 | R@5 | R@10 |
| Baseline (B) w/o VLP | 68.2 | 87.9 | 91.3 | 68.3 | 87.8 | 91.5 |
| B + VLP (w/o structure) | 67.2 | 87.3 | 91.0 | 67.5 | 87.5 | 91.1 |
| B + VLP (Unfreeze Vis. Enc.) | 67.6 | 87.3 | 91.3 | 67.6 | 87.2 | 90.9 |
| B + VLP (w/ Vision tags) | 68.8 | 88.3 | 91.8 | 69.9 | 88.3 | 91.7 |
| B + VLP (ours) | 69.5 | 88.0 | 91.4 | 69.7 | 88.1 | 91.5 |

Table 6. Results of VLP with existing food approaches. We see consistent improvement with VLP.

4.4. VLP on the Recipe1M+ Dataset

Recipe1M+ is the largest dataset for food applications, however, to the best of our knowledge, there is no work, besides the work that introduced this dataset [40], that consider it for cross-modal food retrieval. This might be due to, in addition to computation resources needed, the poor generalization from Recipe1M+ to Recipe1M as shown by the authors [40]. Here we try to leverage this dataset, and assess its benefit during pretraining. We pretrain our models for 30 epochs on all the recipes of Recipe1M+ (after excluding those in the validation and test set of Recipe1M) following the same implementation details as Sec. 3 (except training using only 2 GPUs), and then finetune these models on Recipe1M. The results of Tab. 7 show that Recipe1M+ is more effective than our IST, however, the latter contains only 1M images compared to 13M in the former, and the images and recipes are in the same distribution of those during finetuning. To fairly compare with IST, we also pretrain on Recipe1M+ by keeping only 10% of the images (i.e. 1.3 images in average per recipe). Interestingly, we can notice from Tab. 7 that pretraining on IST leads to better results.

| Model | VLP | image-to-recipe | recipe-to-image |
|-------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|
|       | R@1 | R@5  | R@10 | R@1 | R@5 | R@10 |
| Tfood IST | 69.5 | 88.0 | 91.4 | 69.7 | 88.1 | 91.5 |
| Tfood R1M+ | 70.3 | 88.6 | 91.9 | 70.7 | 88.6 | 91.8 |
| VLPCook w/o CLIP-ViT R1M+ | 71.0 | 89.1 | 92.7 | 71.9 | 89.6 | 92.7 |
| VLPCook IST | 73.6 | 90.5 | 93.1 | 74.7 | 90.7 | 91.9 |
| VLPCook R1M+ | 74.9 | 91.4 | 93.7 | 75.6 | 91.2 | 93.6 |
| VLPCook R1M+ (1.3M Im.) | 73.4 | 90.7 | 93.2 | 73.8 | 90.8 | 93.1 |

Table 7. VLP on our IST dataset vs on Recipe1M+ (R1M+). Pretraining on R1M+ gives better results, however, for the same number of images, IST is a better choice.

4.5. Foundation Models in the Cooking Context

Best SoTA results on general benchmarks are currently obtained by finetuning foundation models, however, we show that for tasks requiring more complex input, such as food retrieval, this paradigm lags significantly behind existing food models. To this end, we finetune on Recipe1M for cross-modal retrieval, considering 2 kinds of approaches; light fusion (CLIP) and heavy fusion (ALBEF) approaches.

CLIP [48]: Is trained contrastively (using InfoNCE loss) on 400M of general image-text pairs and consists of a ViT-Base/16 as image encoder and a transformer as text encoder.

ALBEF [27]: Is trained using ITC, ITM and MLM losses on 14M images and their corresponding text. It consists of a ViT-Base/16 on the image side, a 6-layer BERT on the text side, in addition to a multimodal decoder that is also a 6-layer BERT with cross attention.

