

Aphrodite: A Memoir of the Senses

Study Guide

Aphrodite: A Memoir of the Senses by Isabel Allende

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Introduction

In the opening sentence of her 1998 book, *Aphrodite: A Memoir of the Senses*, Chilean author Isabel Allende declares: "I repent of my diets, the delicious dishes rejected out of vanity, as much as I lament the opportunities for making love that I let go by." In the height and rigor of physical self-awareness of the late 1990s in America, Allende's literary celebration of sex and food found ample response: her naughty recipe/pillow book ended up on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

Allende's seventh book follows the author's tradition of semi-autobiographical literature; it is a memoir of return to life, written after her 1997 novel *Paula* about the painful loss of her daughter. In the introduction, Allende states that her re-awakening to sensual pleasures marked her exit from the three-year period of sadness. The critics, calling *Aphrodite* an unusually "light" work for an author of customarily weightier literature, still praised it as a life-affirming sequel to the grief and anguish of *Paula*.

Aphrodite's anything-but-linear narrative is a mix of the author's romantic and culinary musings and recollections, her friends' stories, world recipes, excerpts from erotic texts, folktales, mythology, anthropology, poetry, travel writing, ancient and historical anecdotes, even gossip. In Allende's words, *Aphrodite* is "a mapless journey through the regions of sensual memory, in which the boundaries between love and appetite are so diffuse that at times they evaporate completely."

Even the author's California house was inspiring for the writing of her novel: as the author stated in an interview with Fred Kaplan for *The Boston Globe*, "it was the town's first brothel, then it was a church, then it was the first chocolate-chip cookie factory. So we live with all these smells - of the women and the chocolate - wafting in the air."



Author Biography

Isabel Angelica Allende was born on August 2, 1942, in Lima, Peru, to parents Tomas, a Chilean diplomat, and Francisca (Llona Barros) Allende. After her parents' divorce, three-year-old Isabel returned with her mother to Santiago, Chile; she grew up in her grandparents' home and attended a private high school. In 1962, Allende married her first husband, Miguel Frias, an engineer. After several years as a secretary, Allende started working as a journalist, editor, and advice columnist for *Paula* magazine; she also occasionally worked on television and movie newsreels.

In 1973, her uncle, Chilean president Salvador Allende, was assassinated in a right-wing military coup against his socialist government; Allende, her husband, and their two children fled the country and moved to Venezuela, where Allende had trouble finding work. While in exile and under the influence of her memories of Chile, Allende wrote her first semi-autobiographical novel, *The House of the Spirits*, which was inspired by her letters to her grandfather. Published in 1982, the novel became an instant success and placed Allende in the literary category of magic realism, along with Jorge Amado, Jorge Luis Borges, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. However, Allende's writing also portrays the political reality of Latin America and assumes a decidedly feminine perspective, apparent in her future works.

Allende's other publications include novels *Of Love and Shadows* (1984), *Eva Luna* (1987), and *The Infinite Plan* (1991); a collection of short stories entitled *The Stories of Eva Luna* (1990); and an autobiographical account of her only daughter's death in 1991, entitled *Paula* (1997).

In an interview with Fred Kaplan for the *Boston Globe*, Allende recalled the time after her daughter's death as a gray, painful period void of inspiration and desire - until a night in January 1996, when she had an erotic dream of diving into a swimming pool full of rice pudding, her favorite dessert. "I decided I was never going to diet again but just enjoy what life had to offer. This came slowly - a slow understanding that life is borrowed time, that we are here for a very short time, and we must enjoy what we have," Allende stated.

In the introduction to her 1998 book, *Aphrodite: A Memoir of the Senses*, the author describes this gradual return to life as "reaching the end of a long tunnel of mourning and finally coming out the other end, into the light, with a tremendous desire to eat and cuddle once again." The semi-fictional *Aphrodite* is a book of aphrodisiacs, written in celebration of the inspiring powers of food and sex, a life-affirming and humorous testament of continuing creativity.

Since her second marriage in 1988, Allende has lived in California with her husband, lawyer William Gordon.



Plot Summary

Aphrodisiacs

This chapter defines an aphrodisiac as "any substance or activity that piques amorous desire." The author lists the categories of aphrodisiacs according to their function (the analogy of "the vulva-shaped oyster or phallic asparagus," or the suggestion of certain organs that, when eaten, can convey "strength"), and ruminates on the necessary role of imagination in erotica. Further, she examines the relationship between eating and sexual activity, finding that aphrodisiacs are a "bridge between gluttony and lust."

The Spice Is in Variety

Allende states that "the only truly infallible aphrodisiac is love" followed by the second - variety. However, both infidelity and polygamy are unnecessary if one introduces diversity into sexual practice with some study of erotic manuals or use of sex toys. Nevertheless, Allende warns that excessive and obsessive pursuit of variety can numb one's senses to the full experience of savoring the object of pleasure - be it a sexual partner or "a simple tomato."

The Good Table

Allende describes the culinary attitudes of her family, with a traditionally puritan grandfather, an indifferent grandmother, and a mother "who through one of those incomprehensible genetic accidents had in the midst of that Spartan tribe been born with a refined sensibility."

Cooking in the Nude

This chapter states that "everything cooked for a lover is sensual" and that the processes of cooking, eating, and lovemaking should be approached with pleasure and openness to fun. Allende writes that men proficient in the kitchen are sexually irresistible, and offers anecdotes from her own life and a friend's experience to support this statement.

The Spell of Aromas

The author states the interdependent connection between taste and smell, and proceeds to describe the erotic power of scent (as used by Cleopatra and the French monarchs, among others). After a brief history of perfume and a description of the process, Allende recalls her friend's failed attempt to arouse lovers with a purchased bottle of pheromones. The chapter ends with the significance of scent in the sexual



experience, and a claim that the sensuous scent of cooking can have a very erotic result. Allende also includes the story "Death by Perfume" written by Lady Onogoro in tenth-century Japan, describing the revenge of a woman who applies erotic fragrances on the body of her cheating lover, finally killing him with a poisonous dose.

At First Sight

The visual appeal of the human body depends on the teasing and tempting element of the unseen. The erotic appeal of food lies in its resemblance to the body's shapes and colors. The presentation of the table can also be seductive.

Etiquette

Allende calls the rules of table etiquette relative, and describes the pleasures of eating with one's fingers. However, she says that strict rules can also be erotic and imagines such a scenario.

With the Tip of the Tongue

After an analysis of the sense of taste, the author relates it to sexuality and cooking; the key, she states, is in accentuation through opposites.

Herbs and Spice

This chapter contains a history of the use of herbs and spices both in preservation of food and aphrodisiacs, and a list of "Forbidden Herbs."

The Orgy

After a short history of orgiastic celebration and some descriptive examples, Allende gives advice on how to prepare an orgy, along with the recipes: Aunt Burgel's Aphrodisiac Stew, Panchita's Curanto en Olla, and Carmen's Soup for Orgies.

About Taste

The author recalls exotic dining experiences and describes some of the world delicacies that are shunned in the United States. The sections "Alligators and Piranhas" and "Aphrodisiac Cruelties" describe some unusual dietary practices, as well as certain hair-raising aphrodisiac methods.



About Eroticist

This chapter consists of a letter by the writer of erotica, Anais Nin, to her employer, who demanded literature on sex without "the poetry." Nin's reply is Allende's manifesto of pleasure of the sensual vs. the pornographic.

Whisper

The author explains the sexual power of a whispered, spoken, and written word.

A Night in Egypt

This section is an excerpt from a letter from Tabra, Allende's friend, describing an erotic and culinary experience she had on one of her travels.

Sins of the Flesh

The author lists the aphrodisiac properties of different kinds of meat on the menu.

The Gigolo

Allende recalls a conversation with a young male prostitute, and provides the recipe for Aphrodisiac Soup of Acupuncture Master.

Bread, God's Grace

This chapter reviews the kinds of bread, its history, and the sensuousness of making it.

Creatures of the Sea

The author describes uses of seafood for erotic purposes, gives the Bouillabaisse recipe, and quotes Neruda's poem "Ode to Conger Chowder."

The Harem

This chapter explores the nineteenth-century European fascination with the harem as an erotic fantasy, the harem's history, and its cuisine.



Eggs

Allende describes the ancient and worldwide belief in the aphrodisiac power of eggs, from chicken to caviar. The section "Supreme Stimulus for Lechery" includes Catherine the Great's recipe for Empress' Omelet.

Forbidden Fruits

This section examines the erotic properties of fruit, and lists coffee, tea, chocolate, and honey as "Other Delicious Aphrodisiacs."

Cheese

The author describes the sensuality of cheese making and lists the most popular kinds of cheeses.

Si Non e Vero. . .

Allende offers some advice on how to "cheat" in the kitchen when preparing a complex meal. She also gives the recipe for her seductive Reconciliation Soup.

The Spirit of Wine

This chapter examines the effects of alcohol on the libido and offers some classification of wines according to the cuisine. A similar outline follows the section on "Liquors."

Love Philters

The author gives an overview of both legal and illegal - but usually dangerous - potions and substances, from the Spanish fly and powder of rhinoceros' horn to marijuana and cocaine.

The Language of Flowers

Allende reviews the symbolically romantic language of the past, encoded in flowers.

From the Earth with Love

This chapter lists the aphrodisiac properties of vegetables, along with the Shekter's Vegetarian Aphrodisiac recipe and a "Subjective List of Aphrodisiac Vegetables."



Colomba in Nature

This chapter is a rather comic account of an unsuccessful picnic, in which a professor tries to seduce his plump student Colomba. Allende adds an excerpt from the poem "Eating the World."

Finally. . .

The author ends the book with thoughts on the best aphrodisiac, love.

Panchita's Aphrodisiac Recipes

The final third of the book contains the recipes for aphrodisiac dishes, including sauces, hors d'oeuvres, soups, appetizers, main courses, and desserts, all introduced with erotic allusions.



Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso

Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso Summary

In the introduction, author Isabel Allende discusses the connections between people, sensory perception, and memory. She explains why memories of a favorite aunt are linked in her mind to the scent of violet PASTILLES, or candies. Allende tells about the fisherman who first gave her a taste of sea urchin when she was young, forever linking the smell of iodine to the memory of that fisherman and images of sea urchins. Allende explains that all the important people in her life, particularly men, are associated in her mind with specific foods.

Allende's purpose in writing this collection of recipes is to entertain and be creative. The author says she has researched the substances, spells, and magic that have been employed over the centuries to incite passion, and she proves it by providing examples: potions used by Cleopatra and philters made of blood mixed in a skull.

Allende explains that the purpose of an aphrodisiac is to incite passion, but if readers spend all of their time and energy preparing the aphrodisiacs then they will not have the energy to enjoy them. So the recipes in this book all have easily accessible ingredients and simple instructions for preparation. There are no supernatural potions in this very practical book. Allende discusses the role of many religious beliefs that preach against gluttony and lust, resulting in many limited, bland diets, with little creativity in them.

In the introduction, Allende also briefly introduces how the book developed and the people who helped with the project. Her collaborators include Panchita Llona, who contributed the recipes, and Robert Shekter, who contributed drawings of nymphs, satyrs, and other mythological cartoon creatures throughout the book. Robert also wanted to include a musical CD and incorporate musical names into some of the recipes to include more of the senses, but it proved too difficult a concept to include in the project. Robert insisted on a scientific approach when measuring the degree of passion aroused from particular recipes. They found that the effect of any given aphrodisiac was directly related to the power of suggestion. If the participant knew that he or she was tasting an aphrodisiac, they reacted differently than those who were not informed. Allende's agent, Carmen Balcells, was also a strong supporter of the project.

When the project was almost complete, Allende realized that she had left out the most important aphrodisiac of all: stories. Allende reminds readers of Scheherazade and the 1,001 stories told to the sultan to save her own life. According to Allende, the unique way that a person tells a story is intimate in itself. The author ends the Introduction with a story from her book, *The Stories of Eva Luna*, to illustrate the importance of storytelling to passion and lovemaking.



Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso Analysis

In the Introduction, Allende introduces all of the major themes this work will address: love, sex, sensory perception, passion, creativity, food, and the many varied relationships between all these themes.

It is clear from the introduction that Allende has done her research and her homework. The author refers to the stacks of books on her desk several times, as well as giving examples from some of them in the introduction. Allende uses personal examples as well, including that of her aunt. Allende has tested every recipe herself and prepared each one for guests, scientifically measuring the effectiveness of each recipe.

Even in this nonfiction format, Allende manages to weave in her incredible skill at the craft of storytelling. The examples of Cleopatra and Scheherazade, as well as many others, are told as stories. Also, she directly discusses the importance of storytelling in sparking passion of any kind. The stories are entertaining, told with wit and compassion, and great humor. In all, the introduction prepares readers for an interesting, lively discussion of the topics at hand, neither too vague nor too deep.



Mea Culpa of the Culpable

Mea Culpa of the Culpable Summary

This section introduces the people who collaborated on this work, starting with Robert Shekter. Allende met Shekter in her neighborhood bookstore. Shekter reminded her of her grandfather, which drew her to him. They became friends in the bookstore over morning cups of coffee and croissants. One day, she told him about a dream she'd had, in which she was a plump nymph, running around in a land of very erotic vegetables and meat dishes. While she was speaking, he drew a picture of a nymph and a satyr-character, which later became the drawings that decorate the pages of this book. During this conversation, Shekter and Allende also brainstormed known aphrodisiacs and searched the bookstore for books on them. There was less information available than they expected, so they began the project of writing their own book.

Panchita Llona is introduced next. She is the author's mother and an extraordinary cook. Allende says that Panchita has never served the same dish twice, but that she always introduces some variation or new garnish. Panchita's cooking is art. Allende reports that, with a single taste of a new dish, Panchita can tell exactly what's in it and in what proportions, how long it was cooked, and how she can improve upon it. Panchita fell in love with her second husband over fifty years before the book was written, when they were both married to different partners, had seven children between them, and lived in a country that does not allow divorce. Allende speculates that the success of that romance is due to a blend of eroticism and good food, which is why she invited her mother to help with the project by creating and testing recipes to be included in the book.

Allende's last collaborator on this project is her literary agent, Carmen Balcells. Allende was afraid of disappointing Carmen when she decided to write this book instead of another novel. Carmen, however, was excited by the decision and offered the recipe for her extraordinary Catalan stew to be included in the book. Catalan stew is the meal she serves to Allende every time Allende travels to see her in Barcelona. When Carmen entertains, she always uses the finest china, linens, and silver.

Lastly, Allende introduces herself, with a bit more detail as to how this book came into existence. Three years after the death of her daughter, Paula, she began having erotic dreams involving food. She knew that she was finally recovering from her grief and began dealing with her new obsession with food by writing about it. She also extensively researched eroticism, aphrodisiacs, and all forms of pleasure. Much of the book was written in her home to avoid the embarrassment of having to explain the explicitly illustrated books. By the time she finished the book, however, she left her research materials scattered around everywhere, no longer impressed or embarrassed.

