

FLUENT ENTITY FRAMEWORK

REBECCA M. RIORDAN



FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

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FLUENT ENTITY FRAMEWORK

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FLUENT ENTITY FRAMEWORK

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The applesauce bread recipe is adapted from King Arthur Flour 200th Anniversary Cookbook. The challah recipe is adapted from Peter Reinhardt's Bread Bakers Apprentice. (The remaining 2 recipes are the author's.)

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Explore the Entity Framework code model, and learn how to create models without the Designer and before you have a database.

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 - Determine the requirements
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 - Build the model
 - Build the client

Put all you've learned to good use by building a complete data application.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

As the reader of this book, you are our most important critic and commentator. We value your opinion and want to know what we're doing right, what we could do better, what areas you'd like to see us publish in, and any other words of wisdom you're willing to pass our way.

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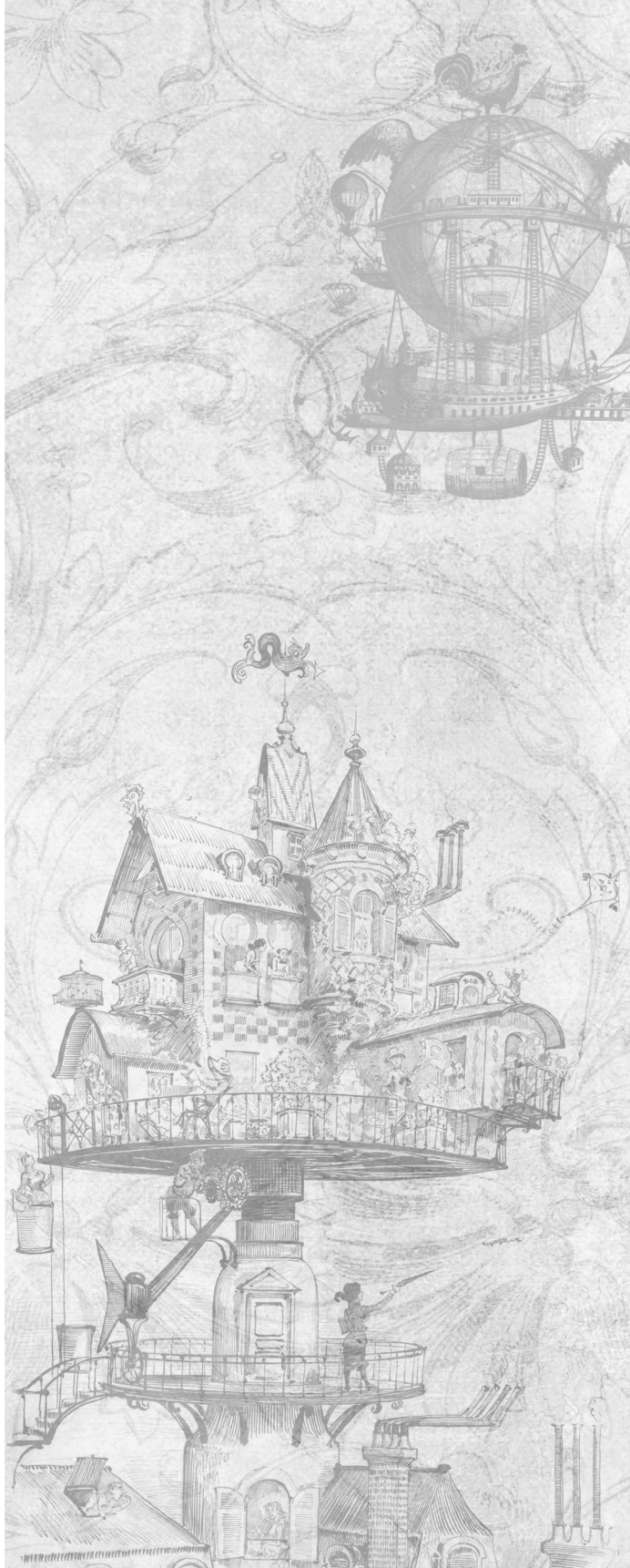
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USING THE DESIGNER



Congratulations. You've now written a real Entity Framework application. A pretty simple one, I grant you, and you're unlikely to build many applications that only need a couple of loops and some `Console.WriteLine()` statements by way of UI, but the skills you've already gained will get you through a surprising number of situations, particularly when you have a preexisting database that's in reasonably good shape.

But of course that isn't always going to be true, and there's a lot more to learn about working with Entity Framework. (Otherwise this would be a very short book!) You might, for example, decide to start your application with the EDM and build the database from it (Model-First), or you might decide to forego a model entirely and do everything in code (Code First). We'll look at both of these options in later chapters. Even when you are starting from a database, you may need to make more substantial changes than the simple ones we looked at in the last chapter.

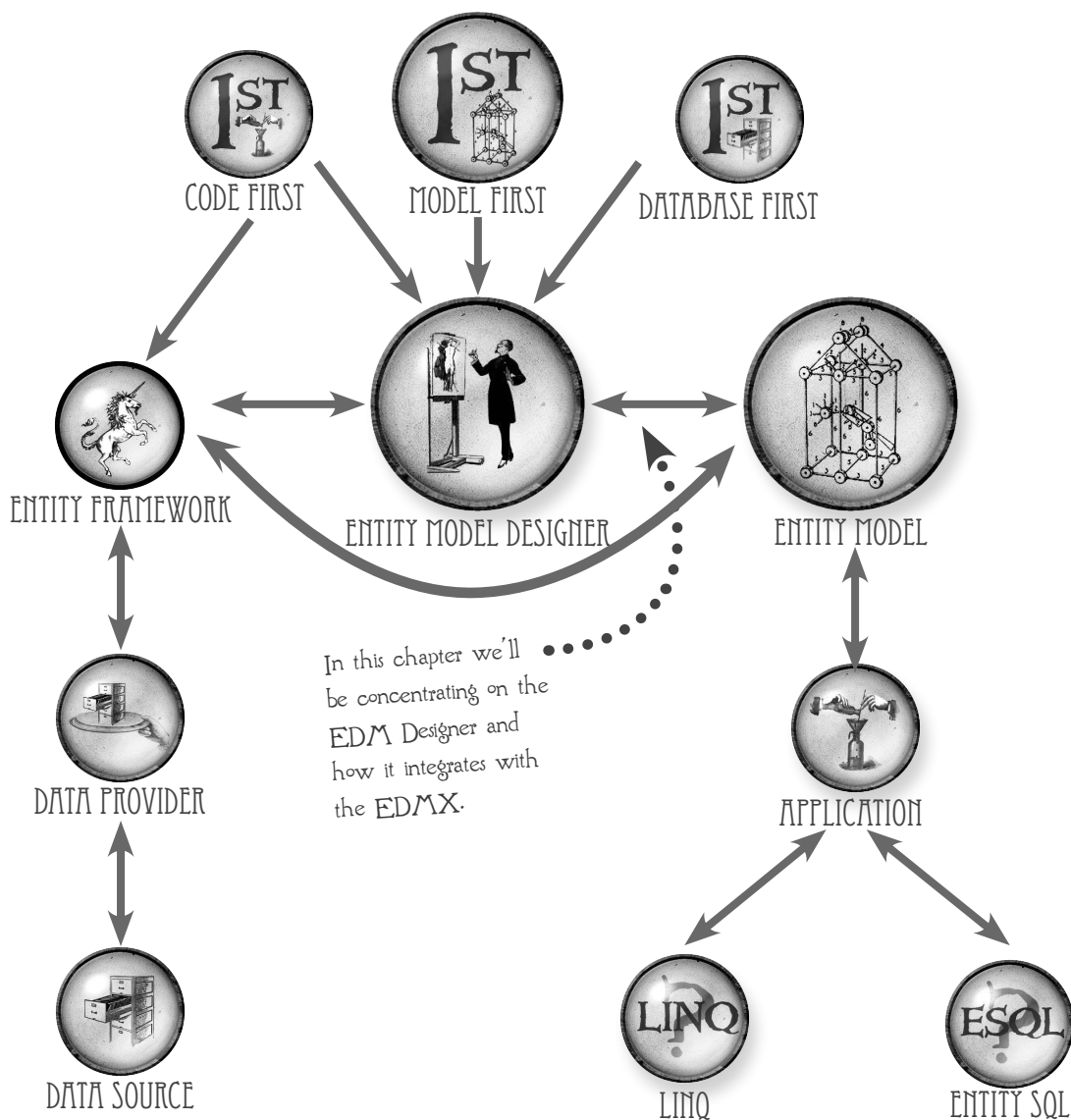
In this chapter, we'll start exploring some of the nooks & crannies of the Entity Framework by taking a closer look at the Entity Framework Designer and some of the advanced capabilities it offers.