For both models, we change the word embedding layer, the vocabulary, and maximum number of textual tokens to 300. We train for 120 epochs with the two losses; Adam optimizer and learning rate of 1e-5 (for CLIP ViT we use lr of 1e-6) and a total batch size of 80 and 56 for CLIP and ALBEF respectively. Tab. 8 shows that CLIP and ALBEF give reasonable performance and outperform most of the baselines (Tab. 1). However, and contrary to other general benchmarks, their performance is still below SoTA food models.
5. Conclusion

In this work, we show the benefits of Structured VLP for Computational Cooking. We also, successfully leverage pretrained foundation models, to enrich the vision encoder with structured context. These contributions led to a new SoTA for Cross-Modal Food Retrieval. We believe the impact of this work is broader, and might be adopted for other computational cooking applications or more general multimodal tasks, especially, those with complex input. An interesting follow up of this work, is to improve the textual structure extraction, going large scale in terms of pretraining data and testing on other downstream tasks, potentially beyond the cooking context.

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A. Appendix

The Appendix is organized as follows; Sec. A.1 elaborates on the implementation details, Sec. A.2 presents the complete comparison of VLPCook with other SoTA approaches on Recipe1M and Recipe1M+ datasets. We analyse the effect of the pretraining dataset size, especially, the number of images and texts in Sec. A.3. We then investigate in Sec. A.4 the training of BERT-based food models on structured and unstructured text. In Sec. A.5, we do a robustness analysis to missing recipe entities, where we show also the contribution of each of these entities for food retrieval. Finally, we show some qualitative examples on the extracted text (Sec. A.6) and the injected local and global context (Sec. A.7).

A.1. Implementation details

VLP of VLPCook: the model consists of a hierarchical transformer encoders and decoders on the recipe side, a ViT-B/16 [12] on the image side and a multimodal module [59]. For VLP, We start by pretraining this baseline with Adamine triplet (without semantic regularization losses) [4] and ITM losses ($\lambda = 1$), with learning rate (lr) 1e-5 and total batch size of 200, on 4 GPUs (50 per GPU) for 30 epochs. We pretrain on the 2M pairs of the IST dataset. Inspired by LiT [82] we freeze the image encoder during this stage.

Finetuning on Recipe1M: in the second finetuning stage, we follow the implementation details of recent work [59], mainly, batch size of 100, lr of 1e-5 (lr of 1e-6 for CLIP-ViT) and training for 120 epochs on the training set of Recipe1M. We optimize the model with the Adamine triplet (instance and semantic) with incremental margin (we start by a $\alpha_{inc} = 0.05$ and increase it by 0.005 each epoch until reaching 0.3) and ITM objective ($\lambda = 1$). The ViT is kept frozen for the first 20 epochs. Note that, we pretrain always with a ViT, even when we finetune with CLIP-ViT. We associate each image to 5 titles and 15 ingredients. These are extracted from the recipes of the training set of Recipe1M, using the CLIP-based retrieval approach. During training, we sample only 2 titles and 4 ingredients randomly in each batch. During Test we use all titles and ingredients. We concatenate the ingredients to the input of the ViT and the title to its output, before the linear projection to the latent space. The context is embedded by the first 2 layers of the BERT [9] encoder, then linearly projected to obtain the context tokens, we find it beneficial to use separate BERT encoders for each context.

Finetuning on Recipe1M+: for finetuning on Recipe1M+ [40], we adopt the same implementation details as for Recipe1M, however, due to the large number of images (i.e., 13M) we extract the context from only 1 image for each recipe and use this context for all the other corresponding images. We finetune on 2 A100 GPUs, for 60 epochs, without the semantic triplet loss and keep the ViT frozen for the first 5 epochs.

A.2. Comparison with SoTA

We compare VLPCook with other SoTA for Cross-Modal Food Retrieval. Tab. 9 shows the results after finetuning on Recipe1M. We outperform other SoTA by a significant margin on the 1k (+2.1 R@1) and 10k (+1.9 R@1) setups. Pretraining on Recipe1M+ (R1M+) leads to additional improvements of +3 and +3.3 R@1 on the 1k and 10k setups respectively. We also show some qualitative results in Fig. 6 and 7.

The results of training on Recipe1M+ dataset are shown in Tab. 10. We show the first interesting results on this challenging dataset, after the work [40] that introduced this dataset. Despite the large improvements, these results reveal the difficulty of this dataset, that could be interesting for devising more sophisticated approaches in the future.