Mea Culpa of the Culpable Analysis

This section allows readers to know more about the individuals who contributed to this book and Allende's close relationship with each. It lends a sense of closeness, family, and companionship to the text. It feels more immediate, as if one is reading a letter, or a series of letters, from personal friends, instead of a text on the history of sexual and culinary practices. These are real people, with real lives and relationships, whom readers can respect and trust. Allende writes about each with such knowledge and compassion that readers cannot help but trust them and be entertained.

Aphrodisiacs

Aphrodisiacs Summary

In this chapter, Allende clearly defines the term aphrodisiac as "any substance or activity that piques amorous desire. Some have scientific basis, but most are activated by the imagination." Allende explains that some items are considered an aphrodisiac because of their suggestive shape, such as pickles or oysters. Other things may remind us of something erotic through memory or suggestion. Sometimes language can contribute to the erotic quality of something, such as French or Italian terms in particular. Patriarchal societies, which include most societies around the world, are obsessed by the penis as a symbol of virility.

Allende continues by stating that eating and copulating depend more on the brain than on the digestive or sexual systems, as humanity requires a bare minimum for survival, but engages in quite a bit more sex and food than is absolutely necessary. The excess consumption of both, then, is for the purpose of enjoyment.

Allende highlights the history of the research and study of aphrodisiacs around the world, citing examples of a Taoist monk from biblical times, and a Chinese priestess who lived for five hundred years as a result of her sexual ecstasy.

Allende explores the idea of fasting and abstinence as aphrodisiac in nature, though painfully uncomfortable. She also highlights known anti-aphrodisiacs such as bad breath, the common cold, socks on a naked man, and curlers in a woman's hair.

She ends by restating her purpose: to describe the most common, and the most commonly available and easily employed aphrodisiacs, with the intent of enriching her readers sexual, culinary, and creative lives.

Aphrodisiacs Analysis

Beginning with a definition of aphrodisiacs ensures that everyone is beginning with the same information and expectations. This establishes the groundwork for all of the remaining chapters and suggests a logical organization for the material. Something else to note is the use of artwork within the text. At the beginning of the chapters is a small, round "thumbnail" picture, quite suggestive in nature. The one in this chapter looks like two mountain peaks covered with fish eggs. A picture of the entire artwork that the thumbnail was taken from is included later in the chapter. In this case, the thumbnail was taken from a painting of a papaya sliced in half, interesting and suggestive by itself. This technique is used throughout the book.



The Spice is in Variety

The Spice is in Variety Summary

In this chapter, Allende names love as the most powerful of all aphrodisiacs and variety as a close second. Since variety in partners is generally frowned upon in many cultures today, variety in technique, position, and other variables can be employed.

Allende discusses the importance of including books on eroticism in your home library. The author also tells of sixteen sketches painted on the walls of the Vatican in the mid-sixteenth century which depicted a variety of sexual positions. The sketches were still in use two centuries later in the sexual education of young aristocrats.

The last point that Allende makes in this section is that the modern obsession with variety is a result of people having lost the gift of savoring simple things in life. She uses Howard Hughes at the end of his life as an example of this concept. Hughes died of hunger in a Las Vegas motel, though he had more money personally than some countries possess.

The Spice is in Variety Analysis

This chapter serves to remind readers of the importance of not getting trapped in predictable behavior, because it can diminish one's enjoyment of life. Allende discusses the overuse of tricks, toys, and tools as distancing, instead of enhancing, if used too soon, and before intimacy has developed. The example of Howard Hughes reminds readers of the importance of appreciating life's abundance in the simple things, like healthy food, warm touch, or a subtle scent. You do not have to have great wealth or a lot of possessions to experience abundance.



The Good Table

The Good Table Summary

This chapter starts with a description of a culinary writer's experience regarding food and meals. It tells of a person who grows up in a household that values good food, fine wines, starched linens, expensive china and silver, and fresh flowers and candles to adorn the table.

After that description, Allende follows with a description of her childhood home, which belonged to her grandfather. In Allende's family the only values that were acceptable were those having to do with the mind and the spirit. Earthly pleasures, such as fine dining, were ignored. Allende's grandmother died at a young age, after ignoring many of the household responsibilities in favor of pursuing telepathic and levitational abilities. Domestic chores and maternal duties were turned over to nannies and housekeepers.

Following her grandmother's death, Allende's mother took control of the domestic responsibilities of the household. The kitchen was dominated by an old cook that would not take any suggestions on improving her culinary skills or the family menu.

Eventually, after the death of Allende's grandfather and with the advent of her mother's marriage to a diplomat, her mother had the opportunity to begin developing her natural culinary skills and talent. It would still be many years before Allende explored sex and food as related and the kitchen as more than just a place dominated by her mother.

The Good Table Analysis

The contrast between the culinary artist's beginnings and those of Allende and her mother, found at the beginning of this chapter, serves to remind readers that one does not have to be born a culinary genius to develop skill in incorporating creativity and passion in the kitchen. Attention to details and preparing meals with love and enthusiasm can immediately enhance any meal.

Especially apparent in this chapter is Allende's storytelling technique. The information in this chapter spans a period of over thirty years of family history in just a few pages, highlighting with carefully chosen examples just what's important to make her point and leaving the rest behind.



Cooking in the Nude

Cooking in the Nude Summary

Allende tells readers about her husband's incredible skill in the kitchen, which was more attractive to her than his physical appearance. Women are attracted to men who can cook and who know about food, because contrast and surprise are erotic. Allende also tells a story about a friend's blind date. The date ended up being very homely and very disappointing. Allende's friend had decided to make a simple spaghetti dinner and send him home, when he took her apron from her, sat her down, and proceeded to cook dinner for her in her own kitchen, transforming himself in the process into a Herculean god.

Allende tells readers about a phone call she received from her stepson, Jason, seeking advice for his first date with the (seventeenth) woman of his life. His funds were limited, so a night on the town was out of the question. He cannot cook, so Allende recommended a little deceit. Allende told him to go pick up take-out that was exotic, but not so exotic that she would know he had not prepared it himself. The author reminded him of women's inclinations towards rituals and processes, telling him to set a pretty table, turn on music and light candles for the meal. Allende reminded Jason of the many great authors, such as Henry Miller and Pablo Neruda, who had turned food into sexual inspiration.

At the end of the chapter, Allende cautions that she does not want to give the impression that she is a belly dancer in her kitchen; not anymore anyway.

Cooking in the Nude Analysis

Allende seeks to remind readers that the admiration a woman feels for a man who can cook can easily be transformed into passion. Even a man who is physically unattractive can be transformed by a successful foray into the kitchen. This chapter challenges the accepted gender roles in both American society and in Allende's native Chilean society. Men and boys in patriarchal societies are seldom taught to cook, though it is a useful and practical skill, should they ever become bachelors. A man who can cook implies that he has made a conscious effort to overcome traditional roles and that he is comfortable enough with himself to step outside the usual boundaries. The extension is made in a woman's thinking: if he can step outside the norm in the kitchen, he can probably step outside of the usual rules regarding sex as well. This extended thought makes a man who can cook very appealing.



The Spell of Aromas

The Spell of Aromas Summary

This chapter explores the importance of aromas and their role in human attraction and repulsion. The beginning of the chapter tells of Cleopatra's use of the fragrance of roses as her signature scent, which she flaunted in the face of her lover's queen when she visited Rome with her son. Allende speculates on how humanity might have come to creating scents to be worn on the human body.

She shares with readers a story about the skunk family that lives under her home. For years, she tried to get rid of the skunks, but they kept returning to her basement. After a time, she realized that the skunks' odor did not bother her family anymore, but that they actually liked it.

A man's sensitivity to smell and a woman's sensitivity to smell is very different. A woman's sense of smell is more developed, but a man reacts more strongly to scent. Women are more sensitive to the odor of a man's body when they are ovulating and estrogen levels are higher. Men's scents are typically stronger and more direct than women's body scents.

The chapter ends with a comparison between the excitement resulting from a lover's body scent and the excitement of smelling delicious, well-prepared food. Allende tells about her strong memories of Seville and a platter of plums sitting in the sunlight. The chapter closes with a poem by Pablo Neruda, entitled "Ode to the Plum."

The Spell of Aromas Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to remind readers of the connection between scent and taste. Without fragrance, humans can not taste many things. The chapter, as a whole, establishes the sense of smell as the oldest, best-developed sense in humans by using anecdotes and quotes from a variety of historical sources. In closing, Neruda's poem reconnects the aphrodisiac qualities of food based on the connection between scent and taste.

Allende draws many comparisons and contrasts in this chapter to illustrate her material. There is the contrast between the fragrances in the stories about Cleopatra's use of roses and the story about the skunks. Other contrasts are those between men and women's responses to scent and the comparison between emotional responses to food and to body odors. Contrast is used to organize the material in the chapter most effectively.



Death by Perfume

"Death by Perfume" Summary

This chapter is a story originating in tenth-century Japan, written by a woman named Lady Onogoro. In the story, a courtier is unfaithful to his mistress with three other women in one night. One of the women is the mistress' maid, whose guilt overcomes her and she admits her crime to her mistress. The lady was tired of her lover's cheating and came up with a plan to kill him. She invited him to the perfume-mixing chamber under the pretext of creating a scent that would be their signature scent. Once there, she covered his body with a variety of fragrances. The lady knew that, in certain dosages, the flower essences, that are otherwise healing, can take on a negative effect. The lady used the essences to create feelings of insecurity, self-loathing, jealousy, inadequacy, discouragement, and apathy in her lover. These feelings were so intense that he asked her to kill him so he could pay for all of his crimes against her. So she gave him one last drop of essence on his tongue, and he died.

"Death by Perfume" Analysis

The re-telling of this story confirms the important role that scent plays in human relationships. It also illustrates the strong connection that exists between the fragrance of something and a person's perception of reality. It is unlikely that a drop of flower essence would kill a person, but someone who has been convinced of the power of fragrance could be influenced to believe in such power.



At First Sight

At First Sight Summary

In the beginning of this chapter, readers learn about Lola Montez, a celebrated courtesan, who invented the Tarantula dance to woo her subjects. She had never studied dance and she was not Castilian, but she removed her veils to the music as though she were both dancer and of Castilian blood. The pleasure men experienced with Montez was primarily the result of the physical presentation of the dance.

Allende continues with details of other women's use of visual details to woo lovers. In India, the women rely on their kohl make-up and jewelry contrasted against their skin tone. In modern times, silk and lace are still used to excite and entice, even under modern polyester blends.

"Among humans, attraction begins from a distance, through the eyes." Allende describes examples of adornment used by both men and women, including jewelry, make-up, hairstyles, tattoos, and even decorative scars. There is a Nigerian tribe that holds a male beauty pageant every year to rival the Miss America pageant held annually in the United States.

Halfway through the chapter, Allende turns her attention to food, stating that food also appeals to the eye. Although the use of fresh, natural ingredients should be enough, chefs the world over spend an incredible amount of time transforming and decorating our food for consumption. The association between the shapes and colors of food and those of the human body is inevitable.

Allende talks about the presentation of food being a critical skill which takes time to learn. While oysters in a bottle look like malignant tumors, served on the shell they look like delicate vulva. Presentation is everything.

Allende says she prefers her food in its natural state and this is also how she prefers her men. Unnecessary adornment is not to be trusted. Though she does occasionally experiment with suggestive presentations of food, such as peach halves with raspberry nipples in crème Chantilly (whipped cream).

Included in this chapter is the story of Allende's grandmother's experience with a smitten lover who invited her to share a famous dish of the region. Dinner turned out to be jellied guinea pigs, still recognizably whole, encased in gelatin. The young woman passed out cold from the shock.

At First Sight Analysis

This chapter focuses on the instant assumptions and judgments that people make based on sight alone. Allende plays with the idea that less is more; using scarves and



silk to drape and cover the human body can be more visually appealing and seductive than complete nakedness. Humans, as a species, are initially influenced from a distance by what we see, before any of the other senses are activated.

In terms of food, presentation is everything. She cites the examples of the jellied guinea pig, and overcooked, limp vegetables to draw out this point. It makes one think of stew that tastes wonderful but looks like dog food. What might be done to salvage the meal? Allende would contend that if a meal is not visually appealing, it cannot be salvaged.



Etiquette

Etiquette Summary

This chapter opens with a discussion of etiquette, related to table manners. Allende points out that most cultures in the world today eat with their hands, not using utensils of any kind. Forks, knives, and spoons are inventions of European-based cultures that tend to relate to everything through the sense of sight, to the almost complete exclusion of the other four senses, especially that of touch. We also are taught to respect physical distance from other people and to ignore our own bodies.

Handling and preparing food joins the sense of touching with the pleasure of satisfying hunger. Allende reminds readers to notice the textures of different ingredients when making cookies. She describes some of her most memorable meals as those that she ate with her hands. Allende also describes some famous images of orgies, in which the participants are eating with their hands, and throwing fruits and sweets at each other.

The second half of this chapter focuses on ways in which ritual and good manners can also be exciting and sensual. Allende reminds readers that several of her books have been banned by a fundamentalist Catholic sect and some Mormon schools, which has increased her readership. She tells of the manual used by priests when asking a list of sins during confession, which lists a long repertoire of sexual sins more perverse than a normal person might imagine. She says there is nothing better for firing up sexual desire than reading the priests' confessional list of questions.

Finally, at the end of this chapter, Allende describes a dinner scene at a fine Renaissance palace that has been converted into a restaurant or hotel. She describes the exquisite room with heavy drapes, thick rugs, wall tapestries, silver and porcelain. A couple, elegantly dressed, occupies a table by the window overlooking a garden. Allende builds up a scene of incredible longing and tension between two characters who follow all of the rules of etiquette and good manners; the only actual contact between them being an accidental brush of the knees beneath the table. In their minds, however, both diners are imagining the lovemaking, as it would be right there on the table in the full dining room.

Etiquette Analysis

The first half of this chapter is used to establish the relationship between desire and restrictions. Allende discusses several examples in which restricting people's behavior actually increases the likelihood that people will engage in that behavior simply because it is restricted.

Once she has clearly established the connection between etiquette and sensuality, Allende proceeds to create some of the most subtle, artfully-written erotica imaginable in the guise of an example of what happens when diners follow the rules of etiquette.



Readers are surprised to find the erotic story at the end of the chapter, following the historical and familial examples given earlier in the chapter. The surprise only illustrates Allende's point, made earlier in the chapter, that following the rules can be as exciting as breaking them.



With the Tip of the Tongue

With the Tip of the Tongue Summary

The sense of taste is almost as difficult to define as the sense of smell, although there are only four different kinds of tastes: sweet, salty, bitter, and acidic. According to science, all other tastes are a combination or blend of two or more of those four. The pleasure of taste resides in memory and in concert with one or more of the other four senses, because taste is never experienced in isolation. Skin, bodily creases, and secretions have a taste as individual as odors.

Once, Allende attended a conference with a spiritual guru who challenged the attendees to eat a grape in no less than twenty minutes. To this day, Allende remembers the grape's shape, texture, temperature, taste, and smell.