FITTING IT IN

Here's how this chapter fits in to the book as a whole...





TASK LIST

In this chapter we'll explore the Entity Framework designer and the tools it provides for manipulating the EDMX.



THE DESIGNER & THE EDMX

We'll start this chapter by exploring how the Entity Framework designer translates the conceptual model in the EDMX into the class diagram you can manipulate on the design surface and through the Properties window.



UPDATING THE MODEL

EDMs are just as likely to change as any other part of an application. (You knew that, right?) Fortunately, the Entity Data Model Wizard makes it just as easy to update a model as it was to build it in the first place. We'll find out how in the second section of this chapter.



MAPPING DETAILS

After we've used the primary designer window to explore the conceptual layer of the EDMX, we'll look at the Mapping Details window, which is the designer's way of letting you view and control the way the conceptual model maps data to the database schema.



THE MODEL BROWSER

Finally, we'll turn our attention to the Model Browser, which provides a hierarchical view of all three layers of the EDMX. In addition to general poking around (more useful than you might think), you'll mostly use the Model Browser to explore stored procedures that don't map neatly to database operations, and we'll learn how to do that at the end of this chapter.



THE DESIGNER & THE EDMX

You may have worked with the Class Designer in Visual Studio, which provides a graphic view of a class diagram. The Entity Model Designer plays a similar role, but it works directly with the underlying EDMX. Here's how it works:

The `EntityType` definitions in the EDMX are represented as entity classes on the primary designer surface.

```
<EntityType Name="Pan">
```

```
<Key>
```

```
<PropertyRef Name="PanID" />
```

```
</Key>
```

```
<Property Name="PanID" Type="int" Nullable="false"
```

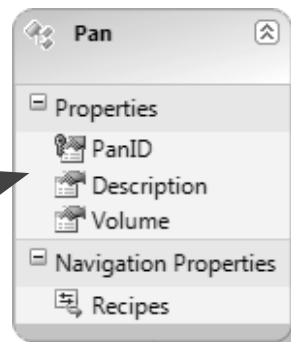
```
StoreGeneratedPattern="Identity" />
```

```
<Property Name="Description" Type="nvarchar" Nullable="false"
```

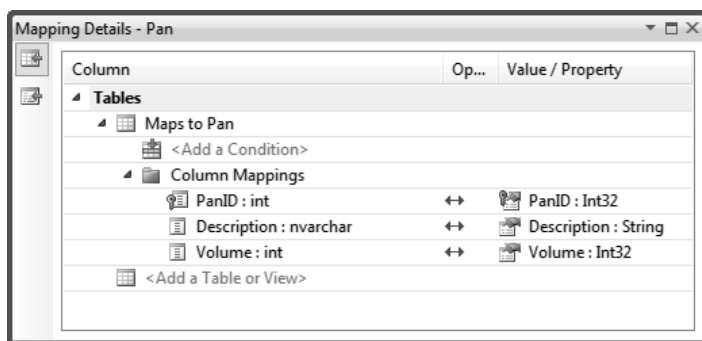
```
MaxLength="50" />
```

```
<Property Name="Volume" Type="int" />
```

```
</EntityType>
```



The Mapping Details window represents the content of the `Mappings` section of the EDMX. We'll look at the Mapping window in a few pages.



```
<EntitySetMapping Name="Pans">
```

```
<EntityTypeMapping TypeName="RecipeModel.Pan">
```

```
<MappingFragment StoreEntitySet="Pan">
```

```
<ScalarProperty Name="PanID" ColumnName="PanID" />
```

```
<ScalarProperty Name="Description" ColumnName="Description" />
```

```
<ScalarProperty Name="Volume" ColumnName="Volume" />
```

```
</MappingFragment>
```

```
</EntityTypeMapping>
```

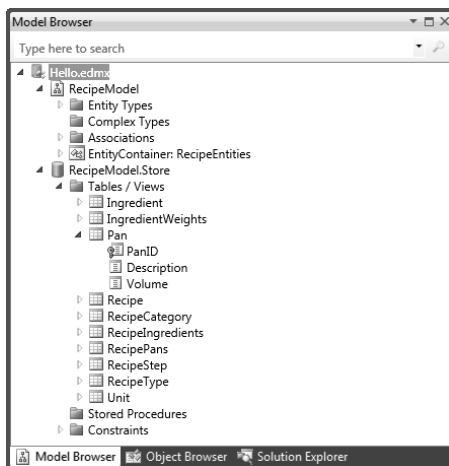
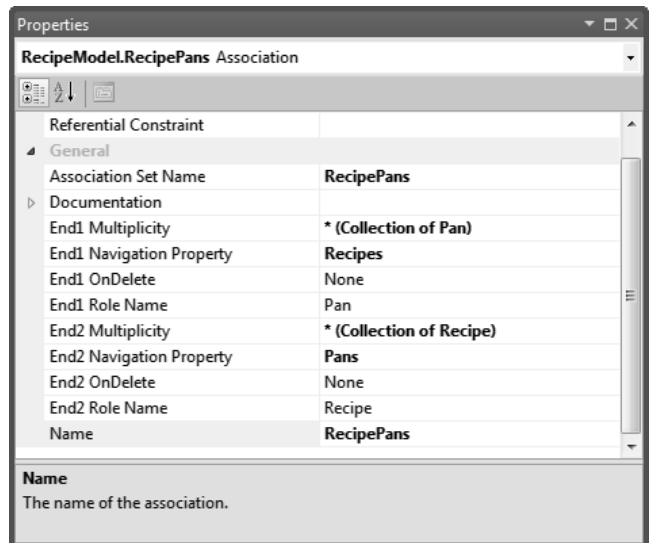
```
</EntitySetMapping>
```

```

<Association Name="FK_RecipePans_Pans">
  <End Role="Pan" Type="RecipeModel.Store.Pan" Multiplicity="1" />
  <End Role="RecipePans" Type="RecipeModel.Store.RecipePans" Multiplicity="*" />
  <ReferentialConstraint>
    <Principal Role="Pan">
      <PropertyRef Name="PanID" />
    </Principal>
    <Dependent Role="RecipePans">
      <PropertyRef Name="PanID" />
    </Dependent>
  </ReferentialConstraint>
</Association>

```

Details of Associations can be seen in the Properties window when you click on them in the primary designer window.



```

<EntitySet Name="Pan"
  EntityType="RecipeModel.Store.Pan"
  store:Type="Tables" Schema="dbo" />

```

The Store Schema, which you'll recall is the EDMX representation of the underlying database, is visible in the Model Browser.