A.3. Pretraining on Recipe1M+

In this section, we analyse the influence of the number of images and recipes for VLP. We pretrain on different subset

| Model       | R@1     | R@5     | R@10    | R@1     | R@5     | R@10    |
|-------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| X-MRS [18]  | 64.0    | 88.3    | 92.6    | 63.9    | 87.6    | 92.6    |
| H-T (ViT) [50] | 64.2 | 89.1    | 93.4    | 64.5    | 89.3    | 93.8    |
| T-Food [59] | 68.2    | 87.9    | 91.3    | 68.3    | 87.8    | 91.5    |
| CLIP        | 63.5    | 85.4    | 90.0    | 64.1    | 85.8    | 90.1    |
| ALBEF       | 61.0    | 84.7    | 89.9    | 61.9    | 84.6    | 89.8    |

Table 8. Finetuning foundation models on Recipe1M.
### Table 9. Comparison with other work on the Recipe1M dataset.

Our approaches (VLPCook) significantly outperform all existing work. Best metrics are in bold, and next best metrics are underlined.

| Dataset   | Pretraining # Recipes | # Images | Recipe1M+ | IST | Recall@1  | Recall@5  | Recall@10 |
|-----------|-----------------------|---------|-----------|-----|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Recipe1M+ | 13M                   | 1.0     | 74.9      | 91.4 | 93.7      | 75.6      | 91.2      |
|           | 6.5M                  | 1.0     | 74.9      | 91.4 | 93.7      | 75.6      | 91.2      |
|           | 1.3M                  | 1.0     | 74.9      | 91.4 | 93.7      | 75.6      | 91.2      |

### Table 10. Comparison with other work on the Recipe1M+ dataset.

Our approaches (VLPCook) significantly outperform all existing work. Best metrics are in bold, and next best metrics are underlined. All models are trained on the training set of Recipe1M+. * means without pretraining.

| Dataset   | Pretraining # Recipes | # Images | Recipe1M+ | IST | Recall@1  | Recall@5  | Recall@10 |
|-----------|-----------------------|---------|-----------|-----|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Recipe1M+ | 13M                   | 1.0     | 74.9      | 91.4 | 93.7      | 75.6      | 91.2      |
|           | 6.5M                  | 1.0     | 74.9      | 91.4 | 93.7      | 75.6      | 91.2      |
|           | 1.3M                  | 1.0     | 74.9      | 91.4 | 93.7      | 75.6      | 91.2      |

### A.4. Additional VLP experiments

In this section we investigate the importance of pretraining BERT-based food models on structured text. As these models take only one sequence of tokens, we flatten the structured text. We pretrain on the 2M examples of COCO, Visual Genome and SBU and compare the performance after fine-tuning on Recipe1M between; pretraining on image captions (Cap), and pretraining on structured image captions (our IST dataset). For the TFood-BERT model, we can notice in Tab. 13, that pretraining on IST is more efficient (better results for 10 epochs). Interestingly, pretraining on IST for
Figure 6. Recipe to image qualitative results of VLPCook on the Recipe1M test set. The image in green is the ground truth, followed by the top 4 retrieved images in order. For VLPCook, we can notice that all images semantically resemble the ground truth in addition to successfully retrieving the correct image.

10 epochs outperforms pretraining on image captions for 30 epochs. However, for longer training time, we observe a slight degradation when pretraining on IST, suggesting that flattening a structured text might not be optimal to train good BERT transformers to learn structured text.

| Model               | epochs | VLP | RSUM 1K | RSUM 10K |
|---------------------|--------|-----|---------|----------|
| TFood-BERT          | 10     | Cap | 474.5   | 328.6    | 803.1    |
|                     |        | IST | 477.9   | 332.0    | 809.9    |
|                     | 30     | Cap | 476.4   | 330.6    | 806.9    |
|                     |        | IST | 473.5   | 328.5    | 802.0    |

Table 13. Pretraining BERT-based food models. We compare between pretraining TFood-BERT on image captions (Cap) and on structured image captions (IST). Pretraining on IST is more efficient in terms of training time.