According to Panchita, each course of a meal should compliment the others and be differentiated from them as well. The order in which dishes are served affects how each is appreciated.

Allende likens the courses of a meal to a musical composition: the soup is a pianissimo, the appetizer is an arpeggio, the main course is a rousing fanfare, followed by the dulcet chords of dessert. She also compares a good meal with stylish lovemaking beginning with insinuations, savoring erotic juices, reaching climax, and ending with repose. Finally, Allende reminds readers that temperature, texture, and color all have important roles in the sensual experience of a meal.

With the Tip of the Tongue Analysis

This chapter serves as a discussion of the importance of the sense of taste in food preparation, the enjoyment of food and in sensual experiences in general. Connections are made between the sensations of taste related to meals, music, and sexual relations. Readers are admonished to pay attention to the connections between all of the sensory experiences in life as memories of taste and smell, in particular, and to connect these senses to pleasurable and painful experiences equally.



Herbs and Spices

Herbs and Spices Summary

In this chapter, readers learn of the historical uses of herbs and spices, beginning with their use in preventing food spoilage in hot countries, and for use in perfumes. Later, aromatic herbs were commonly used in love philters with other, less pleasant ingredients. The herbs made the philters tolerable, and probably accounted for any effectiveness the philters may have had. Many of the herbs and spices were grown in the orchards and gardens of monasteries and convents, used for medicinal purposes, and as remedies for impotence and sterility. In order for herbs and spices to be effective aphrodisiacs, Allende recommends frequent use in order to create a consistent reaction.

Allende reminds readers that, in the past, anything from another country seemed strange and mysterious, containing erotic properties. However, in today's cyber-filled world, we can taste dishes from around the world in our home town. Because little surprises or excites people today, they turn to ever-stranger aphrodisiacs: battery-driven devices and shows, live and on video.

Allende recommends more natural alternatives in plants grown in our own gardens and purchased in the market. She claims that the fundamental ingredients to enhance one's cooking and one's love life are: balsamic vinegar, the best mustard, the purest honey, and virgin olive oil.

When Panchita, Allende's mother, visits from Chile, they buy spices in a Hindu's shop in San Francisco. Allende says the shop is like an illusion and the only proof they have of having been there are the extra-potent spices in small plastic bags that they take home with them. This shop is reminiscent of a similar shop that Allende visited in Katmandu, where she purchased spices that she doesn't know the names of, and which she is afraid to use in food. But her suitcase is permanently perfumed by the spices she spilled on her way home, and she keeps the remaining spices in case a visitor from around the world ever comes, one who can pronounce their names.

Herbs and Spices Analysis

This chapter focuses on the ingredients found in the smallest amounts in the foods we consume, and yet make the largest difference in taste and enjoyment. It is a reminder to not ignore the little details, in cooking or in lovemaking. Panchita's love of spices is illustrated in her willingness to travel into the city to the Hindu's shop, which re-introduces Panchita into the story and text of the book, preparing readers for the chapter to follow. Allende moves smoothly between references to worldwide issues and personal issues in this chapter.

Forbidden Herbs

Forbidden Herbs Summary

This chapter consists of a list of herbs that were blacklisted in the convent of the Barefoot Sisters of the Poor because of their aphrodisiac qualities. The list includes many of the more common spices such as cinnamon, mint, and vanilla, leaving one to wonder what the sisters used to flavor their food.

Forbidden Herbs Analysis

Interestingly, this chapter was written by Panchita. There are fewer historical references and stories woven into the descriptions of the herbs than readers found in previous chapters. Panchita's attention to detail is evident in the descriptions of the herbs' flavors and common uses. Panchita's exceptional talent as a cook is cleverly highlighted by the inclusion of this chapter of the book.



The Orgy

The Orgy Summary

This chapter begins with Allende's memories of the private orgies that her step-father, Tio Ramon, set up for her mother when they were living in Lebanon. Allende remembers him moving furniture into and out of their room, laying down assorted rugs and cushions, preparing cocktails and caviar, and selecting special music. She always imagined what went on in their room, based on what she had secretly read in *The Thousand and One Nights* that Tio Ramon kept locked up in his room.

The history of orgies is as varied and colorful as that of humankind. Orgies have existed in various forms, from religious holidays to victories at war, both private and public, as escape valves for everyday tensions. Fertility was celebrated in all ancient civilizations. Before overpopulation became a problem, orgies ensured frequent impregnation and the survival of the species.

Roman orgies included feasts that lasted for days with all of the finest foods and best wines. Floors were covered with flower petals; guests were sprinkled with perfume and offered frequent baths, often in vats of wine. Servants were available to clean up the mess, serve the food, and perform any other service desired. Greek and Roman cultures believed that pleasure was an end in itself, and their orgies were a direct result of that belief.

Then Christianity began its widespread growth throughout Europe. Based on the concept of compassion and love for one's neighbor and the belief that pleasure was a vice to be overcome, it taught that the senses and appetites were tools of the Devil and must be destroyed. Art, luxury, and beauty caused suspicion, delight caused guilt, and the body was the enemy of the soul. Christian saints found new ways to torture themselves to gain entry into heaven, and the believers bowed before the harsh acts that supposedly pleased God.

Even during the spread of Christianity, there were always exceptional people among the wealthy and the wise, nobles and prelates of the church, who never renounced good food and beautiful women, and who still enjoyed exotic spices, perfumes, the sciences, and art.

For a thousand years, Christianity systematically destroyed the old gods, burying them in memory, transforming them into devils or assimilating them into the church's own practices. Corpus Christi buns, for example, were once shaped as phalluses and female genitals and were used in orgiastic feasts.

Even so, orgies have continued throughout history. The celebrated courtesan, Marie Jeanne Isabel Becu du Barry, married at fifteen and a widow at nineteen, threw



outrageous orgies with her father's blessing. Of course, she died at the age of twenty-four, after some very outrageous living.

Halfway through the chapter, Allende returns to the practical aspects of planning her own orgy. She considers questions about who to invite, where to hold the orgy, what kind of entertainment to provide, and what food to serve. The issue of food sidetracks the discussion of orgies as she remembers a story she read about mushrooms. Nero's mother, Agrippina, ordered Lucasta to poison Claudius with mushrooms, along with many others after him. Nero, himself, requested a faster acting poison to be used on his mother. Agrippina did not trust anything issued from her own kitchen, so she would not eat the poison. He ultimately had to have her killed by sword.

The last two sections of this chapter focus on food to be served at orgies. Allende determines that the best thing to serve at an orgy is an aphrodisiac stew, known as curanto. The first time Allende experienced curanto was during a visit to Easter Island. When a curanto is announced, the natives of the island gather midmorning to begin preparations. The young men dig a large pit and heat up some stones in a bonfire. When the stones are hot enough, they are thrown in a pit and clay pots are placed on top of them. Then, all kinds of foods are layered on top: seasoned lamb, sausages, pork chops, marinated chicken, fish, lobster, shellfish, potatoes, and corn. The whole pile is then covered with clean, damp cloths, and on top of that, clean banana leaves. The dirt then is replaced over the mound for the duration of the cooking process. While they wait, everyone drinks cocktails, plays or listens to music, sings, tells stories, and flirts. At the moment the sun sets, the curanto is ready. The mound is carefully unburied and the food is ceremoniously removed from the pit and shared all around. According to Allende, "One cannot possibly describe the taste, only speak of its effect: it explodes like dynamite in the blood."

While writing *Eva Luna*, Allende wanted to create a curanto similar to the one she had tasted on Easter Island, so she set out to create a similar stew in an aluminum pot instead of the traditional pit. Through experimentation, she realized that the stew cooks more quickly in the pot and requires more careful attention to the seasoning as a result of the higher heat.

The last section of the chapter is Panchita's recipe for Curanto en Olla. She provides detailed directions for preparation of the stew, beginning with spinach leaves, onions, and herbs, and adding ever heartier ingredients, including a variety of vegetables and meats, and a bottle of wine.

Following the recipe and instructions for curanto is a recipe for Soup for Orgies that Allende's agent, Carmen, is famous for preparing. The soup is described as having a country flavor and, similar to the curanto recipe, includes a wide variety of meats and vegetables.



The Orgy Analysis

Like her previous chapters, Allende moves smoothly between the personal anecdotes and historical research; but this chapter also includes favorite recipes.

Readers learn that Allende's fascination with the connections between food and passion can be traced to her childhood and early teens in Lebanon, where she was influenced by her stepfather and mother's passion, as well the books she read about the Roman Empire and *The Thousand and One Nights*.

Thorough research informs readers about the development of orgies throughout history. In addition, Allende asks readers to consider the details for planning orgies of their own. The recipes provided at the end of the chapter are useful for any type of large party and would provide both sustenance and variety combined in a simple menu. Preparation of both recipes is time-consuming, but not particularly difficult. Once all ingredients have been added, the remaining preparation is minimal, allowing the cook to participate in the festivities instead of being stuck in the kitchen all evening. The combination of historical and practical makes this an especially interesting chapter.

About Tastes

About Tastes Summary

This very short chapter details some of the stranger things eaten by humans, including various insects, reptiles, and love philters made of excrement and organs of various animals. Allende references some practices that she has personally witnessed, such as eating snails out of the shells, and selecting sea snakes for a breakfast soup. Allende also discusses practices that she has researched, such as eating live octopus in Samoa and eating live monkeys' brains in China. Allende expresses distaste for such practices and suggests that readers that find them appealing should eat alone and not broadcast their preferences.

About Tastes Analysis

Allende does not spend a lot of time on this topic and readers get the impression from what little is stated that she does not approve of many of the practices outlined in this chapter. The purpose of the chapter, seemingly, is to be politically correct. The author wants to be sure that every culture's unique practices are acknowledged and to indicate that these practices, though sometimes misunderstood, are the result of passion, not perversion.



Alligators and Piranhas

Alligators and Piranhas Summary

This chapter tells of Allende's travels and experiences in the Amazon jungle, where roasted monkey is a delicacy. The jungle appears to visitors to be only green. But for inhabitants, the jungle is a varying pharmacy, providing medications, dietary supplements, first aid products, and practical tools.

Allende tells of swimming naked in the Amazon River, where, just a day before, she had seen tourists fishing for piranha for sport. She clarifies that although piranha have a bad reputation, they do not typically attack humans, but instead help keep the river clean by eating carrion.

Another of her experiences included going alligator hunting at night with an adolescent native. He would shine a bright spotlight on the river until he saw red eyes. Then he would jump into the river, she would hear some thrashing, and he would return to the boat holding a small crocodile by the neck or dragging a larger crocodile with its snout tied shut with a cord.

In a small village where only one inhabitant spoke a small amount of Portuguese, Allende had the opportunity to taste indigenous cooking in the form of roasted crocodile, piranha, and porcupine. Allende said that the crocodile tasted like reconstituted codfish, the piranha tasted like smoke, and the porcupine tasted like petrified pig.

Alligators and Piranhas Analysis

Similar to the chapter before it, this chapter's purpose is to inform readers of the culinary habits of different cultures. Different from the previous chapter, this one highlights daily dietary concerns of a specific area: the Amazon jungle, with no focus on the aphrodisiac qualities of the food.

Allende informs readers of the variety of foods available and indicates that a culture's diet is dependent on the life forms that are indigenous to the surrounding habitat.



Aphrodisiac Cruelties

Aphrodisiac Cruelties Summary

Highlighted in this chapter is the profession of sheep shearing, performed in the time of Allende's grandfather. During the shearing season, men would come from surrounding areas to help with the shearing duties. This was also the time when young bucks were identified for breeding or castrated to continue as wool and meat producers. Allende heard stories about the testicles from castrated sheep being roasted and consumed during the evening meal, along with meat from slaughtered animals. She discusses the practice of eating animal testicles and wearing testicles as amulets as it has existed in many cultures throughout history.

From that discussion, she considers the importance that humanity typically attributes to the male sexual organs. She reminds readers of the story of John Wayne Bobbitt whose wife, after suffering through considerable violence and abuse, cut off his penis while he was sleeping. His wife then took off in her car and, upon realizing that she was still carrying the penis, threw it out the window. Authorities searched the highway until they found the penis and rushed it to the hospital to be re-attached. Bobbitt developed a very successful career in the porn industry, because women flocked to find out if the re-attached penis still performed properly.

A similar case in Japan, on which the movie "In the Realm of the Senses" is based, occurred when a couple developed a game in which the woman strangled the man with a silk muffler in order to prolong his erection and their pleasure. Ultimately, she strangled him to death. When she realized that he was dead, she cut off his genitals and wandered around in open fields for five days, until police stopped her. She served five years in prison, and then returned to her original profession as a prostitute. She charged ten times more than her colleagues, and still men flocked from all corners of the globe to play the silk muffler game.

Aphrodisiac Cruelties Analysis

This chapter was a bit off-course for Allende's purpose in the book. In a book about the connections between romantic passion, the senses, and food, this chapter addresses the three elements only tangentially. It does begin with the practice of eating sheep genitals as a means of increasing or enhancing virility, but most of the chapter focuses on physical cruelties committed in the name of passion.

Many readers are disappointed by this chapter, as Allende seems to take a detour away from her original intent. The images are horrific and lacking in the sensuality evident in earlier chapters. An argument might be made that Allende is carefully addressing all sides of an issue, but in a "Memoir of the Senses", which she has subtitled this work, a writer is not obligated to be that thorough or objective.



About Eroticism

About Eroticism Summary

This chapter contains a single paragraph of introduction before excerpting a letter from Anais Nin to the collector of pornography, for whom she wrote a collection of short, erotic stories. In her letter, Nin defines what makes sex truly fulfilling: the influence and indulgence of the senses. In response to the collector's request that she cut the poetry from her stories and focus more singularly on sex, Nin accuses the collector of killing the spirit of sex.

About Eroticism Analysis

Following the last chapter of atrocities, this short chapter serves as the gateway back to the senses; back to passion. Nin's letter returns readers to the realm of the sensual, and encourages readers to be aware of subtle details in their sexual encounters. Nin's definition of eroticism reminds one of textures, light, temperature, shadows, and gestures, being elements that affect how an erotic encounter is perceived and what makes each encounter unique.



Large Birds and Small Birds

Large Birds and Small Birds Summary

Game birds are said to have aphrodisiac qualities, though domestic birds, such as chickens and turkeys, do not. Domestic birds are considered melancholy birds because they are typically kept caged, fed inferior feed, shot up with hormones and antibiotics, and subjected to artificial light, which causes them to grow too fast and lay eggs as if obsessed. Allende does note that free-range poultry, if one can find it, can be included in an erotic cuisine.

Allende notes that doves, which are often associated with Christian peace and safety from the storm, were originally associated with Aphrodite, Astarte, and Juno, goddesses of sexuality. In Indian mythology, doves represent copulation and life. In spite of the religious symbolism associated with doves, Allende and Panchita include one recipe for preparing doves as an aphrodisiac.

Allende suggests purchasing fowl already dead and plucked, because the process is a gruesome one. The author describes an attempt by a family friend to kill and pluck all of the family chickens. This very large, strong man could not kill the chickens without first covering their eyes with paper hoods so they could not see each other die. Then he killed the first chicken so unsuccessfully that he, himself, was traumatized badly enough that he could not eat chicken for ten years.