We'll be looking at it in detail later in the chapter, as well.

```

<Designer xmlns="http://schemas.microsoft.com/ado/2008/10/edmx">
  ....
  <Diagrams>
    <Diagram Name="Hello" ZoomLevel="100">
      <EntityTypeShape EntityType="RecipeModel.Ingredient"
        Width="1.5" PointX="5" PointY="6.625"
        Height="1.9802864583333335" IsExpanded="true" />
    </Diagram>
  </Diagrams>
  ...

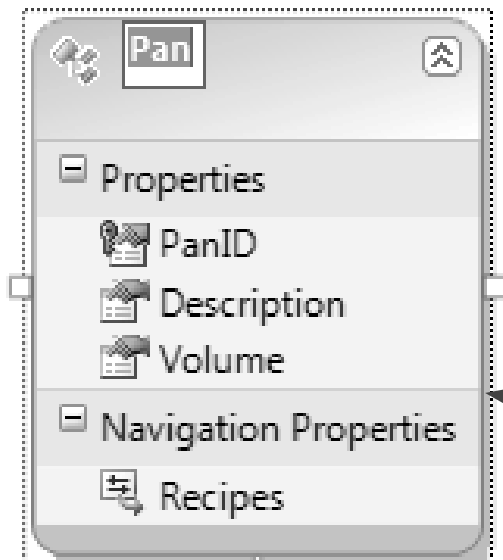
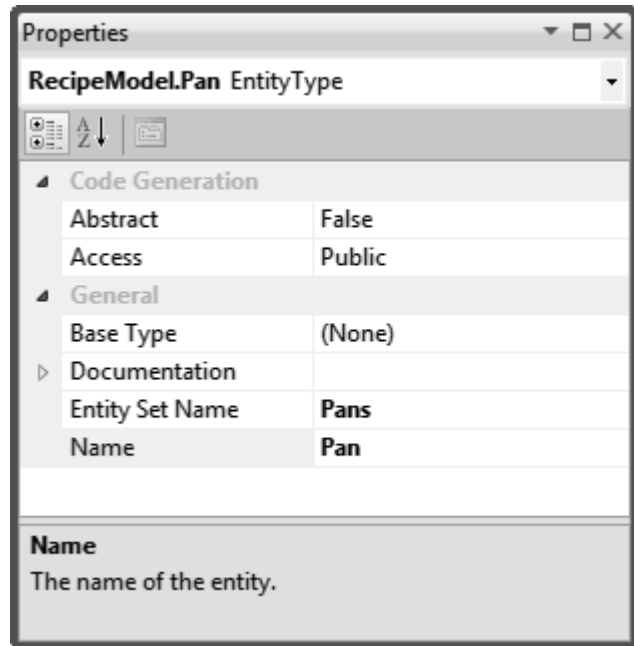
```

Even the layout of the diagram is represented in the EDMX, in a special section at the bottom.

UPDATING THE MODEL

Because the designer is so closely linked to the underlying EDMX, changes you make in the designer will update the EDMX. (And vice versa, of course.) The designer itself works as you would expect if you've worked with other designers in Visual Studio. We'll look at some complex manipulations in later chapters, but here are the basics:

You can select an association, an entity, or one of the entity's members and change its properties in the Properties window.



If you double-click an entity or one of its members, you can change the name directly on the diagram.



PUT ON YOUR THINKING HAT

Can you figure out how to perform the following tasks in the designer?

How would you check the data type of an entity property?

You know that a relationship in a database can be one-to-one or one-to-many. The “one” or “many” is the relationship's **MULTIPLICITY**. The multiplicity of an association in an EDM can also be many-to-many. How can you determine the multiplicity of an association in the designer?

An **ENTITY KEY** in an EDM is like the primary key of a table. Like a primary key, it must be unique, and like a primary key, it can be composed of multiple entity properties. How can you find out if a given entity member participates in the entity key?

In the Entity Framework, the model itself has properties. How do you display the properties of the model in the designer?



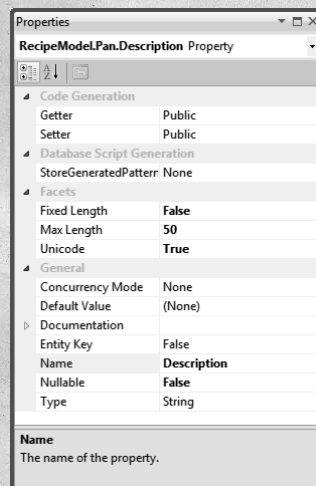
PUT ON YOUR THINKING HAT

How'd you do?

How would you check the data type of an entity property?

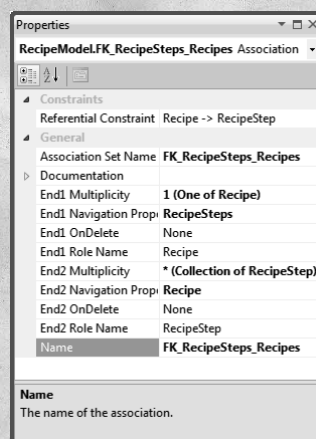
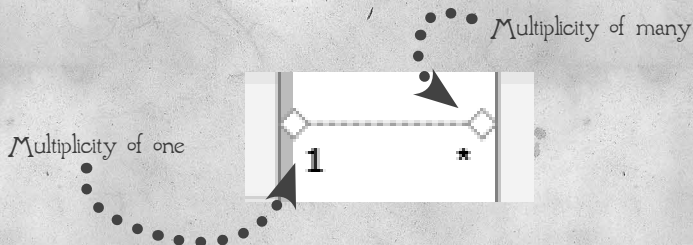
This is an easy one: Just select the property on the designer surface and its type will be displayed in the Properties window.

But there's another way that I haven't shown you: Right-click on the design surface and choose Scalar Property Format. Did you find that one? Try it now.



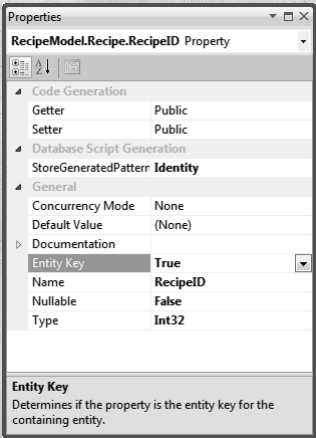
You know that a relationship in a database can be one-to-one or one-to-many. The “one” or “many” is the relationships MULTIPLICITY. The multiplicity of an association in an EDM can also be many-to-many. How can you determine the multiplicity of an association in the designer?

It's shown in the Properties window if you select the association, and also directly on the diagram.



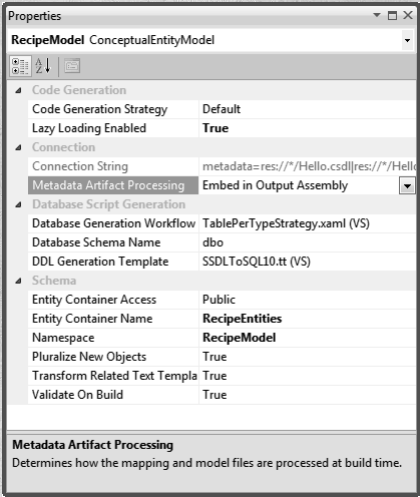
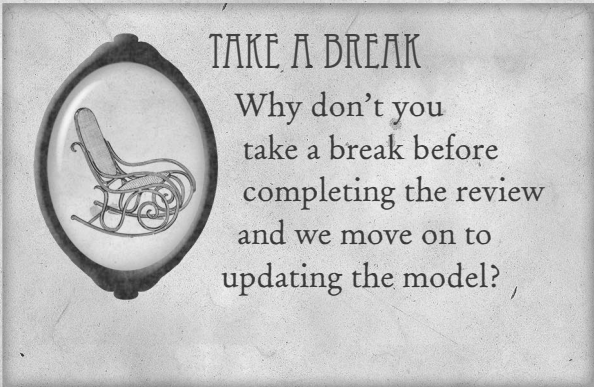
An ENTITY KEY in an EDM is like the primary key of a table. Like a primary key, it must be unique, and like a primary key, it can be composed of multiple entity properties. How can you find out if a given entity member participates in the entity key?

It's shown in the Properties window when you select the property, but notice that it doesn't tell you if this is the only property that participates in the key, so you might have to check several properties to be sure. We'll see another way to check the Entity Key when we look at the Model Browser later in this chapter.



In the Entity Framework, the model itself has properties. A model is called an EntityContainer in the EDMX and a ConceptualEntityModel in the designer. How do you display the properties of the model in the designer?

To show the properties of the model itself, just click on a blank area of the designer surface.