A.5. Robustness to missing recipe entities

Here we analyse how much our model is robust against missing recipe entities: title, ingredients and instructions. In addition, this will help to understand the importance of each element, and how much they contribute to find the right visual representation. This may also have some important applications in several scenarios (e.g. in case we have a specific ingredients, and we are wondering what can we make from them). The results are shown in Tab. 14. We can notice that the most important elements are the ingredients, then the instructions and finally the title. Compared to Tfood (CLIP-ViT) [59], in general we are more robust, except for missing ingredients. This indicates that our model rely heavily on the ingredients to find the image which might be caused by the local context (ingredients injected in the vision encoder) that might steer the model to focus more on the ingredients.

| Missing entry | Model               | image-to-recipe | recipe-to-image |
|---------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|               | Model               | R@1  | R@5  | R@10 | R@1  | R@5  | R@10 |
|               | Tfood (CLIP-ViT)    | 65.6 | 87.8 | 91.8 | 64.2 | 86.9 | 91.1 |
|               | VLPCook             | 68.6 | 88.1 | 92.0 | 68.4 | 87.6 | 91.3 |
|               | Tfood (CLIP-ViT)    | 40.6 | 69.6 | 78.6 | 30.4 | 57.5 | 67.3 |
|               | VLPCook             | 36.5 | 65.7 | 75.3 | 24.9 | 52.4 | 63.9 |
|               | Tfood (CLIP-ViT)    | 62.1 | 84.9 | 90.1 | 57.5 | 82.3 | 88.2 |
|               | VLPCook             | 64.1 | 85.7 | 90.0 | 62.0 | 83.8 | 88.6 |

Table 14. Robustness to missing recipe entities. The ingredients contribute more to finding the corresponding example, then the instructions, and finally the title.
A.6. Structured Text Extraction (STE)

We illustrate in Fig. 8 some qualitative examples of the structured text, obtained after transforming image captions using the STE module. We can see that the local elements are related mostly to the center of the image, describe the main or central object, and redundant. While such extracted information proved to be useful for food retrieval, devising other approaches that extracts information about all seen objects, with richer details, can help for tasks requiring more complex reasoning.

A.7. Local and Global Textual Concepts

Fig. 9 shows the extracted context associated with each image. We successfully extract relevant contexts describing the recipe. However, we have similar observation as in STE, mainly the redundancy in the local context, which might be due to the biases in the CLIP to the main or central objects in the image.
**Title:** Fruit Smoothie II

**Ingredients:**
- 1 cup blueberries
- 2 apples - peeled, cored and chopped
- 1 1/2 cups raspberries
- 3/4 cup seedless grapes
- 3 tablespoons white sugar

**Instructions:**
In a blender, combine blueberries, apples, raspberries, grapes, sugar and ice. Blend until smooth. Pour into glasses and serve.

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**Title:** Chicken Pie

**Ingredients:**
- 2 12 lbs chicken, cooked and deboned
- 1 (10 1/2 ounce) can cream of chicken soup
- 1 1/2 cups chicken broth
- 1 teaspoon baking powder

**Instructions:**
Bring chicken, soup and broth to a boil. Pour into a 9x13 pan. Mix remaining ingredients and pour mixture over chicken mixture in pan.

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**Title:** No-Bake Cheesy Lasagna (Vegetarian) With Optional Meat Sauce

**Ingredients:**
- 8 ounces lasagna noodles, uncooked
- 15 ounces ricotta cheese
- 1/2 cup parmesan cheese, grated
- 2 eggs
- 1 (26 ounce) jar...

**Instructions:**
Preheat oven to 350F. Combine ricotta, parmesan, and eggs and mix well. In a 9x13 dish, spread about 1/3 of the sauce, ...

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**Figure 7. Recipe to image qualitative results of VLPCook on the Recipe1M test set.** The image in green is the ground truth, followed by the top 4 retrieved images in order.

**Figure 8. Illustration of the structured text, extracted by the STE module.** For each image, we extract a global information using SGP, local information using CLIP-based retrieval and the event which is simply the caption.
Figure 9. Illustration of the local and global concepts. Both concepts are extracted using CLIP-based retrieval. The local concepts consist of ingredients, and the global ones as recipe titles.
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