Large Birds and Small Birds Analysis

This chapter is a slow return to Allende's discussion of food and passion. It is a nice segue between the preceding chapters about atrocities and unusual cuisine, and the original discussion about the aphrodisiac qualities of food and the effects of the senses on passion.

Allende is again combining her own personal history and anecdotes with research, evidenced in the references to the ancient goddesses of fertility. Allende also includes recipes for preparation of fowl as a food of passion, appealing to the reader's senses in her description of Panchita's turkey nestled on a silver platter among baked apples.



Whispers

Whispers Summary

Men's sexual impulses are triggered by sight, while women's impulses are triggered by sound and by the imagination. Many of the most famous lovers are those who wooed women with poems and songs rather than by their appearance or exploits. Allende proves her point with examples of the female baboon's enlarged, red genitalia necessary to attract the males of the species, the lack of popularity of erotic magazines among women, and Cyrano de Bergerac's success in wooing a woman for his friend through the use of his poetry.

In addition to the sense of sound itself, passion is controlled and aroused by the quality of the sound as it appeals to the listener. What is appealing to one person may have a different effect on others.

Allende cautions readers to be careful with words and use them wisely, both spoken and written. She tells a cautionary tale about a woman who wrote love letters to both a husband and a lover and then sent them to the wrong people. This woman lost her marriage and married the lover solely to silence the gossip, living out her life in regret.

Language is also aphrodisiac in regard to food; descriptions of fragrance, taste, and texture having the power to trigger sensual and sexual responses in people.

At the end of the chapter, Allende focuses on music as an aphrodisiac, again commenting on individual taste being the deciding factor about what is arousing. She tells of a woman listening to a celebrated tenor singing opera, who, from all appearances, had an orgasm from listening to the tenor's performance.

Allende notes that when it comes to food, sounds can also be aphrodisiac; sounds such as the hiss of hot oil, the flow of wine into glasses, the burble of a boiling pot, to name just a few.

Whispers Analysis

This chapter reminds readers that sound is closely connected to memory, and memory is often linked to passion. Allende indicates that the more passionate the memory is, the stronger the connections to the senses will be. Hearing similar sounds triggers the same passionate response that was present in the original experience. Allende uses her own skills of description and detail to provide readers with examples of how music, sound, and the sense of touch are all interconnected. The long list of kitchen sounds separated by commas, in a sentence that lasts for seven lines of the final paragraph, takes on the feel of music, while the reader floats through the images evoked by thorough, specific description.



A Night in Egypt

A Night in Egypt Summary

The chapter is comprised of an introductory paragraph about Allende's friend, Tabra, who travels extensively in search of unique treasures that will inspire her work as a jewelry maker and artist.

The rest of the chapter is a letter that Tabra sent to Allende during her travels in Egypt in 1990. It tells of arriving in an airport in southern Egypt and meeting an attractive man who offered to be her guide while she was in his country. Since it is unsafe for a woman to travel in Egypt alone, and he seemed trustworthy, she accepted his offer. Tabra found herself traveling on an empty road through the desert with her guide, Mahmoud, and four of his male relatives.

Mahmoud took her to his grandfather's house where she met his entire family. The women showed Tabra their treasures: a bridal dowry, a sewing machine, and a refrigerator. They shared fruit and tea with her. Then the women disappeared. Tabra asked her host to return her to the hotel. Mahmoud agreed and she again found herself traveling through the empty desert in a car full of men, this time at night. Just as she was becoming panicked, they arrived back at the family house, where dinner was waiting for her and Mahmoud. The rest of the family had already eaten and disappeared, but because the electricity in the village had been shut off, she and Mahmoud sat down to eat by candlelight.

Tabra's letter describes a sensuous meal of tender lamb, fish from the Nile, goat cheese, black olives, ripe figs, fried eggplant, a garbanzo paste, and yogurt. Throughout dinner, Mahmoud whispered compliments and seductions into Tabra's ear. Though she was nervous about her fate and about being alone with this stranger, she enjoyed the attention, too. The story ends with the couple sampling sweets for dessert. Readers are left to their own conclusions regarding the outcome of Tabra's adventurous journey.

A Night in Egypt Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to act as a testament to the power of whispers discussed in the previous chapter. Following the chapter, which demonstrates the power of sounds, this story about Tabra's adventure in Egypt both gains strength and lends strength to the ideas of each chapter. Tabra is moved from fear and panic, strictly by the sound of Mahmoud's softly whispered compliments and reassurances. Tabra is in no less dangerous or unfamiliar situation, but because of the whispers she feels safer.

Sins of the Flesh

Sins of the Flesh Summary

This chapter is introduced by a paragraph about vegetarians. Allende says that vegetarians are the most successful at cultivating the art of the erotic, so she seriously doubts claims that meat can be an aphrodisiac. However, since there are many serious texts that say otherwise, she includes this chapter on the flesh of mammals.

The rest of the chapter consists of descriptions of various kinds of meat: game, beef, goat, rabbit, and organ meat such as liver and kidneys. Allende includes a few details regarding how each meat is processed and prepared, and a few historical anecdotes, such as the one explaining the origin of steak tartare.

Sins of the Flesh Analysis

This chapter and the next contain very little information. Allende seems to have included them in an effort to be thorough in her coverage of food as a source of passion, not through a belief in their importance and relevance to the subject at hand. Interesting to note in this chapter on meat is the surreal picture of an apple that fills the room in which it sits. Allende suggests that, if one insists on using meats in an aphrodisiac menu, they are used sparingly.



Unclassifiabiles

Unclassifiabiles Summary

"Unclassifiabiles" refers to the meats commonly eaten in cultures around the world that are considered aphrodisiac, but cannot be included in the common food categories.

Turtle, though an ocean creature, does not belong in the same category as fish. Allende discusses the numerous traditions surrounding the preparation of turtle soup, including drinking the turtle's blood first with some strong, sweet liquor and following the soup with an amorous encounter in a private room, woman included on the menu.

Allende also describes the bird-nest soups, commonly included in the menu of the emperor of China, which is also supposed to inflame the emperor's decadent appetites.

Next, a discussion of snail is included among the unclassifiabiles. Snails are supposed to resemble the clitoris, but Allende is offended by the reference as women's genitalia do not look anything like snails.

Frogs are included in this chapter; although, only the legs are eaten. Allende tells of the day she was to dissect a frog in her science class and instead snuck into the room early in the morning and released all of the frogs into the garden.

Unclassifiabiles Analysis

This chapter, like the last, seems superfluous to the topic at hand. While the delicacies listed in this chapter are often cited as being aphrodisiac, Allende dispels the myths with very graphic details of the preparation of each, all of which are very distasteful.



The Gigolo

The Gigolo Summary

A summary of the history of kept men in various cultures begins as far back as recorded history. Aristocratic ladies have often kept lovers in addition to the husbands of their arranged marriages, just as men have often had mistresses for similar reasons. Today, expert lovers are available for hire in most modern countries around the world.

According to Allende's friend, Dr. Miki Shima, modern male prostitutes from his country memorize large portions of erotic manuals in order to have a variety of sexual positions to choose from. They are typically fit, healthy, and attractive, because they do not have to engage in hard labor and appearance is critical to their success in the profession.

Dr. Shima reminded Allende of the importance of diet for keeping in shape, and then shared with her a recipe for Aphrodisiac Soup of Acupuncture Master, which he had received from a master who lived for more than one hundred years, and died with all of his own teeth and still-black hair. The soup contains ginseng, chicken, chives, ginger, miso, sake, and prawns.

The remainder of the chapter tells of Allende's encounter with a professional gigolo in a German airport during a layover on her way to India. Though she declined his services, she invited him to join her for dinner and interviewed him for information to be included in this book. Allende discovered that gay men were his best clients, since they are freer in a strange airport than they would be at home. Also, women often forget that they are the ones paying for the service and pretend satisfaction to keep from disappointing him. The gigolo must identify the deception and correct it in order to protect his reputation. Allende asked him if he knew about the aphrodisiac qualities of food and if he took advantage of them in his profession, but he did not display the slightest interest in the topic.

The Gigolo Analysis

In a book about sex and food and written by a woman, this chapter had to be included. It is interesting to note in this chapter that the recipe included was provided by a doctor who made the connection between the importance of diet and successful, satisfying sexual relations. The ingredients in the recipe are known to have a variety of health benefits besides the aphrodisiac quality for which they are included in this soup. The question could be raised, are foods really aphrodisiac, in and of themselves, or are good health and clean living the true aphrodisiacs?

In contrast to the doctor, the professional that Allende interviewed for the book was uninformed regarding the aphrodisiac qualities of foods. Interestingly though, he selected lobster, an aphrodisiac, from the menu when he joined Allende for dinner and may have still had ideas about seducing her and selling his services. This raises the



question of whether foods have natural aphrodisiac qualities to which people unknowingly respond.

In other words, this chapter asks readers to consider whether foods are aphrodisiac because of their chemical and nutrient make-up, or whether they are aphrodisiacs because people perceive them to be so.



Bread, God's Grace

Bread, God's Grace Summary

Allende once bought a bread machine and began making bread regularly. Within a very short time, the adults in the household began gaining weight and the children refused to eat much besides the bread. So the bread machine was retired, until her stepson, Harleigh, made a few adjustments on it and began using it to convert marijuana into chocolate cookies, which he sold at school for a great profit.

Allende feels that making bread is similar to poetry in that it requires much free time and it nourishes the world. However, she recommends purchasing bread at a good bakery, feeling no guilt, and spending your time on other pursuits. Allende notes that in the erotic kitchen, bread is indispensable, because wheat is considered an aphrodisiac and is also a symbol of fertility.

Guy de Maupassant wrote a story about a servant girl who goes to market every morning to buy bread for the household and fantasizes about the young baker's broad shoulders, powerful arms, the gleam of sweat on his skin, and his sensual hands. Of course, in this love story, the girl's fantasies come true. Allende says that whenever she sees a large country loaf of bread, she remembers de Maupassant's story. She states that there are many kinds of hands, but what matters in both making bread and making love is the intent that guides the hands.

The most popular bread in Chile is called marraqueta and is shaped like vulvae. In France, the most popular bread is the phallic-shaped baguette. Allende says that, in spite of its shape, it is modest, trustworthy, and never-failing. Regardless of what type of bread your menu calls for, you cannot go wrong with a baguette. However, do not buy it too far in advance, for it contains no shortening and, therefore, will go stale within hours. It can be resuscitated by sprinkling it with water and heating it in a conventional oven, but the microwave will turn it to rubber.

At the end of the chapter, Allende describes sitting in the corner of the kitchen of a convent watching a nun making fresh bread. While she watches the process, she cries, without understanding why.

Bread, God's Grace Analysis

Like in previous chapters, Allende describes the simplest of tasks, bread-making, in such sensual terms that it becomes an erotic art. Using words such as commingling, nakedness, pulsed, and surrender, Allende likens the rising loaves of bread to a woman in the "surrender of love."

It is most interesting that this description comes after Allende has said it is a waste of time to make one's own bread and that readers should instead purchase bread from a



good bakery. One explanation for this is that Allende wants readers to know what goes into good bread-making -- the sensuousness of the experience, the eroticism of working with bread dough -- to more fully appreciate the aphrodisiac qualities of something as simple as bread. One can hardly eat bread without remembering her description of the nun in the warm kitchen making loaves for the day's meals. Amplifying the contrast established in the description is the fact that it is a nun who is engaged in such sensual activity, seemingly oblivious to the effect she has on anyone witnessing the act.

Similar to the chapter on etiquette, Allende again shows, through her description and word choice, how a seemingly upstanding activity such as a civilized dinner or bread-making can have a sensual, erotic effect on people.



Creatures of the Sea

Creatures of the Sea Summary

Fish and other forms of sea life have long been considered aphrodisiac by many cultures around the world. Most sea creatures are rich in vitamins, minerals, and protein, low in fat, have delicious flavor, and an aroma that reminds one of the most intimate regions of the human body.

The fugu is a fish only available in Japan. This fish is so poisonous that a single bite paralyzes the heart and lungs, resulting in death. In minute amounts the poison heightens sexual excitement, however, so people continue to risk eating fugu. In spite of careful preparation by Japan's finest chefs, five hundred people die from consumption of fugu each year.

Sashimi is another aphrodisiac from Japan. Though prepared somewhat humanely here in the United States, in Japan sashimi is prepared using a still-live fish from which paper thin slices are removed, dipped in soy sauce and consumed.

In contrast to the cruelty of Japanese sashimi, Allende recounts the eleventh century story by Lady Onogoro, entitled "The Cold Fish." In this story, a beautiful, young girl has a lover that is totally obsessed with cleanliness. Her lover personally oversees her bath to be sure that she is properly cleaned; he wears gloves to make love, and he never utters a word of affection or appreciation for her charms. In the garden pond lived an enormous carp. After an unsatisfying night with her lover, the young girl went out to the garden to cry. The carp heard her sobs and sucked each finger on the hand that dangled in the water. The carp seduced the girl into entering the water, and then led her along a path of pleasure unlike any she had ever experienced.

The most delectable dish that can be prepared with fish is a soup called bouillabaisse. According to one story, the soup was created by Venus to prod Vulcan to more amorous feats. According to another story, the soup was brought to the three Marys of the gospels by angels.

Panchita traveled from Chile to Paris and London, and then to Marsailles to find an authentic recipe for bouillabaisse. Panchita will never reveal how she got the coveted recipe as long as her husband is alive, but the soup is befitting the gods on Mount Olympus. If you have the ingredients ready in advance, the soup can be prepared in 15 minutes, but it should be served the moment it reaches perfection, because it does not keep well.

Panchita's recipe is included in this chapter, with complete instructions. This soup is made with six kinds of fish, garlic, tomatoes, saffron, sugar, and white wine. It is served in ceramic bowls.



Following the recipe is a Chilean poem by Pablo Neruda entitled "Ode to Conger Chowder" which is the name for bouillabaisse in Chile. The poem contains the recipe and directions for the poet's version of bouillabaisse. His soup is made with a large eel, known as conger, and also garlic, onion, tomato, prawns, and cream.

Creatures of the Sea Analysis

By now, Allende has established a pattern in her writing of these chapters, beginning with personal anecdotes and historical background, and moving into a discussion of the erotic and passionate elements of each type of food examined. Allende contrasts the violence involved in preparing sashimi and the violence experienced by the obsessive lover with the sensuality of the love-making fish and the incredible essence of bouillabaisse. Although there is a section of recipes at the end of the book, we find that the bouillabaisse recipe is important enough, and central enough to the discussion, to be included in this chapter. Allende has also found a recipe in the form of a poem, which lends authenticity to her claim regarding the sensual nature of the soup. Not many foods, except those of an erotic nature, lend themselves to inclusion in a poem. Most often, we find fruits and sweets described in poetry, not fish soup. Of note is the fact that the poem is by a fellow Chilean poet, one that is well-known for his love poems.