REVIEW

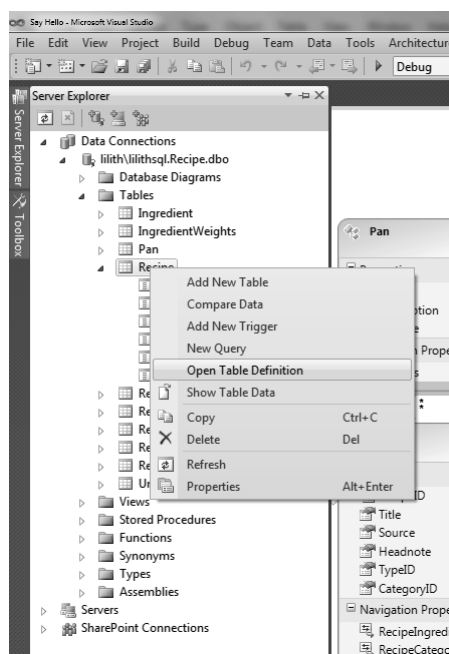
Based on what you've learned so far, do you think the following statements are true or false?

- TRUE FALSE By default, database tables become entity classes in the EDM.
- TRUE FALSE The Entity Model Designer is a visual representation of the classes in the .designer.cs or .designer.vb file.
- TRUE FALSE One-to-many relationships in the database are called associations in the EDM.
- TRUE FALSE Changes that you make in the designer will update the EDMX when you save them.
- TRUE FALSE The Entity Model Designer is the only way to view the EDMX.
- TRUE FALSE Selecting an entity property in the designer shows the entity key in the Properties Window.
- TRUE FALSE Selecting an entity property in the designer shows whether the property participates in the entity's entity key.



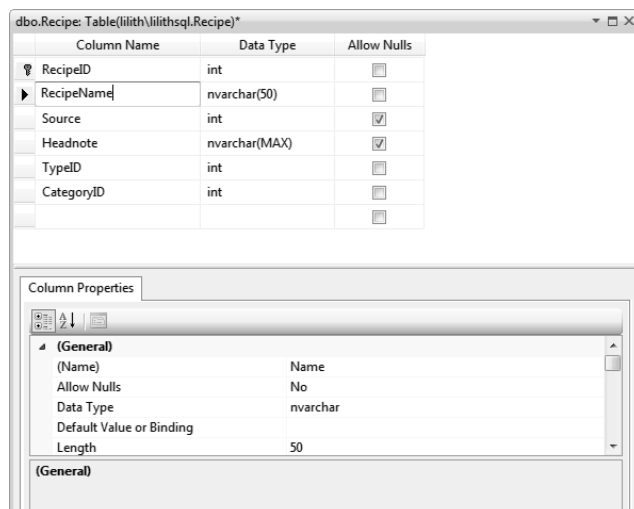
UPDATING THE MODEL

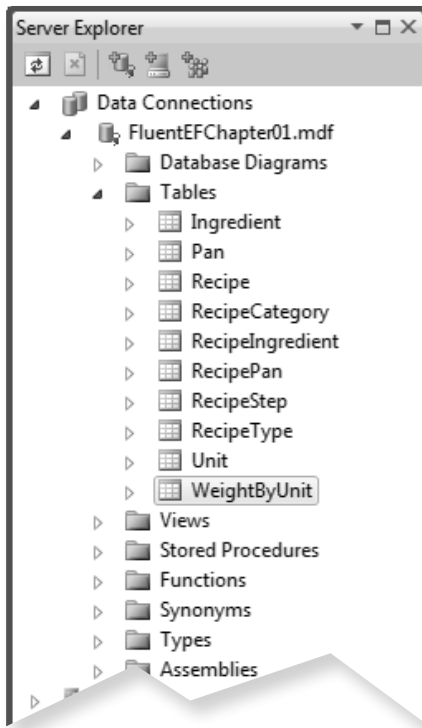
Stuff changes. It's a basic fact of our profession, and you've learned to expect and plan for that, right? Right? Well, even if you haven't, the designers at Microsoft have, and they've built the Entity Model Wizard to allow you to be able to update the model when the database schema changes, or when you need to add additional database objects to your model. To see how that works, let's start by making a minor change to the database:



In the Server Explorer (choose Server Explorer from the Windows menu if it's not visible), expand the connection to the Recipe database that Visual Studio created for you. Expand the Tables node and then right-click the Recipe table and choose Open Table Definition.

Change the name of the Title field to RecipeName, save the change, and then close the tab.





Let's make one more change: Select the **WeightByUnit** table in the Server Explorer and press the Delete key to delete it from the database. Visual Studio will ask you to confirm the change. Click OK.



ON YOUR OWN

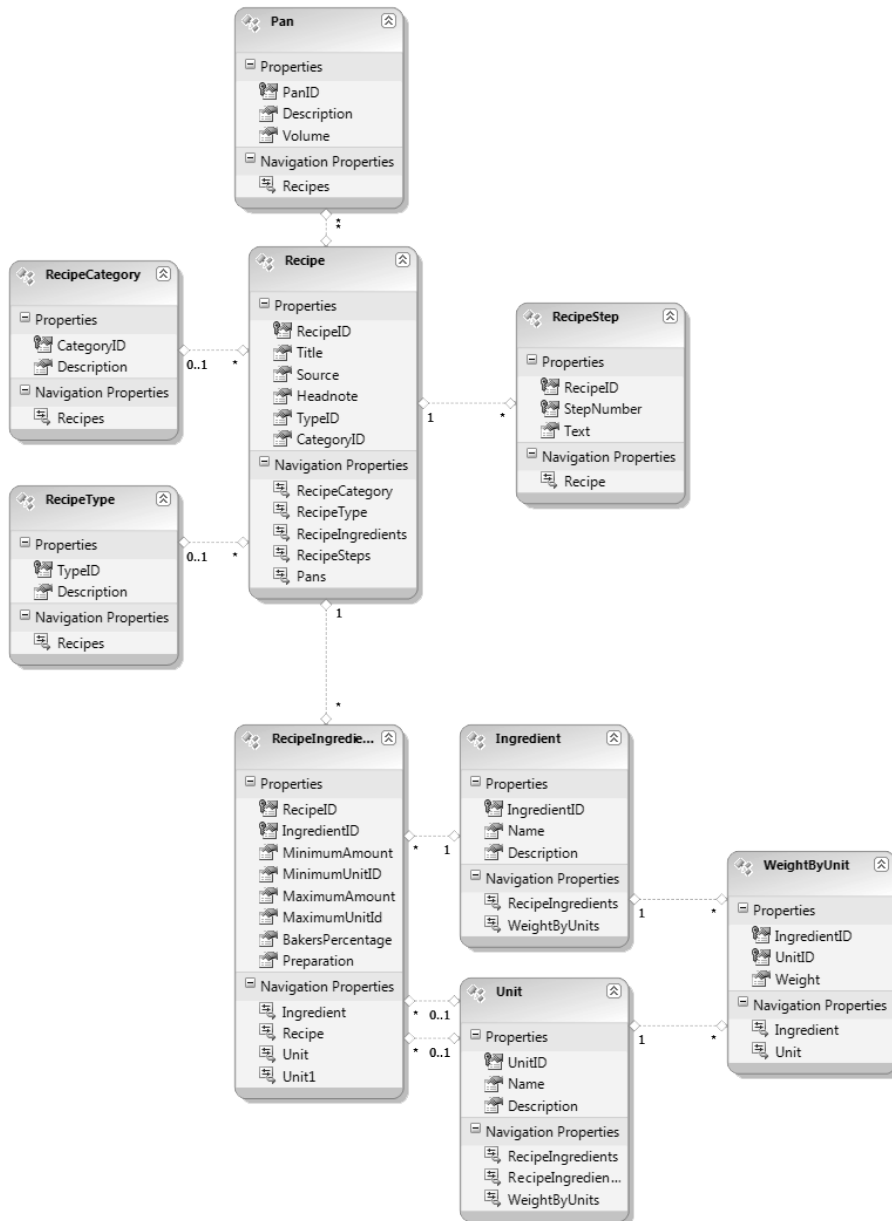
When you right-click on a blank area of the designer window, one of the options is "Update Model from Database..." What do you think will happen if you choose it?

We changed the name of a field in the **Recipe** table. Do you expect the name to change in the model? (Remember that we changed the names of the association properties in the **RecipeIngredient** entity. What do you think will happen to those?)

We deleted a table from the database. What do you expect to happen to it in the model?

UPDATE MODEL WIZARD

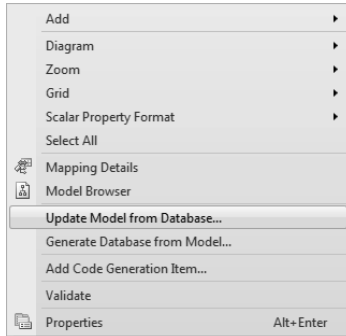
You've changed the database, but you haven't updated the EDMX, so the designer is still showing "Title" as the name of the member. Let's fix that.





UPDATE THE MODEL

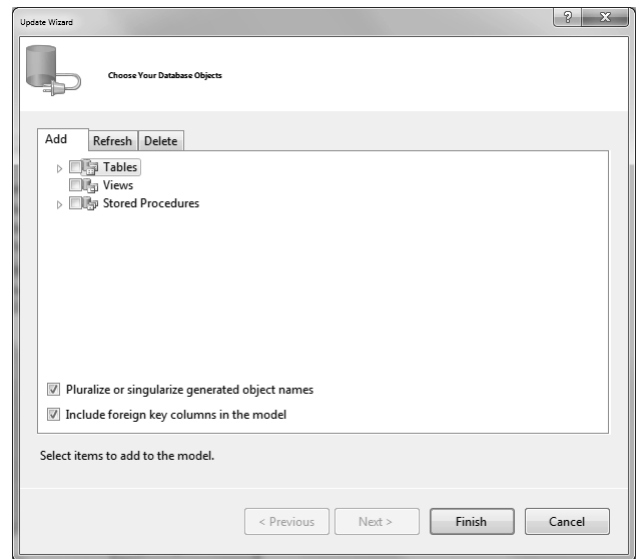
Have you thought about what you expect to happen? Let's try it out and see if you were right:

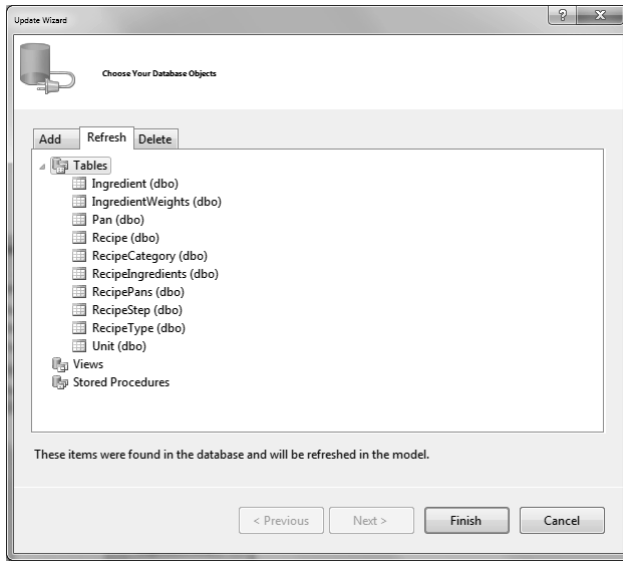


In the Entity Model Designer, right-click on a blank area of the design surface and choose Update Model from Database...

The wizard will open on a screen with three tabs, and the Add tab will be displayed. You can use this tab to add database objects to your model after it has been created.

We'll do that in the next section of this chapter, but not right now, so select the Refresh tab.



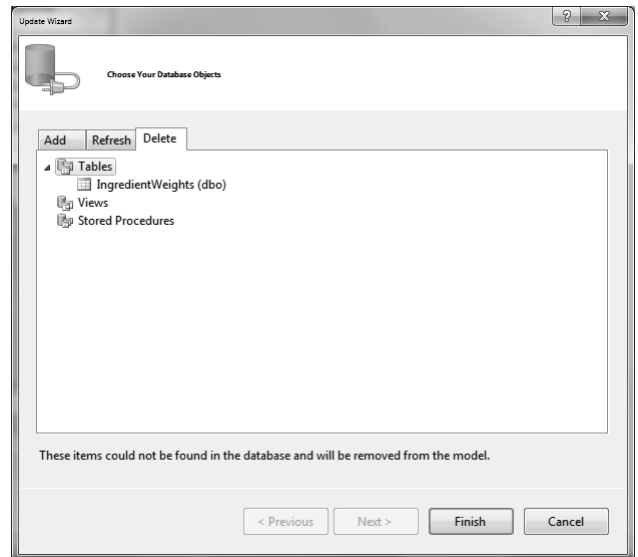


You can't make changes on the Refresh tab. Visual Studio is going to update every object that has changed in the database (assuming that you've already included the object in the model).

Are you surprised at the number of tables to be updated, even though we only updated one? That's because of the way all the tables are related. When we made a change to the **Recipe** table, Visual Studio decided that every table that's related (directly or indirectly) to it needs to be updated.

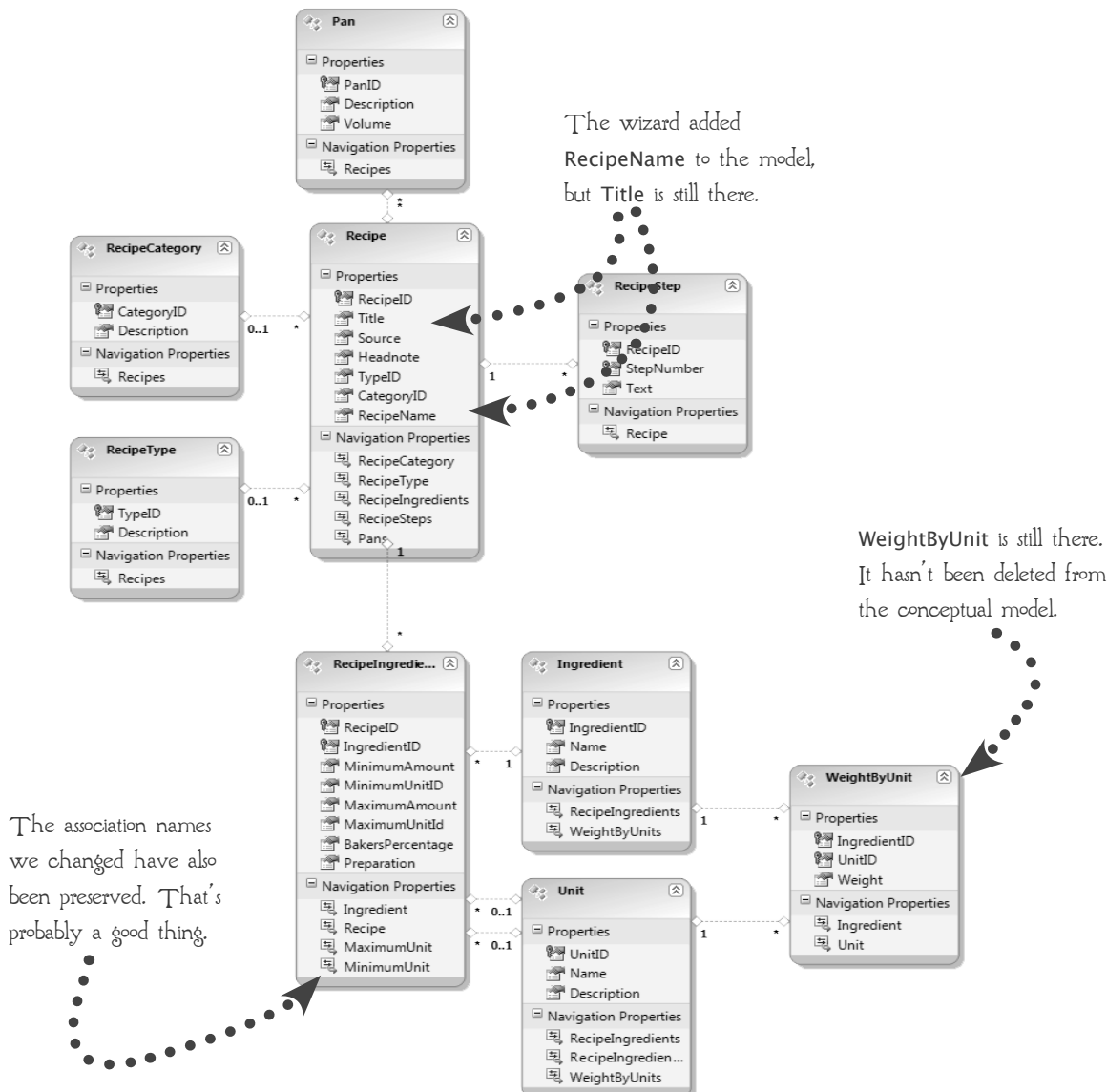
You can't make changes on the Delete tab either, but the **IngredientWeights** table that we deleted from the database is listed here.