More Creatures from the Sea

More Creatures from the Sea Summary

Marine mollusks and crustaceans are believed to have the highest aphrodisiac value, especially oysters. The word "aphrodisiac" originated from the name of the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite, who is said to have been born of the sea foam after her grandfather castrated her father and threw the genitals into the deep ocean waters. In a famous painting of the birth of Venus, the Roman's name for Aphrodite, the goddess is seen emerging from the sea, wearing nothing, and standing on a scallop shell.

Shellfish do not require complicated methods of cooking or preparation. Many are served raw, with a touch of lemon, cilantro, and spices. Also, since they do not have expressive eyes or audible voices, humans feel less guilt over consuming them over other life forms.

In North America, shellfish have been accused of contributing to high cholesterol, but most other cultures do not share that assessment. The greatest drawback to eating shellfish is that they often cause allergic reactions. Also, if they are not fresh, they can be poisonous. Sometimes, they are difficult to get out of their shells.

While traveling on a Chilean cruise, Allende ate some of the strangest seafood ever, including: shoe clams, round-tail shrimp, purple prawns, hairy prawns, and barnacles, among others. While Allende traveled through abandoned islands and open seas, villages periodically appeared on the hillside. The cruise ship would stop and trade with the villagers, purchasing various forms of sea life in exchange for money and wine. Often, on the day that the galley was replenished, the tourists would huddle on the upper deck and eat the creatures raw, directly from their shells.

The second half of the chapter lists the most aphrodisiac seafood, including abalone, clams, mussels, scallops, squid, octopus, shrimp and other crustaceans, sea urchins, and oysters. Along with the list, Allende includes recipes, and her usual historical and personal anecdotes. There is a personal anecdote about serving prawns to a man who was allergic to them, and a historical anecdote about Pauline Bonaparte, sister of Napoleon, who was exiled to an island. When Pauline returned to her husband in France, she brought five slaves with her and ate fresh oysters and champagne for breakfast every morning.

More Creatures from the Sea Analysis

This chapter is included in order to cover the additional oceanic life forms that did not fit with the discussion of fish in the previous chapter. Shellfish and crustaceans are very different, both in appearance and in preparation from a fish. Central to this chapter is the image of variety and its importance in developing and sustaining passion. Although many of the life forms discussed in this chapter are related to each other, they are also

very different in tastes, textures, and methods of preparation. Consuming a variety of aphrodisiacs can enhance the erotic experience.



The Harem

The Harem Summary

This chapter begins with a serial romance that Allende read before the advent of television, although her grandfather disapproved of such stories. In the story, a woman is stolen by pirates and sold into the sultan's harem. The hero of the story makes plans to rescue her, with the help of a Jewish merchant, who had access to the inner courtyard of the palace in order to sell rich cloth. The hero shaved his beard and dressed like a harem chambermaid and was able to deceive the eunuch who stood guard, thereby gaining entry to the harem. The hero found his sweetheart just in the nick of time, saved her from becoming the sultan's love slave, and both escaped by jumping walls and eluding the palace guards. Though these feats would have been impossible in real life, they spark the imagination.

After this story, Allende examines the historical background of real-life harems. Harems have existed throughout history in cultures like China, India, and Arabic countries, the most famous of these being Turkey. More than 2000 women were housed in the Turkish sultan's palace when the doors were finally opened in 1909. Many thousands of women had lived physically and spiritually isolated lives within the palace walls during its 400-year history. Now, no trace of those women remain. No one knows who they were, where they originated, or the circumstances of their deaths. It is as if they never existed.

Recent research clarifies that the harem was not created to protect women as was originally believed, but instead to preserve man's morality. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all teach that women are flesh and temptation, dominated by sensuality. Therefore, protecting men from such immorality became necessary, and the harem achieved that end. A Muslim may have four wives and an unlimited number of concubines.

In the harem, the sultan's mother reigned supreme, followed by the four wives, then the favorites, and finally the odalisques or servants. Women of high rank had their own servants and eunuchs and their own exquisitely decorated rooms. Some women were born in the palace, but many were kidnapped or sold in the slave markets by their parents. The favorite women rose in category if they gave birth to a son, and then spent the rest of their existence defending themselves and their sons against attempted assassinations. The slightest misstep could result in death by drowning, overseen by the Great Eunuch.

Outside the Turkish bath, eating was one of the most important activities in the harem. There were twenty kitchens and one hundred and fifty cooks responsible for all of the foods, treats, and refreshments served in the harem. Eggplant was considered the most powerful aphrodisiac, and even today, good Turkish wives pride themselves on knowing at least fifty eggplant recipes. Because there was little else to do in the harem, meals lasted for hours and were followed by relaxation and rest.



Harems also existed in India and China. One emperor of the Tang dynasty had over two thousand women in his harem and fathered over five hundred children. It was a matter of national importance and pride for the emperor to have so many children. The emperor relied on physicians, acupuncturists, and experts in aphrodisiacs to stimulate him so that he could perform each night. All of his sexual activity was formally recorded so that the time of conception of each child could be accurately determined and paternity could be verified.

Younger wives and concubines were often left idle, entertained only by the eunuchs. Castration did not eliminate desire, and the eunuchs were creative in their search for sexual alternatives. Although eunuchs were known to be excellent lovers in the Chinese harem, their popularity never reached the Western world like the popularity of Chinese wisdom regarding aphrodisiacs and erotic food.

The Harem Analysis

This chapter discusses a social structure based on the major elements of this book --passion and food -- in the harem. Harems are often romanticized in history and in literature to be pleasure palaces full of decadent practices and treats instead of the prisons that they actually were. Allende does detail some of the injustices that took place in harems, the objectification of women, the unreasonable confinement and lack of choices available to women in the harem, for starters. She also describes the treachery to which the women subjected each other.

For the purposes of the book, it is most important to note the delicacies on which the women and the sultan, himself, dined. Also, Allende allows certain aspects of the harem to go unchallenged, such as the sensual aspects of the Turkish bath and the opulent surroundings in which the odalisques lived.

The description and discussion of the harem is one-sided and myopic in this chapter, but serves the purpose of the book: to enjoy sensual pleasure in everything -- food, company, and activities.



Eggs

Eggs Summary

In all cultures, eggs are known to be erotic and restorative. All eggs, from the smallest fish eggs used for caviar to the largest ostrich egg, are associated with fertility.

The method of preparation differs from culture to culture, but the purpose of all is to arouse lust and passion. Some of the most popular methods of preparation include eating eggs raw with spices and condiments, hard boiling, scrambling, and making omelets.

Caviar is discussed at length, including information on the harvesting of the eggs from the female sturgeon, a cold water fish. There are three classifications of caviar, based on the size of the eggs from largest to smallest: beluga, ossetra, and sevruga. A professional taster is employed in Russian processing plants to ensure optimum taste and salting. The price rises in proportion to the size and quality of the eggs.

Eggs Analysis

Eggs, as the symbol of fertility and reproductive energy, are an appropriate topic for the chapter following the discussion of harems and mandated, controlled breeding of human beings as it existed in Turkey, China, and other Eastern countries that supported harems as social constructs.

The discussion about harvesting, processing, and distribution of caviar is informative, especially to someone who has never developed a taste for caviar.

Supreme Stimulus for Lechery

Supreme Stimulus for Lechery Summary

Catherine the Great was known to be both supportive of foreign artists and repressive of artists in her own country. She married young, to an ugly, gluttonous man but had the presence of mind to secure assistance in eliminating him and ruling his country for half a century. She had many lovers, and was said to be so insatiable that she had relations with her horse; but that may be just a rumor. To the end of her seventy-seven years, Catherine the Great's breakfast consisted of vodka-laced tea and a caviar omelet.

Allende compares a freshly-prepared omelet to the music of an Indian snake charmer -- a song for the spirit. Allende says that music powerful enough to empower a cobra must be capable of arousing anything.

The last section of this chapter is a recipe for the Empress' Omelet, made with eggs, butter, chives, salmon, caviar, and sour cream. Allende provides detailed instructions to ensure the most passionately decadent outcome and tells readers that "After a night of passion, this is the breakfast indicated for making love, no holds barred, the rest of the day."



Supreme Stimulus for Lechery

Supreme Stimulus for Lechery Summary

This chapter is the perfect accompaniment to the preceding chapter about eggs and their aphrodisiac qualities. It makes the connection between eggs as a symbol of fertility and reproduction that is present in every society, and eggs as a stimulus for lecherous behavior. Readers will question what effect eggs have on their behavior, if any, and where they are on the continuum between passion and lechery.

Supreme Stimulus for Lechery Analysis

Allende heightens the passion in this chapter through the use of exotic imagery of the German princess, turned Russian czarina, the Indian snake charmers, and virgin hens. In addition, she uses phallic symbols, such as the serpents standing at attention and the San Francisco lighthouse, combined with eggs, the symbol of female fertility, to subtly influence readers' perception of passion within the writing.

Forbidden Fruits

Forbidden Fruits Summary

Allende refers to oral sex sometimes being called "forbidden fruits," but then continues with a list of all of the fruits which are considered aphrodisiac in nature. The list is arranged alphabetically and includes common favorites such as apples and grapes, as well as lesser-known fruits such as quince. It also lists a few items that are not traditionally classified as fruits in American culture, such as avocados and pistachios. For each fruit listed, Allende includes between two and eight lines of information about its origin, symbolism, and significance to the discussion of aphrodisiacs.

Forbidden Fruits Analysis

This chapter is a tribute to fruit as both symbols of passion as well as sources of the fruits. Many of the fruits are identified as male or female in nature while their qualities are enumerated. The only fruit that is not represented on this list are the citrus fruits, which evidently are too fibrous and acidic to be considered aphrodisiac.

The last paragraph in this chapter is addressed directly to the reader, an effective technique used to establish rapport between the author and the reader.



Other Delicious Aphrodisiacs

Other Delicious Aphrodisiacs Summary

This chapter is a discussion of a few aphrodisiacs that do not fit into any other category, including: coffee, tea, chocolate, and honey.

Coffee has mixed reviews as an aphrodisiac. It is a stimulant, due to its caffeine content, which is why Mormons do not drink it. It is, however, favored in Arab nations where the Koran forbids the consumption of alcohol. Allende questions the aphrodisiac qualities of coffee, because its popularity in the United States is at an all-time high, but American libido is not especially notable. The variety of flavors and sophisticated preparations of coffee, however, lend themselves to passionate responses unknown to drinkers of plain, unflavored coffee.

Tea was used first as a medicine prior to becoming a popular drink in Europe during the sixteenth century. By the eighteenth century, tea time was an established practice in England and American colonists threw tea into the harbor as a protest move. Tea is primarily cultivated in warm, humid climates, which may account for its questionable value as an aphrodisiac. Allende indicates that the aphrodisiac qualities of tea seem to depend on the faith of the person drinking the tea, not the tea itself.

Chocolate was a sacred drink in Aztec society, related to the goddess of fertility, and consumed only by nobility. Though popular in Europe and America, chocolate is not appreciated in Asia and Africa. Aphrodisiac qualities of chocolate developed early in its history, due to its stimulant and addictive properties, directly related to the alkaloid theobromine, "fruit of the gods."

Honey's reputation as an aphrodisiac is extensive, recognized by many cultures, and included in many wedding ceremonies around the world. Its high vitamins B and C, and the minerals in the pollen used in its production, stimulate the production of sex hormones in humans. Its pleasing taste and smell make it a potent aphrodisiac.

Other Delicious Aphrodisiacs Analysis

A catch-all chapter that discusses items that many scientists today would consider to be "non-food" items, illustrates the inherent passion in humanity's ongoing search for love and sensual pleasure. While both chocolate and honey have long been considered aphrodisiac in nature, coffee and tea are less obvious choices, as Allende illustrates through the historic trace of each item in this chapter.

Nouvelle Cuisine

Nouvelle Cuisine Summary

The definition of nouvelle cuisine is established as the same ingredients combined in more ethnic combinations, including more Asian and Latin American influences, which were previously ignored in most of Europe and North America. Nouvelle cuisine is also lighter, with fewer calories and smaller portions, but it is expensive, because it requires decoration.

Allende does not trust the waiters, the menu, or the dishes served in nouvelle restaurants.

While nouvelle cuisine is often perceived as fresher, requiring Spartan preparation, Allende prefers food that does not move. She wants meat products that are dead, with no remaining eyes or heads visible. If people have gone to the trouble of killing the animal, it is not too much to ask that they remove the head as well.

Nouvelle Cuisine Analysis

This chapter is a rant against the nouvelle cuisine that has developed in recent times in America and Europe. Allende's objections to nouvelle cuisine are based primarily on the too-small portion sizes and the use of artistry instead of presentation. While she acknowledges that the appetizing presentation of a dish is important, she does not want her foods turned into euphemisms- tomatoes as roses or potatoes as nightingales. In addition, she prefers a simple menu, free from the "pedantic language of a literary critic," and more robust flavors and a simpler appearance in both men and food.

In all, nouvelle cuisine is not an appealing improvement in food preparation or presentation, according to Allende.



Cheese

Cheese Summary

Allende first saw cheese being made at a rustic dairy in Venezuela when she was an immigrant in a foreign country. It was made in the heat from curdled, bacteria-filled milk. Don Maurizio, a gigantic man, stirred the curdled milk into cheese with his bare hands, molded the curds into round, loaf shapes, and left them to set in the shade for a few hours, after which they were ready to be sold and eaten.

Allende then visited an industrial, computerized processing plant where hygiene was of the utmost importance, and the cheese was not as perfect or as tasty as that made by Don Maurizio.

There are more flavors and consistencies in cheese than there are countries in the world, and each region has its favorites that are central to their recipes and diets. Both dry, strong-flavored cheeses and softer, milder ones are considered aphrodisiac for different reasons. The dry ones are thought to be stimulating, while the softer ones have a more sensual, inviting texture.

At the beginning of the seventies, during the era of Twiggy, a revered model at the time, the musical comedy, "The Seven Mirrors" played in Chile. The musical featured beautiful, fat women who acted as a Greek chorus in the show. Many hours spent rehearsing and performing caused these women to begin dropping pounds very quickly. The director put up a sign in the foyer requesting that admirers send cheese-covered pizza to the women instead of flowers.

Cheese Analysis

Allende employs an effective use of contrast to establish the aphrodisiac qualities of bacteria-filled milk. In spite of her images of hogs, sweaty armpits, and fly-covered cows, readers recognize the passionate energy of Don Maurizio as he creates the perfect cheese. Contrasted with those images are the images of the hygienic processing plant with its antiseptic, computerized environment and hormone-filled cows incapable of producing cheese as tasty and satisfying as that of Don Maurizio.

The aphrodisiac qualities of individual cheeses are not well-established through historical research, but instead rely on personal preference, culture, and the consistency and texture of the cheese itself. Allende seems to indicate that, as with many other aphrodisiacs, the intensity of the passionate response relies heavily on the beliefs and practices of individuals.