Click **Finish** to exit the wizard and update the model.



HEY, WHAT HAPPENED?

When you click Finish on the wizard (the button is available on every tab), the wizard will update the EDMX and redisplay the model. Is the display what you expected? Probably not. The wizard didn't rename the **Title** property; it just added a new **RecipeName** property, and the **WeightByUnit** table is still there. Actually, Visual Studio has just been a little smarter about things than we expected. The secret is the Mapping window, and by a strange coincidence, we'll look at that next.

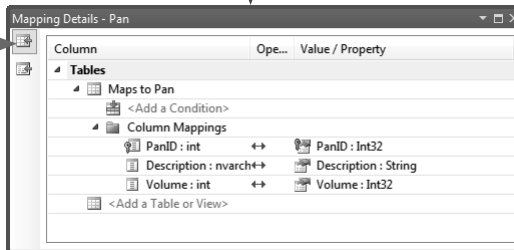
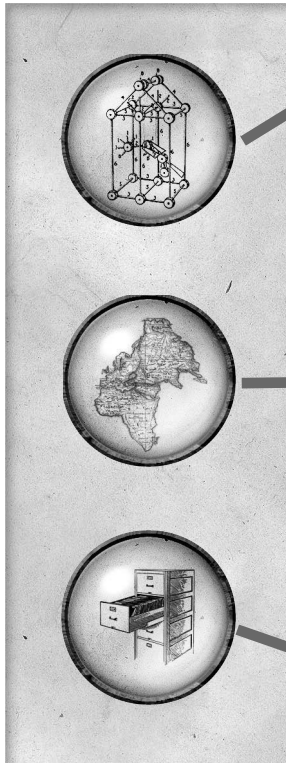
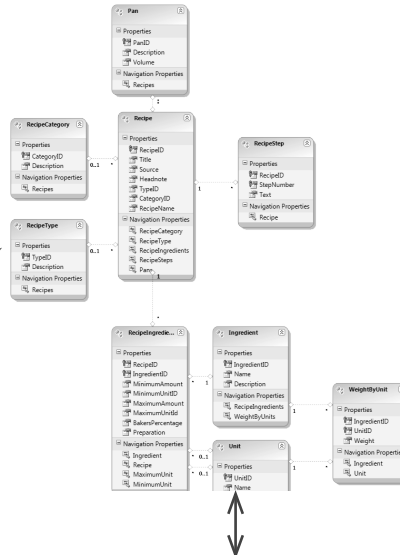




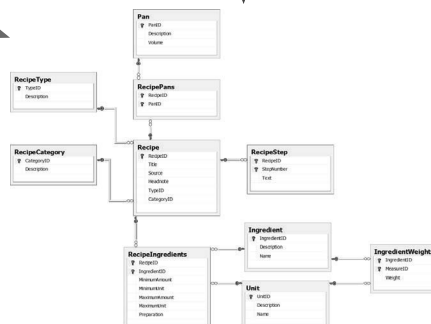
THE MAPPING WINDOW

In order to understand what the Update Model Wizard did (and didn't) do, we need to look at the relationship between the sections of the EDMX, the database, and the designer, and how they fit together.

The CSDL, or Conceptual Schema Definition Language, represents the conceptual model. It's displayed in the primary designer window. These are the objects you'll work with in code.



The MSL, or Mapping Schema Language, controls the relationship between the CSDL and the SSDL. It's displayed in the Mapping Details window.



The SSDL, or Store Schema Definition Language, represents the database. It's visible in the Model Browser, which we'll discuss in the next section.

SO WHAT HAPPENED?

When we changed the database and then updated the model, the wizard didn't do what you probably expected it to do. (It certainly came as a surprise to me when I was learning the Entity Framework, but you're probably smarter than I am.)

What the wizard did was update the SSDL to reflect the changes in the database and update the MSL so that nothing in the conceptual model was mapped to a nonexistent database fields, but it otherwise maintained the conceptual model as we'd designed it.

Right-click on a blank area of the primary design surface and choose Mapping Details from the context menu. By default, the Mapping Details window will appear below the primary design surface. If you select the Recipe entity, you can see what's happened:

This column shows the properties of the entity.

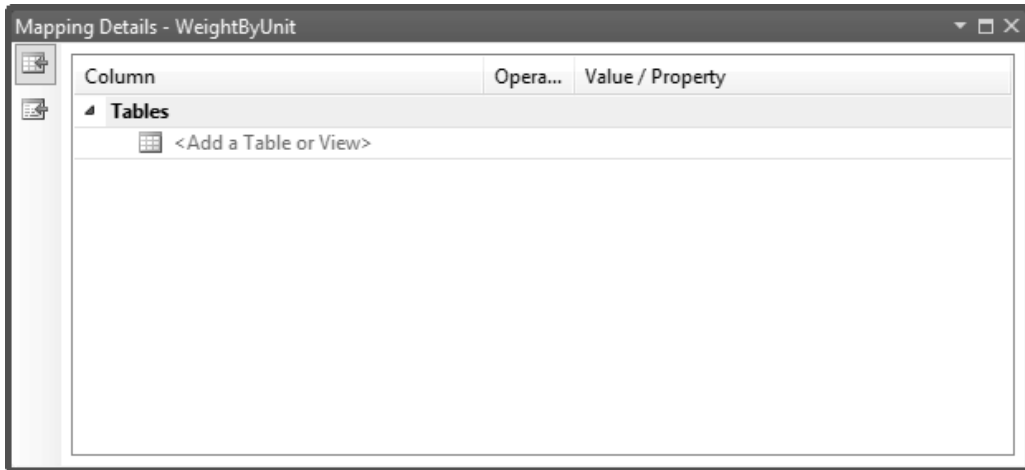
This column indicates how the mapping is performed. The double-headed arrow indicates a direct mapping.

This column shows what the property is mapped to—usually (but not always, as we'll see) a field in the database.

Column	Oper...	Value / Property
Tables		
Maps to Recipe		
<Add a Condition>		
Column Mappings		
RecipeID : int	↔	RecipeID : Int32
RecipeName : nvarchar(max)	↔	RecipeName : String
Source : nchar	↔	Source : String
Headnote : nvarchar(max)	↔	Headnote : String
TypeID : int	↔	TypeID : Int32
CategoryID : int	↔	CategoryID : Int32
<Add a Table or View>		

Do you see what's happened? The new entity property, RecipeName, is mapped to the RecipeName field. The Title property, which still exists in the entity, isn't in the list at all because it's no longer mapped to anything.

If you select the `WeightByUnit` entity, you'll see that the Mapping Details window is completely empty. None of the properties of this entity are mapped to the database any longer:



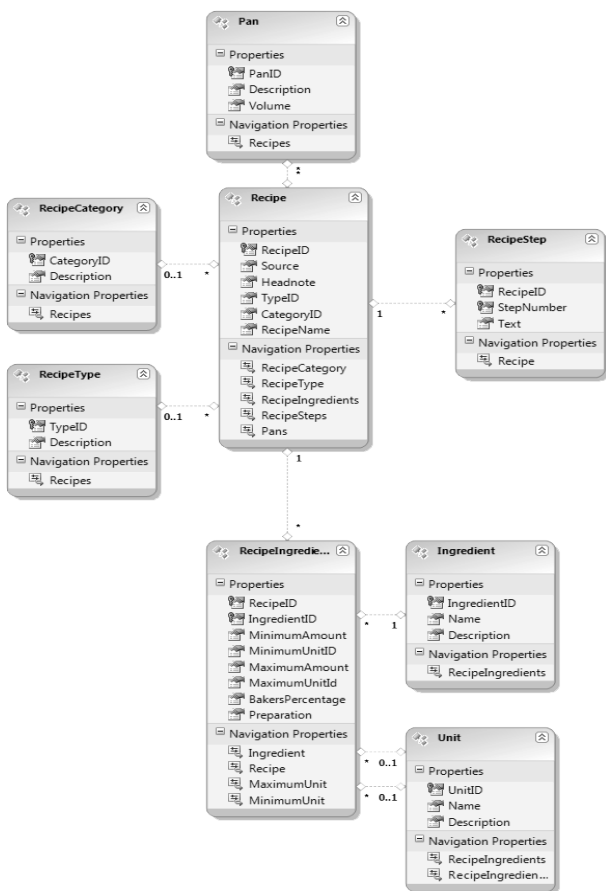
MY OPINION

The wizard does what it does, and there's not much to be done about that. You can choose not to use it, of course, if you really don't like the way it behaves.

But before you throw your hands up in disgust and decide that the Entity Framework team made a terrible decision, consider this: There is no way (or at least no practical way) for the wizard to know which of the changes you've made to the conceptual model you want to keep. It makes the changes it can—to the schema definition and the mapping layer—and leaves the decisions it can't make to the person who can (you). Personally, I'd much rather fiddle around in the Mapping Details Window for a minute or two than spend hours manually updating the EDMX.

BEFORE WE MOVE ON...

Go ahead and make the changes to the conceptual model. Simply select the **Title** property of the **Recipe** entity and either choose **Delete** from the context menu or press the delete key. Do the same thing with the entire **WeightByUnit** entity. Your model should look like this:



MAKE A NOTE

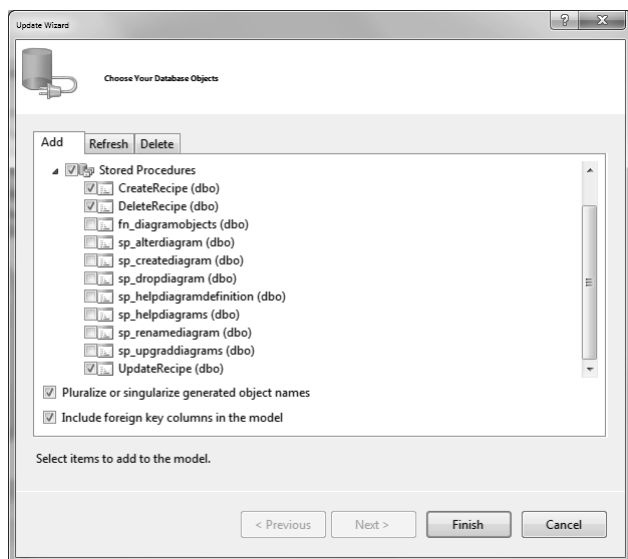
You'll probably want to change the code we wrote to reflect the change of name. Otherwise, you'll get build errors if you try to rerun the application.



MAPPING FUNCTIONS

So far all our entity properties are mapped directly to database fields, and the Entity Framework is generating the code to insert, update and delete values. But as you probably know, many database administrators don't allow this kind of direct access. For very good reasons having to do with maintaining the integrity of the data for which they're responsible, they require you to perform these operations through stored procedures. The Entity Framework treats stored procedures as functions. You add them using the Update Wizard and connect them to the conceptual model in the database file. Let's give it a whirl:

The first step is easy. Run the wizard the same way you did before, by right-clicking on a blank area of the primary designer window and choosing Update Model from Database.

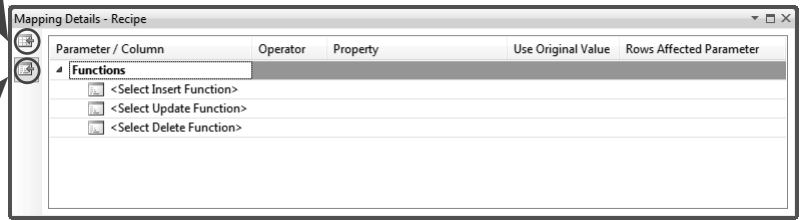


On the Add tab of the wizard, select the CreateRecipe, DeleteRecipe and UpdateRecipe stored procedures, as shown. (The other stored procedures that the wizard lists were added by Visual Studio and the SQL Server Management Studio. You can ignore them.)

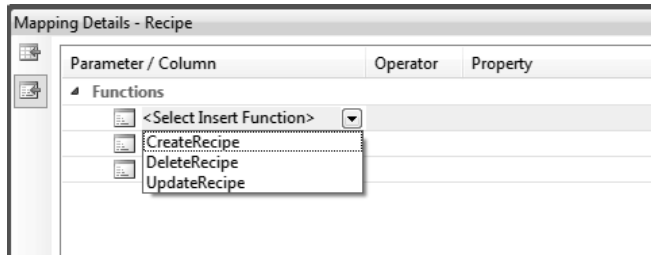
Click Finish. Once again, the wizard will update the SSDL and MSL but leave your conceptual model alone, so you won't see any changes.

Make sure the Recipe entity is still selected on the primary designer surface, and then click the second button on the left side of the Mapping Details Window to display the Map Entity to Functions Pane.

••••• This button shows the default view, Map Entity to Tables/Views.

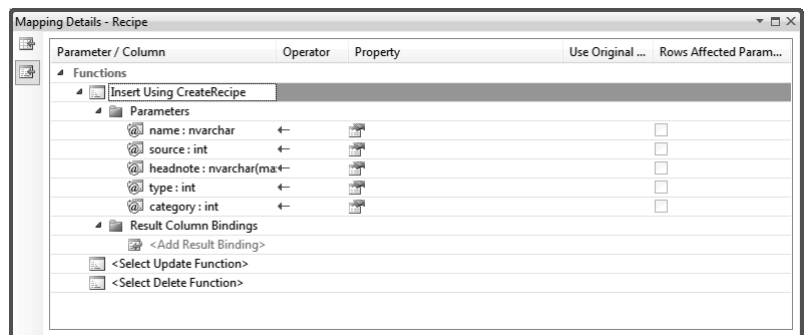


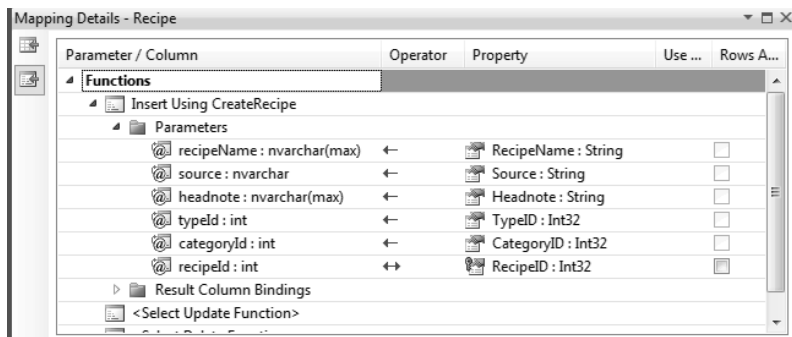
••••• This button (selected in the screen shot) shows the Map Entity to Functions pane.