Se Non e Vero

Se Non e Vero Summary

Truffles are mushrooms that grow in the wild and cannot be cultivated. They are rare, prized, and very expensive. Madame du Barry, the Marquis de Sade, and Louis XIV all consumed truffles frequently and believed fervently in their aphrodisiac qualities. Scientists have discovered the scent of a truffle activates a gland in the pig that produces the same pheromones present in humans when they are in love.

Allende once planned to treat a beau to a truffle omelet, but discovered that she could not afford the truffle. The clerk in the delicatessen where she was shopping instead sold her black olives and truffled olive oil with instructions to wash the olives to rid them of their flavor, soak them in the truffled oil and chop them up in the omelet. The fake truffles fooled Allende's lover, and she was glad, in the end, that she had not spent the money on real truffles as "his reputation as a beau was as exaggerated as that of truffles."

At the end of this chapter is Allende's emergency recipe for truffle soup. She calls it "Reconciliation Soup," because she makes it after terrible fights with her husband as a way to make peace without humiliating herself. The soup is made with 3 kinds of mushrooms, garlic, stock, port, truffled oil, and sour cream. It is a blended cream soup that works to create harmony in the household every time.

Se Non e Vero Analysis

It would be helpful for English-speaking readers to be provided with a translation for the title of this chapter, but, for reasons unknown, Allende has not provided this.

While most of the ingredients discussed in the book are well-known and readily available, truffles are not. In spite of this, they are included as a powerful aphrodisiac, along with less expensive ways to achieve the same effect. This is the first chapter in which this technique is used, partly because this is the first ingredient that is not easily available, and partly because of the truffle's reputation as an aphrodisiac.

Many readers will be familiar with chocolate truffles, so named because of their appearance that mirrors the dark mushroom growing in the forest, and also because of the known aphrodisiac qualities of chocolate, discussed several chapters earlier.

The Reconciliation Soup is a recipe for cream of mushroom soup that is made to be eaten and enjoyed for its own properties, not mixed into a casserole like many store-bought varieties. Readers will notice that Allende's recipes for common foods are designed to celebrate the foods used in their preparation and to be savored in this way.



The Spirit of Wine

The Spirit of Wine Summary

Wine is, of course, a well-known and universal aphrodisiac. It dilates the blood vessels, which prolongs erection, and it lessens inhibitions, relaxes, and fosters joy. There are many misconceptions about what kind of wine to serve in which situation. Winemaking and tasting is an ancient and elaborate art, about which Allende admits ignorance, but she has learned and shared some basic principles in this chapter.

Though wine makes Allende lightheaded and uninhibited, she has always wanted a wine cellar like the ones her grandparents and her mother had when she was growing up. Once a year, the family traveled to famous vineyards to purchase wine that was stored in the cellars, typically aged for five years or more. For special occasions, a reserve from one of the best Chilean vineyards was chosen.

While Allende's stepfather was stationed in Turkey on a diplomatic mission, her mother found that good quality wine was difficult to find. A French diplomat taught Panchita how to add port to red wine and to add sherry to white wine to save a bad wine when you have no other choices available. He also said that one should always serve the good wines first and save the bad for later, when the guests will not care or notice as much. At the feast when Jesus turned water into wine, the master of the feast commented on the same, age-old practice, indicating that the wine that Jesus created was actually the better wine.

Recent research indicates that wine drunk in moderation and with regularity reduces wear on the heart, elevates levels of HDL cholesterol (the good kind), and cleans the arteries; effects that folklore has taught us about for centuries.

All wines are sensual, even the cheapest, most easily attainable. The varieties are infinite and are influenced by the region in which they are produced, the types of fruit used, the process of fermentation, the year, hour of harvest, wood used for the barrel, and temperature.

Wine brings out the flavor of the meal, and a different wine should be introduced with each course. Ideally, white wine should be served first, then two or three varieties of red. The reds should be from the same type or from the same region. The youngest wine should be served first, followed by older wines or better labels. These are the rules of etiquette regarding wine, but Allende cautions readers to use extreme moderation when serving wine with an erotic dinner to prevent your lover from becoming comatose while still at the table.

Readers who still have questions about wine selection are encouraged to frequent wine boutiques or specialty shops where wine experts can assist in selections to compliment the menu.



The Spirit of Wine Analysis

Though wine has a rich and varied history, Allende chooses not to use historical references and anecdotes in this chapter like she has in previous chapters. One possible reason for this change is the fact that there is too much information from which to choose and the research would be ongoing. Instead, she relies on personal anecdotes like those about the wine cellars of her childhood and memories from the family's time in Turkey.

The rest of the chapter highlights some very helpful tips about wine selection and serving. A minimal amount of research is indicated in the details about the effects of wine on health, but the majority of the chapter is practical information designed to make erotic meals more successful. This chapter exhibits a sense of the practical which is absent in many of the immediately preceding chapters.



Liquors

Liquors Summary

Alcohol was first used for medicinal purposes, before antiseptics or anesthesia were developed. Alcohol, in moderation, produces feelings of well-being, but in great quantities becomes destructive. Even some animals and birds purposely become drunk on fermented fruits. Arabs developed the technique of distillation.

In ancient times, the Greek and Roman gods of wine, ecstasy, and eroticism figured prominently in society, with many festivals in their honor. In the Bible, God punished Sodom and Gomorrah for their orgies in the streets, all but Lot. Lot, the only just man, was allowed to escape after offering his two virgin daughters to an angry mob. Following his escape, the same daughters got him drunk in order to seduce him and have his children. Lot was said to be drunk out of his mind and unaware of what he was doing, but if that's the case, the wine did not have its usual effect, that of causing temporary impotence.

In a number of cultures around the world, alcohol is the base of some very unusual cocktails. In Taiwan, alcohol is mixed with snake blood and sugar, in China a few baby cockroaches are mixed into sake, and in Malaysia swigs of whiskey are alternated with draughts of rattlesnake blood.

Miki Shima, a friend of Allende's, told her of sitting in the freezing, Colorado cold eating elk sausage and raw buffalo liver and drinking Black Dog, a mixture of whiskey, tobacco juice, and gunpowder. According to Shima, the first swallow eliminated his awareness of the cold, the second recovered memories of his deepest yearnings, and the third produced fantastic visions of all of the beautiful women he had known in his lifetime.

Liquors frequently come into or go out of style. In the sixties and seventies, martinis were popular. In the eighties, popularity fell to white wine. In the nineties, kirsch was preferred. Any alcohol is perceived as being of a better quality when served in good crystal.

The remaining two pages of the chapter list liquors with strong reputations as aphrodisiacs. The same as with previous lists in the book, unusual items, such as absinthe and parfait amour, are included with timeless favorites, such as champagne, brandy, and vodka. For each of the twelve liquors included, readers are provided with details regarding the drink's history and development.

Liquors Analysis

This chapter includes another of Allende's meandering tangents. One page into the chapter, readers are reminded of Jesus turning water to wine, which is related, but from there, readers are reminded of the story of Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah, which is



tangential at best. The mention of alcohol is late in the story, and, by then, readers have forgotten where the story is leading. Many other stories from the Bible involving alcohol could be used to demonstrate the aphrodisiac qualities of alcohol much more effectively than this one. Aside from that tangent, the chapter is one that had to be included by its very nature. Alcohol and sexual pursuits are often linked together in many societies as evident in advertising, television, and even everyday conversations.

Interesting to note is the fact that, although alcohol can have an opposite effect if consumed in excess, it is still touted as an aphrodisiac.



Love Philters

Love Philters Summary

This chapter highlights a number of love potions created from unusual ingredients. Some of the tamer aphrodisiac ingredients include common plants such as licorice, sarsaparilla, green oats and ginseng. Spanish Fly, a cockroach species, initially creates sexual excitement in both men and women, but ultimately leads to lightheadedness and even insanity. A prized philter is made of rhinoceros horn, ground to a powder and ingested or rubbed into minor abrasions on the skin.

Love potions can be created to treat a variety of issues, including jealousy, infidelity, indifference, resistance, and alienation.

Marijuana and cocaine are both stimulants that have been used for many centuries to break down inhibitions and to excite the imagination and the senses.

Tantric rites made use of a mixture of hashish, honey, and ambergris to excite and enlighten the lovers. Tantra is a cult that explores the possibilities of eroticism as a path to illumination. Its goal is to transform the libido into spiritual energy. The closest Allende ever came to a tantric experience was a time that she was buying gloves in Venice, Italy.

Mandrake root was one of the most common ingredients in love philters during the Middle Ages. The plant was said to be sown at the foot of gallows from the sperm of men hanged or tortured on the wheel. The power of this plant developed more from magic rather than from science. Machiavelli used the myths about this plant to develop the thesis of a comedy he wrote.

The chapter ends with the ingredients included in the witches' cauldron of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, a philter of questionable purpose.

Love Philters Analysis

In her dedication to thoroughness, Allende is testing the patience of herself and her readers by this point in the book. She, herself, claims that the list of aphrodisiacs was longer than she anticipated and that she is becoming bored. Readers will agree that the discussion about actual, edible ingredients was engaging and interesting, but now that she has moved on to less commonly ingested ingredients, the text is becoming a bit fantastic.

It is still well-organized, with clear descriptions and details though, which helps readers stick with it, and the ability with which she tells the story about the tantric glove salesman reminds readers of why they are still reading.



The Language of Flowers

The Language of Flowers Summary

The use of flowers, as a form of communication without words, is centuries old. In spite of its long history, the modern-day Western world does not pay attention to such details as the type, color, or fragrance of flowers as a form of communication.

Although specific flowers symbolize specific emotions, experiences, and expectations, not many people are aware of them in modern times. In spite of this, Allende still sees forget-me-nots as a symbol of her exile from her homeland. When fleeing from Chile following the military coup of 1973, Allende took some dirt from her garden with the intent of planting forget-me-nots in the unknown country she escaped to. The flowers did not grow well in the Caribbean climate and now always remind her of exile.

The Language of Flowers Analysis

An interesting encyclopedia of flower symbolism, this chapter does not deliver what is expected. Readers hoping for a discussion of the use of flowers in food and modern day recipes will not find them here, though flowers are used extensively in some cuisines.

The symbolism of flowers based on color and temperament are useful in modern literary analysis, but as Allende suggests, very much ignored in modern times.



From the Earth With Love

From the Earth With Love Summary

The sensual qualities of vegetables depend on their freshness. The fresher the vegetables are, the more likely they are to entice an intended lover. For obvious reasons, the best aphrodisiac vegetables are phallic-shaped or round with fleshy, moist textures, with sensual colors of skin and orifices and lingering scents.

Robert Shekter, illustrator of this book, is a vegetarian. The recipe for his vegetarian, aphrodisiac ratatouille is included at the end of this short chapter.

From the Earth with Love Analysis

By their very nature as natural gifts from the earth, vegetables are aphrodisiac. However, in our more urban society, the sensual characteristics of vegetables are somewhat diminished by the time they reach the grocery stores. Nonetheless, the inclusion of Shekter's recipe at the end of the chapter is a tribute to the passion and power inherent in the simplicity of vegetables.



Subjective List of Aphrodisiac Vegetables

Subjective List of Aphrodisiac Vegetables Summary

This chapter is a list of vegetables that are widely considered aphrodisiac. The list is arranged alphabetically and contains information regarding the origin of each vegetable as well as the symbolism and reasoning behind its inclusion in this chapter.

Subjective List of Aphrodisiac Vegetables Analysis

Allende begins the chapter with an apology for any mistakes or omissions that might exist in this list. Information, though plentiful, is confusing at best, and at times downright contradictory.

This chapter leaves readers with the impression that the erotic qualities of vegetables rest largely in tradition and habit, not in actual scientific evidence.



Colomba in Nature

Colomba in Nature Summary

This chapter is Allende's storytelling at its best. The story is a true story about a friend of Allende's, a large, vegetarian woman named "Colomba." Colomba is pursued by a married, college art professor. Finally, he invites her for a pastoral picnic in order to make his move on her. He prepares all of her favorite vegetarian dishes and takes a blanket, pillows, and insect repellent. Over the course of the meal, he teases and tempts her, finally convincing her to remove her clothing so that he may apply the insect repellent for her. Colomba does so, but soon thereafter an impatient bull begins charging them to convince them to leave his pasture. In all, the romantic adventure was a bust and ended in disaster. They returned to their picnic spot after the bull went away, only to discover that someone had stolen all their clothes and the professor's car as well. The only thing remaining by the weeping willow was Colomba's Italian straw hat.

Colomba in Nature Analysis

Allende takes full advantage of the opportunity to tell a good story, one that is prompted by discussion in the previous two chapters about vegetables. Along with the vegetable references in the vegetarian cuisine, there are also references to the professor's cucumber, and also references to famous erotic paintings mixed into the story to add interest and to highlight the connection between vegetables and eroticism.



Finally...

Finally... Summary

Appetite and sex are the great motivators of history and all of creation is one long uninterrupted cycle of digestion and fertility. These are the ideas that have driven the creation of this book.

In this final essay on appetite and sex, Allende admits that she believes in love at first sight, and then carries it a step further and marries. Allende writes of the role of love in her life and her hopes of maintaining love and sexual relations for the duration of her life.

Allende reminds readers that the bond between food and pleasure is the first thing learned at birth when a baby begins nursing at its mother's breast. The greatest aphrodisiac of all is love. Without the passion and attraction inherent in love, nothing can be perceived as aphrodisiac, regardless of appearance or content.

Finally... Analysis

The final chapter of this book is written in the form of an essay. It can be read on its own, independent of the rest of the work and still make sense. Although it is the summarizing statement for the book, it stands alone as well. As with the earlier chapters, Allende blends personal experience into the fabric of the essay, telling of her motivation in marrying her husband and explaining the success of their marriage.

Readers come away from the work with a thorough understanding of the topic: the connection between appetites of all kinds, passion, and the senses.



Panchita's Aphrodisiac Recipes

Panchita's Aphrodisiac Recipes Summary

The final section of the book contains all of the recipes that Allende's mother, Panchita, created to be used and in tandem with the reading of the book. Recipes include sauces, hors d'oeuvres, soups, appetizers, main courses, and desserts.



Characters

Isabel Allende

In the autobiographical vein that several critics have pointed out in examination of Allende's works, the author herself is a character in this memoir/ cookbook/list of aphrodisiacs. She introduces herself at the beginning as a woman at the doorstep of her fifties, "the last hour of dusk," in which she reflects on her life and her past "relationship with food and eroticism." However, Allende's larger focus is the power of sensory experience: she states that her memories are closely "associated with the senses." The reason for writing *Aphrodite*, she explains, is a celebration of her own sensual pleasures reawakening after a three-year period of mourning the death of her only daughter. Allende writes that a dream of diving into a pool filled with her favorite dessert, rice pudding, signaled her return to the joy of living; the book about the connection between food and sex naturally followed.