Click in the <Select Insert Function> cell, and a list of the stored procedures we've imported into the model will be displayed. Choose CreateRecipe.

After you choose the stored procedure (if you choose the wrong one, just choose a different one from the list), the Mapping Details Window will display a list of the parameters that were defined when the stored procedure was created.

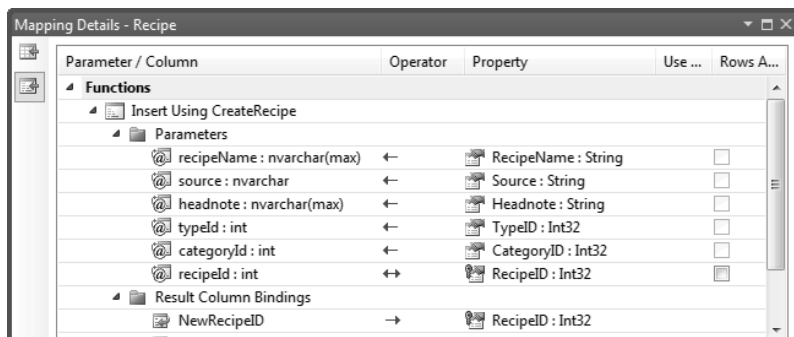




We need to tell Entity Framework how to map the stored procedure parameters to the entity properties. When you click in the Property column, the Mapping Details Window will display a list of properties for you to choose

from. Go ahead and fill it out now, using the screenshot as an example.

One last step. The RecipeID field is an identity field, which means the value is generated by the database. We need to store the generated value in the entity instance to make sure our in-memory data matches up with the rows of the table. The stored



procedure returns that value as an output parameter called NewRecipeID, so all we have to do is tell the Entity Framework about it. Type NewRecipeID in the cell labeled <Add Result Binding> and then press the Tab key. The Mapping Details Window will add RecipeID for you, since it's the entity key for the Recipe entity.



ON YOUR OWN

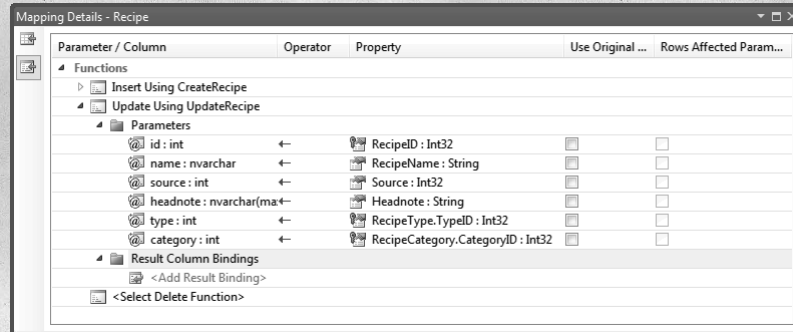
The UpdateRecipe stored procedure needs to be mapped to the Update function. It doesn't return any values (although the corresponding procedure in a production database might return the number of rows affected).

Try adding it now.



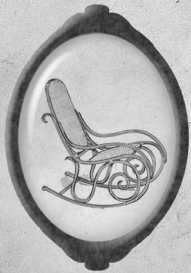
THINKING HAT?

How'd you do? Here's what the Mapping Details Window should look when you're finished:



ON YOUR OWN

It isn't necessary to map every operation to a stored procedure. Sometimes you can't delete a row at all, for example. But our database does have stored procedures for the full set of operations, so now that you're an expert at this, why don't you go ahead and add the DeleteRecipe function to the Mapping Details Window. Like the UpdateRecipe stored procedure, it doesn't have an output value, and it only has one input value (since only the key is required to identify the row to be deleted).



TAKE A BREAK

Once you've completed the On Your Own exercise, why don't you take a break before you complete the Review and we move on to the Model Browser Window?



REVIEW

Based on what you've learned in this section, can you answer the following questions?

How do you trigger the Update Database Wizard?

Which layers of the EDMX does the wizard change when a change is made to the database schema?

How do you add new database objects to the conceptual model?

What do the two little buttons on the left side of the Mapping Details Window mean?

Is it necessary to map all the functions if you map one?

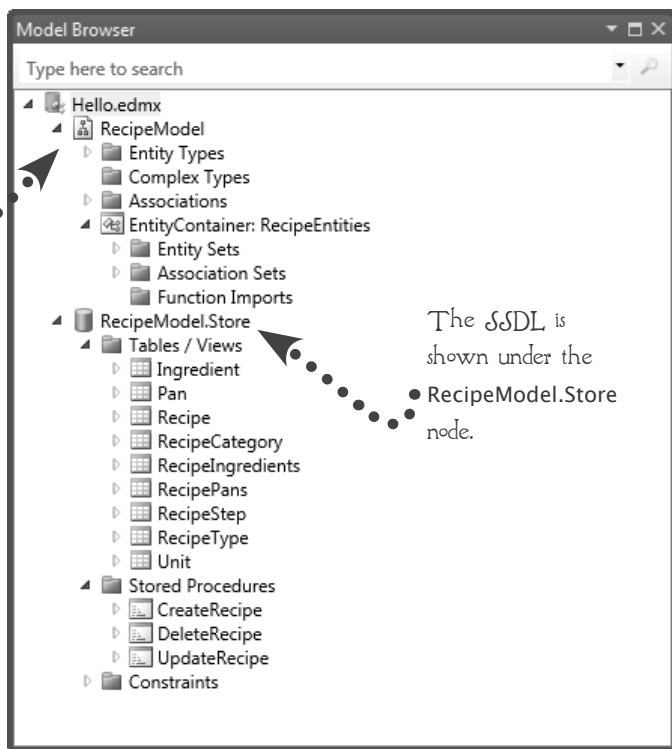


THE MODEL BROWSER

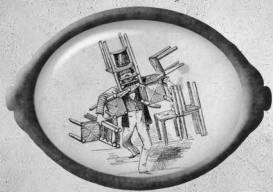
So far we've explored the primary designer surface that lets us manipulate the CSDL and the Mapping Details window that lets us manipulate the MSL. You can't control the SSDL directly in the Entity Model Designer—you have to do that in the Server Explorer or a tool like SQL Server Management Studio—but you can view it using the last major component of the designer, the Model Browser. The Model Browser also shows you the structure of your conceptual model. Let's see how it works.

You display the Model Browser the same way you display the Mapping Details Window: by right-clicking on a blank area of the primary designer surface. (But of course, this time you choose Model Browser from the menu.) It displays the CSDL and SSDL as a TreeView:

The conceptual model is shown under the RecipeModel node.



The SSDL is shown under the RecipeModel.Store node.



ON YOUR OWN

You can use the Model Browser for more than just inspecting the EDMX, but we'll look at that more advanced functionality in the next chapter. For right now, why don't you explore the basic display and see if you can answer these questions?

How many entity sets are in our model?

What properties comprise the entity key of the `RecipeIngredient` entity? How can you tell?

How does inspecting entity keys in the Model Browser differ from selecting the properties individually on the primary designer surface?

What's the data type of the `RecipeName` field as defined in the database? (Hint: check the Properties window.)

Is the table we deleted from the database (`IngredientWeights`) shown in the Model Browser?

There are two things that we haven't yet discussed shown in the Model Browser. One is a node in `RecipeModel`, the other a node in the `EntityContainers`: `RecipeEntities`. What are they? What do you think they do?



REVIEW

There are three primary windows in the Entity Model Designer. What are they? How is each used?

Why does the Update Model Wizard try to preserve the conceptual model?

What window would you use to map a stored procedure to the delete entity function?

How do you delete an entity from the model?

How do you change the name of an entity property?

What is the relationship between two tables in the database called in the conceptual model?

Congratulations! You've finished the chapter. Take a minute to think about what you've accomplished before you move on to the next one...

List three things you learned in this chapter:

①

②

③

Why do you think you need to know these things in order to work with Entity Framework?

Is there anything in this chapter that you think you need to understand in more detail? If so, what are you going to do about that?

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