Allende uses examples from her private life in explaining how she developed her Epicurean philosophy of cooking and lovemaking: she recalls the scents of her childhood, the amorous and culinary adventures and teachings of her family members, erotic experiences from her youth to the recent days, and past and present sensual perceptions. The first-person narrative of *Aphrodite* allows the author/ narrator to sound didactic and sympathetic at the same time. Although both technical and spiritual advice for better cooking and lovemaking abound throughout the text, Allende "jumps in" often to remind the reader of her main point - that the goal is to have fun with both of these enterprises. Personal anecdotes are very useful in bringing humor to an instructional text: Allende admits to her many culinary disasters to ease the reader's way through a list of sometimes complex recipes. She justifies her interest in these topics saying that, at her age, most couples need a bit of help in the department of sensual excitement.

Allende is candid about the personal view of her book: she openly and repeatedly declares her own preferences in selecting recipes, literary excerpts, and aphrodisiacs of the world for inclusion in *Aphrodite*. In the chapter entitled "The Orgy," she offers advice by imagining how she would prepare a perfect bacchanal; also, she provides the recipe for her appropriately named "Reconciliation Soup" that she prepares for her lover "after some terrible fight."

Finally, Allende discusses her romantic and marital experiences, making some generalizations about the erotic and entertaining factors in both. She offers her own recollections and wisdom derived from two marriages and several love affairs, concluding that love is an indispensable aphrodisiac - but, until the end, writing from her own viewpoint is the only reliable basis for her claims.



Carmen Balcells

Allende gives her literary agent a place in the "Mea Culpa" section as well, thanking her for the support given for *Aphrodite* and for making her famous Catalan stew whenever the author visits her in Barcelona. Balcells is another hard-core chef, a confident ruler of her kitchen where, "wrapped in her apron, a kerchief around her head and a string of curses upon her lips," she creates miracles of aphrodisiac cuisine. The labor of several hours is always served on a richly embroidered tablecloth, among crystal goblets full of the best wine, in china of superb porcelain and with antique heavy silverware. Allende says the effort is worth it: "We eat up until our souls rise up sighing and the most hidden virtues of our wretched humanity are renewed as that blessed soup seeps into our bones, sweeping away with one stroke the fatigue of all the disappointments gathered along the road of life and restoring to us the uncontrollable sensuality of our twenties." Generous in her cooking as in her profession, Balcells provides her recipe for the Catalan soup in the chapter "The Orgy."

John Wayne Bobbitt

Bobbitt is the American husband whose wife, "fed up with violence and abuse," made international news when she cut off his penis. Allende illustrates the civilization's obsession with the male sexual organ, describing how the police on the case diligently searched the highway for the amputated piece which was immediately sewn back on and can now be seen in the pornographic movies starring Bobbitt.

Napoleon Bonaparte

A fan of the female scent au naturelle, the French ruler wrote to his beloved Josephine asking her not to bathe her private parts "in the weeks prior to his return from the battlefield." Josephine also relied on the seductive fragrance of violets to charm her lover.

The Butcher

In a story by the French writer Alina Reyes, a man purchases goat testicles from his butcher every week in order to "maintain his extraordinary sexual powers." Allende mentions the story to emphasize the reverence with which people treat the male organs.

Casanova

Allende describes the aphrodisiac power of oysters with an illustration of the famous lover's technique of seducing young novices by passing oysters from mouth to mouth. Casanova was also a big admirer of a woman's natural, private smell, and knew that the whispered word was a potent aphrodisiac.



Catherine the Great

The Russian Empress reportedly had "prodigious vitality" and an insatiable sexual appetite. Legend accuses her of designing a harness for a horse in her bedroom.

Christian Saints

Allende cites the self-punishment of the saints of the Middle Ages, whose abomination of the flesh as evil illustrates the extreme separation of body and soul in Christianity.

Cleopatra

The Egyptian queen appears in Allende's book as a masterful seductress who used many sensuous approaches to create her feminine fame and power. Cleopatra soaked the sails of her ship in Damascus rose scent, which announced her arrival from miles away and served as her signature fragrance; the scent was a strong political statement during her visit to Rome, where Caesar's opponents were showered with the fragrance which soon became the fashion worn by all aristocratic women except Caesar's wife. The seductive queen also drove her lovers crazy by letting them lick the soft mixture of honey and ground almonds from her intimate parts.

Colomba

Allende's plump friend Colomba was almost seduced by her art professor during a picnic - almost, because a bull chased the unfortunate lovers into the woods and spoiled the professor's plan. The picnic included some highly aphrodisiac dishes, as the seducer wanted to charm his lady by indulging her gluttony.

Comtesse du Barry

Marie Jeanne Isabel Becu du Barry, a French courtesan from the beginning of the eighteenth century, turned orgy into an art; according to the author, her bacchanals were social events that shocked the aristocracy and gave her a reputation as a degenerate. Allende calls Madame du Barry "a rebellious and fearless spirit." The Comtesse died at the age of twenty-four.

The Friend

Allende warns her readers against extreme measures in spicing up one's love life, and tells the story of a friend who, on a wonderful date with a woman, went to see her bedroom to "get an idea of the layout and plot his strategy" but ended up running away in fear, because the lady had a trapeze above the bed.



The Gigolo

The author recalls her conversation with a young male prostitute she met at an airport. The Gigolo does not rely on aphrodisiacs; everything is done naturally.

The Glove Vendor

Allende recalls a sensuous tactile experience she had years ago, when the clerk in a shop helped her buy gloves and aroused her with the touch of his hands on hers. The author lists that incident as an example of Tantric sexuality.

The Grandfather

Allende describes the patriarch of her family in childhood as a man of tradition, who did not like changes in the menu and made the entire family suffer the brewings of their unimaginative cook for years.

The Grandmother

Allende describes an incident in which her grandmother, usually an otherworldly-looking creature completely uninterested in the food on her plate, passed out when an admirer offered her a feast where the main course was a pair of guinea pigs, "intact from the tips of their stiff whiskers to the toenails of their tiny paws, encased in [a] shroud of glassy, shivering gelatin."

Hannah

Hannah is Allende's friend, whose disappointment at the looks of her blind date turned into fascination and powerful attraction when the man cooked an amazing meal for her. Like the author, Hannah serves to prove the argument that men who cook are irresistibly sexy.

Howard Hughes

In her argument that a modern obsession with variety often deprives people of the ultimate sensuality, Allende states that the famous playboy and millionaire died of "poverty of the senses and spirit," wasted from hunger and terrified of germs, alone in a motel room and looking like a concentration camp prisoner.



The Husband

Allende describes falling in love with her second husband despite all odds, mainly because of the skill with which he cooked for her the day after they met.

King Solomon

Allende mentions the old king's epic promiscuity in relation to the aphrodisiac power of variety. She also notes his enjoyment of spices and scents.

Lady Onogoro

A poet in the Court of Heian at the end of the tenth century, Lady Onogoro wrote outstanding and imaginative erotic stories. Allende gives the full text of "Death by Perfume," in which a deceived woman seduces her lover by applying scents and spices to his body, only to poison him with the deadly ones. The author also retells her story "The Cold Fish," in which a carp makes love to a young woman with more success than her human lover does.

Panchita Llona

Llona is the author's mother and the cook who provided (and perfected) most of the recipes included throughout and at the end of the book. Allende writes that her mother has never served the same meal twice, and can decipher any secret recipe by simply tasting the dish. The author further describes Llona's tremendous culinary abilities in an anecdote about their "mortifying" restaurant visits: the thorough chef would look at what other guests were eating ("sometimes so closely that she alarms the diners"), carefully inspect the menu, torture the waiter "with malicious questions that force him to go to the kitchen and return with written answers," make everyone order a different thing on the menu, take a Polaroid picture of the dinner, and then taste each meal so that she can later recreate it in her own kitchen. Llona is mentioned throughout the narrative in the author's memories of childhood as a stern overseeing influence who believes in "impeccable and honest execution," versus Allende's "creative bungling."

Llona provides the recipe for the elaborate delicacy from Easter Island, the curanto en olla, as well as the recipes in the last third of the book. She once spent weeks traveling from coast to coast in search of the authentic bouillabaisse recipe, which she finally obtained (but "how she got it is something she will never reveal as long as her husband is alive").



Lucasta

A renowned poisoner in the Roman Empire, Lucasta used the aphrodisiac irresistibility of mushrooms to commit many a murder during orgies.

Marquis de Sade

The ever-curious Marquis, whose name became a synonym for extreme sexual experimentation, reportedly ended up in jail for using a so-called love philter. Certain ladies, to whom the Marquis had given the stimulant known as the Spanish fly, almost died and experienced rather unpleasant side effects: they "fell to the floor and gnawed table legs," reports Allende.

Lola Montez

A famous nineteenth-century courtesan invented a seductive dance she called the tarantula; the performance, in whose raptures she would remove most of her veils, was so popular that nobody questioned Lola's claim that she was an aristocratic Spanish dancer.

Anais Nin

An early 20th-century writer who, like fellow writer Henry Miller, was paid by the page in the 1940s. They rebelled against their client ("the Collector") for asking them to "cut the poetry" and write pornography instead of erotica in their stories. Allende includes Nin's letter to the Collector as her own manifesto of sensuality.

Tio Ramon

The author's stepfather, her mother's second husband, often went through thorough preparations to create a love nest in the small apartment where the family lived in Beirut. Allende's childhood imagination was awakened by the mysterious activity behind the closed doors, where her stepfather romanced his wife in as much luxury as he could afford.

Scheherazade

The storyteller of the Arabic epic *One Thousand and One Nights*, Scheherazade is a young and wise woman who saves herself with the seductive powers of narrative. A sultan, catching his wife with another upon his sudden return from battle, takes revenge on women by possessing a virgin every night and killing her in the morning, before she has a chance to betray him. Scheherazade puts a stop to the bloody practice by telling the sultan a story and promptly stopping in the morning; the cruel monarch, in eager



anticipation to hear how the story develops, lets her live another night - then another, until (after 1,001 nights of stories) the ritual murder is abolished. Allende uses the story as an illustration for the aphrodisiac nature of good storytelling.

Robert Shekter

Allende introduces Shekter, along with the other "accomplices" in the creation of her book, in a section entitled "Mea Culpa of the Culpable"; Shekter is the illustrator of *Aphrodite*. His sketches are the characters that emphasize the protagonists of *Aphrodite*: "bold nymphs and mischievous satyrs" that appear throughout the book.

Shekter contributes to the narrative with his memory of an orgy he once attended at a summer house in Sweden, with very little food but plenty of alcohol and marijuana, where participants courteously coupled amongst each other between discussions of Ingmar Bergman's films. A vegetarian ever since he accidentally shot a duck when he was a pilot in World War II, Shekter also provides the aphrodisiac recipe for a vegetable ratatouille.

Miki Shima

Allende's good friend and Japanese doctor, Shima tells her about the famous Japanese pillow-books - ancient erotic manuals closely studied by the male prostitutes in his country.

Tabra

Tabra is Allende's adventurous friend who, in a letter, describes her sensual experience of a feast she attended one night in Egypt.

The Tao Priestess

The most powerful female Tao master claimed that "reality is achieved only through sexual ecstasy." The legend says that she absorbed the male energy of her followers and remained beautiful and young as a seventeen-year-old, until her death at the age of five hundred. Allende tells the tale to depict the connection of carnal and spiritual bliss in some belief systems.

Aunt Teresa

Allende's angelic aunt, who "died with buds of embryonic wings upon her shoulder blades," is preserved in the author's memory along with the scent and taste of violet candy she always gave the children.



Diane de Poitiers

King Henry II of France fell madly in love with this lady, whose success was attributed to her skill in the technique of kabbazah ("squeezing and suctioning contractions of the muscles of their intimate parts").



Themes

Aesthetics

Allende often discusses the concept of physical beauty in her writing, sometimes to emphasize its importance in visual attractiveness, other times to explore the social and cultural differences in what one considers beautiful. In her postscript to several erotic tales of yore, the author laments the modern fascination with the slim and bony female body, recalling the "friendlier" times when a woman's curves were a great feminine asset to her beauty and not a disease called cellulite. However, she adds, the definition of what is erotic is different for each person; her story "Colomba in the Nature" features a man's lust after an obese woman.

In both sex and food, the aesthetic appeal is as crucial for evoking the appetite as any entreaty directed toward the other senses. In the chapter "At First Sight," the author reveals the secret seduction of the flesh according to her grandfather: "Temptation does not lie in nakedness. . .but in the transparent or slinky." Allende claims that partial clothing is provocative and mysterious because it reveals a lot, but excites the spectator's imagination by what it doesn't show. Other bodily adornments used to attract potential lovers include "makeup, hairstyling, jewels, tattoos, and even decorative scars." Also, sexual aesthetics depend on the element of experimentation and surprise: in the chapter "The Spice Is in Variety," the author discusses various decorations used for erotic purposes, especially those used to "sensualize" the setting like Cupid-shaped candles, colorful goblets, satin tablecloths, and evocative plates.

As for the aesthetic appeal of food, Allende presents her mother ("who primps over her table as much as her own attire") as a true culinary artist, always managing to present a dish in an appetizing way and tastefully decorated. According to the author, aphrodisiac meals gather much power from "the association between the shapes and colors of food and those of the body." Allende gives an example of suggestive dishes such as "long, firm asparagus served with two new potatoes at the base of the stem, or two peach halves with raspberry nipples in creme Chantilly."

Flesh vs. Spirit

In her exploration of the relationship between the mind and the body in eroticism and cuisine, Allende discusses the Judeo-Christian division of "the individual into body and soul, and love into profane and divine" as a reason for the shunning of culinary and sensual pleasure in Western culture. After defining aphrodisiacs as "the bridge between gluttony and lust," the author argues that Christian condemnation of both aphrodisiacs and sensuality in general comes from the belief that "the road to gluttony leads straight to lust and, if traveled a little farther, to the loss of one's soul." According to her classification, Lutherans, Calvinists, and "other aspirants to Christian perfection" therefore deny themselves culinary pleasures. Catholics, however, "purified by



confession, free to go and sin again," are unhindered in their enjoyment of the delicatessen. Allende cites the expression "a cardinal's tidbit," used to describe something delicious, as support for her claim.

The author further discusses the Christian division between the carnal and the spiritual during the Middle Ages, when any sensual enjoyment was labeled evil and the Church preached that suffering in this life was the only certain way of achieving a pleasurable eternity. Allende cites the example of those who found virtue and got a title of sainthood in exercises of extreme self-deprivation, equivalent to physical torture.

On the other hand, the author lists some cultures that have embraced the concepts of body and soul as unified in the human pursuit of fulfillment, seen as consisting of both sensual and spiritual elevation. *Aphrodite* contains several references to the Tantric meditation based on sexual ecstasy, the Tibetan practice in which copulation serves as spiritual exercise, and certain Taoist monks who preached that erotic energy is a path to illumination of the soul.

Allende also reflects on the effects of the mind-body binary in the contemporary culture, in which the art of experiencing sensual pleasure has been lost. One example from the author's neighborhood in California is a "recent rash of workshops for teaching what any orangutan knows without instruction: touching oneself and touching others."



Style

Metaphor

Food and sex are interchanged in metaphoric references throughout the text of *Aphrodite*, as Allende persistently connects food and lovemaking in the language of her recipes and erotic tales. The link between sexual and culinary enjoyment, she claims, is in the senses: people experience both food and sex as physical and sensual pleasures. For example, Allende describes a couple having an elegant dinner while, in their thoughts, they make love "devouring each other" on the table. She also recounts the adventure of her plump friend Colomba, a woman whose "delicious flesh" drove her seducer mad with lust.

Allende lays the ground for her metaphors by explaining that many foods gain their aphrodisiac reputation on the basis of their resemblance to bodily features. Peach and apricot are "perhaps the most sensual of all fruits, for their delectable perfume, soft and juicy texture, and flesh color, an eloquent representation of the female private parts"; strawberry and raspberry are "delicate fruit nipples"; oysters in their shell "suggest delicate vulvae"; and asparagus, carrot, and leek gather their seductive merit from their phallic shape. Also, seafood is considered aphrodisiac because "the human body, especially during sexual excitation, emits a marine odor similar to the smell of crustaceans and fish." These are examples by which visual, tactile, and olfactory properties of one have become evocative of another. In accordance with these comparisons, Allende's language in describing the culinary-carnal connection often has a double meaning: some of the book's chapters are suggestively entitled "Forbidden Herbs" and "Forbidden Fruits," "The Spice Is in Variety," and "With the Tip of the Tongue."

The author also acknowledges the insuperable erotic power of language cited in the legend of Scheherazade, "the prodigious storyteller of Araby who for 1,001 nights captivated a cruel sultan with her golden tongue" by driving him wild with anticipation of the plot development of her stories. The narrative can also arouse amorous anticipation and fuel desire with descriptions of the mundane that allude to the sensual. Allende advises her readers to use the aphrodisiac powers of metaphorically seductive language in the kitchen by giving erotic-sounding names to otherwise ordinary dishes: a boring chicken becomes a sensuous meal when called Valentino, the name that has become an alluring metaphor for sexual temptation.

Humor

Allende carefully weaves her tales of culinary and carnal pleasures with a consistent thread of humor, which comforts the reader just at the moment when recipes begin to look too elaborate and sexual positions too challenging. Some critics have noticed and praised her down-to-earth, easy manner of dealing with touchy issues in food and sex:



in a discussion of obesity, Allende includes "Hymn to Cellulite" and shares her personal grief over the fact that feminine curves have fallen out of fashion. In relation to male sexual performance, Allende's suggestions range from eating goat testicles to ingesting the powder of rhinoceros' horn, all in the light of the early proclamation: "As soon as men conceived the curious idea that their superiority over women is based on that organ of their anatomy, they began to have problems."

Every page of *Aphrodite* contains humorous references to the many elements that determine what is acceptable and desirable in food and sex. Allende mentions the Christian division of love into divine and profane, taken to extreme when legs of Victorian dinner tables were covered to prevent impure thoughts, and when virtuous couples would make love through a cross-shaped opening in the wife's nightgown. The author comments that "only the Vatican could imagine something that pornographic!"

Throughout the book, the author stays in touch with her readers by avoiding any pretense that she is either a masterful cook or a grand seductress; she says that sauces are a very useful part of one's cooking because they cover up many mistakes ("I have vast experience in culinary catastrophe," she admits). Allende further describes her research for the book with a self-mocking attitude: in an attempt to test some aphrodisiac herbs, she gave her husband nervous shakes that lasted for days. Also, she argues against exhaustive recipes of full menus that often tire the cook beyond the powers of aphrodisiac revival: after preparing one such elaborate meal and eating it, Allende "fell fast asleep by the dishwasher, clutching a sponge, while the man of the moment. . . awaited in the bedroom, working a crossword puzzle."

The advice Allende repeatedly offers is that both sex and food are enjoyed best when approached with humor: "You're not trying to reach perfection but to laugh along the way." After all, even her elaborate list of culinary aphrodisiacs only worked on her friends who were told the meal was supposed to inspire their sensuality; Allende admits that desire is really in the mind and that, "as in the case of black magic, it is a good idea to notify the participants" in order to make aphrodisiacs work.



Historical Context

Food in the 1990s

The 1990s consumer generation in the United States was heavily influenced by the 1970s health-consciousness wave that created huge new markets and considerably raised nutritional awareness. Pesticides and food additives came under scrutiny in the 1970s resulting in the epoch-setting removal of DDT and cyclamates containing artificial sweetener from the market; nutrition became a hot topic in science as well as popular culture. Numerous books were published about the importance of pure food, which resulted in many new health food stores stacked with organic produce. The movement has proliferated since; many of the products introduced in the 1970s became securely established in the 1990s marketplace and eating habits. However, the trend did not expand beyond a certain slice of the market, and has had arguable influence on the overall concept of food consumerism in the U.S. Healthy eating has not led to reduced or sustainable consumption.

In the 1990s, many authors and critics have noted the reverberating changes in the American attitude toward food. The issue of purity has in some cases developed into an obsession, taking on national proportions: in his article "A New Puritanism?", Craig Thompson writes that "American consumer culture is notorious for its Puritanical, self-abnegating, and hyper-controlling orientation toward food, and it is also a culture where junk food, sublimated advertising images of food erotica, obesity, and binge eating abound." Thompson further points out the contrast with other world cultures, especially the French, who "view eating in highly sensual and social terms and, in general, have a far more relaxed and unproblematic relation to food."

The difference between Americans and Europeans over foods has been revealed most markedly in the debate over genetically modified organisms (GMOs), foods that have been modified by agribusiness companies for certain qualities (a usual modification includes the ability to withstand heavy doses of a particular pesticide sold by the same company). French farmers have dumped such food on the highways in protest, and despite an intensive ad campaign, British consumers refuse to buy GMOs. Such grass-roots concern has prompted the European Union to demand labeling of foods as GMOs, a move that the U.S. dislikes immensely. Protests at the Seattle meeting of the World Trade Organization early in 2000 show that American consumers have begun questions GMOs as well. Meanwhile, farmers who grow foods "organically" continue to make healthy profits and increase market share.

Augusto Pinochet

A few months after the publication of Allende's book in 1998, former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet was arrested in London on charges of human rights violation. Pinochet came to power in Chile thanks to the 1973 military coup in which the Marxist



president Salvador Allende was killed, while his niece Isabel fled the country with her family. She wrote about the national upheaval in her debut novel, *The House of the Spirits*. In the years since the author's exile, her country was transformed from a developing socialist nation to a corrupt democracy of privatization under right-wing military dictatorship. Chilean political crisis, at a high at the time of Pinochet's arrest, was somewhat resolved in 2000 with the election of a socialist liberal president, Ricardo Lagos.

In 1998, Pinochet was accused of the imprisonment, torture, and murder of thousands of Chilean citizens under his reign, as well as assassinations of his opponents abroad. His arrival to power in 1973 was backed by the United States, financed by the C.I.A., and marked by summary executions. In an unheard-of legal move, the military regime protected itself from prosecution by rewriting the Chilean Constitution and giving itself absolute immunity.

When the political left began to struggle harder against the dictatorship during the 1980s, the regime negotiated a plebiscite with the opposition by which Pinochet would retain power as the military commander if voted out of the presidency; this happened in 1988. Also, the new government was both elected and run under the terms of the dictator's rewritten Constitution, while the secret police and the military were still shielded by amnesty and the judicial system still run as before Pinochet's descent from power. The cosmetic changes did nothing to improve the country's failing economy nor its sink-or-swim market: in the mid-1990s study by the World Bank, Chile was ranked seventh-worst among 65 countries in terms of most unequal distribution of income. However, the international media have much hope for the future of Chile, under the newly elected government, and in planning the trial against Pinochet.

Monica Lewinsky

At the end of the twentieth century, America faced a constitutional crisis due to the sexual relations between President Clinton and White House intern Monica Lewinsky. The Independent Counsel, already investigating the Clintons' Whitewater deal, turned to scrutinize sex in the White House. Although it found no evidence to justify impeachment, the U.S. House of Congress voted along party lines to send the matter to trial before the Senate. The Senate reprimanded the President but did not impeach him for sexual impropriety.



Literary Heritage

Latin American Vanguard

Under Spanish rule, the intellectual centers of Latin America were Lima and Mexico City. These two cities had to share intellectual capital with newly formed independent nations when the Spanish Empire ended. Those countries that encouraged literature as part of nation-building, like Chile, leapt to the fore while nations like Paraguay became backwaters. Due to this encouragement, it is not surprising that when a unique Latin American voice began to emerge around World War I, Chileans would play a major role. This developmental period is called the Vanguard.

Chile's Gabriela Mistral was a member of the Vanguard. She followed the example of Peru's Cesar Vallejo and concerned herself with the oppressed. She became the first Latin American to win the Nobel Prize when it was awarded to her in 1945. Fellow Chilean Pablo Neruda would follow her in 1971. Neruda was also socio-politically oriented but he is better known now for his love poems beginning in 1924 with *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*.

El Boom

During the 1960s, the literature of Latin America experienced the height of "El Boom," a revolution that broke away from the nineteenth-century tradition and introduced the modern Latin novel. The result was magic realism, a literary movement that addressed social issues but kept them distorted and veiled in "magical" symbolism. Its founder, Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier, was the first to use the Latin American folk tradition of myth and fantasy to describe the political and historical problems of his day. Other writers of magic realism include the Brazilian Jorge Amado, the Colombian Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and the Argentinians Julio Cortazar and Jorge Luis Borges. The Garcia Marquez generation focuses on the epic and heroic universal "Truths."

One of the first successful female novelists from Latin America, Allende is often included among these authors as a magic realist (her 1982 debut, *The House of Spirits*, is often compared to Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*). However, some critics see her work as a subversion and rejection of the magic realist tradition, since she addresses current issues directly and makes clear references to contemporary political events in her work. Also, Allende's writing approach is often labeled extremely feminine, due to the author's use of the woman's point of view and depiction of the female experience. This literary style, critics argue, places her work in the postmodern opus of personal, down-to-earth, body- and relationship-related works, such as the novels of Diamela Eltit, Albalucia Angel, and Sylvia Molloy, the Latin American female novelists conscious of feminism and post-structuralism.



Critical Overview

The critical reception of *Aphrodite* was mostly positive, although several critics pointed out that Allende's writing style has become quite light and overwhelmingly autobiographical. Some have described the book as a literary incarnation of the author herself: in a review for *The San Francisco Chronicle*, Patricia Holt writes that, like Allende, the work "has an eloquence and underlying ribaldry that lends an air of sensuality to every event of the day." Barbara Fisher emphasizes the book's "self-indulgent memoir" quality in a review for the *Boston Globe*, commenting that *Aphrodite* is "too much written by, for, and about the lusty and lovely Isabel Allende." Michele Roberts of the *Times* comments that the book is not "meant to be swallowed too seriously; these are tidbits for grazers; amuse-gueules in the French tradition" and adds that "in one sense this is a manual for women in the old style: how to keep your husband interested."

On the other hand, in a review for the *Boston Globe*, Fred Kaplan sees *Aphrodite* as Allende's "escapist lark [which] restored her contact with the pulse of storytelling, whose links to food and sex are fundamental." Another review for *People Weekly* praises the delight with which the author approaches her topics: "Sex and food, once celebrated as two of life's great joys, suffer a lot of bad press these days. Genuine epidemics, coupled with monthly findings of new things that are bad for us, have pushed otherwise happy souls into programs of agonizing denial and, in severe instances, abstinence. Thankfully, in this sophisticated defense of pleasure, [Allende] puts the joy back into eating and loving with all the panache that marks the best of her fiction."

Several critics have observed Allende's broad inclusion of topics in her discussion of aphrodisiacs, summed up in her statement that "all of creation is one long uninterrupted cycle of digestion and fertility." The book's subjects vary greatly in significance and origin, just as the listed aphrodisiacs go from the familiar (peaches, eggplant, and ginseng) to the unusual (canary tongues, virgin's urine, and goat testicles). Elaine Kalman Naves of the *Montreal Gazette* calls the work "a piquant smorgasbord" that includes everything from "arcane information" about Napoleon's sexual fixation on the scent of Josephine's intimate parts, to "sensuous and sensory writing" about the taste of the author's first kiss, to "homespun philosophy" (Allende's conclusion that love is the ultimate aphrodisiac) and "engaging whimsy," such as detailed instructions on how to prepare an orgy. In the same vein, Leslie Chess Feller in the *New York Times* describes *Aphrodite* as a plethora of "forbidden fruits, orgies, whispers, pheromones, erotic poetry and Indian tantric rites"; while Deepti Hajela for *Associated Press* cites the practical uses of the lessons from Allende's book: "Looking to impress with your knowledge at your next cocktail party? Mention that saffron is considered a stimulant or that fenugreek is thought to provoke sensual dreams. Trying to catch the interest of someone you've got your eye on? Prepare some harem turkey or a few soused pears, and who knows where it could lead."

Yet, according to Naves, as in all of Allende's books, the power of family ties is at the crux of *Aphrodite* - especially "the profound professional as well as emotional



attachment between mother and daughter." Naves claims that the "delightfully idiosyncratic non-fiction" is not as much about aphrodisiacs as it is about the "playful collaboration between Allende and her mother, Panchita Llonca, who is responsible for the recipes."

Most of the reviews of *Aphrodite* note the suggestively erotic illustrations done or selected by the author's friend Robert Shekter; among paintings of femmes fatales and delicious dishes are the tasteful sketches of Shekter's plump nymphs, flirtatious satyrs, and witches looming over aphrodisiac potions.

The style of Allende's prose also received praise from various critics for its tactful approach to the touchy subjects of sensual pleasures. The writer for the *Kirkus Review* states that "the graceful Allende doesn't kiss and tell. She is never crude or exhibitionistic, and she does not seek to shock her gentle readers"; her prose is "persuasively warm and inviting, but also down-to-earth." The reviewer commends Allende's skill in maintaining "the delicate relations between eros and writing," adding that her "tact amplifies the eros that pornography kills." Further, in the *New York Times* article, Roberts states that Allende's "humor and self-deprecation enliven her pages," but also that *Aphrodite* shows the author's aphrodisiac of choice in the obvious pleasure with which she writes: "Telling stories, playing verbal games and flirting with words like shuttlecocks, these are the real turn-on for Allende."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4
- Critical Essay #5



Critical Essay #1

Hubbell has an M.Litt. from the University of Aberdeen and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in History at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. In the following essay, he discusses the ways in which Aphrodite, far from being a lightweight pillow book, fits in with late-twentieth-century postmodernist texts.

Postmodernism, has been variously defined. Certainly, postmodernism takes the form of montage, the weaving together of information segments to create new narrative identities. For some it is the cultural logic implicit in late capitalism. Others see postmodernism as the condition which results from information floods and information economies. John Barth, in his "The Literature of Replenishment," thinks of postmodernism as a style of literature that replenishes. Each of these definitions can be applied to Allende.

According to some critics of modern Latin American literature, Allende's work belongs to the recently established category of female-written, personal, postmodern, and down-to-earth works, often related to the issues of body and relationships, and written in a tone self-conscious of feminism and post-structuralism. Other writers in this group include Diamela Eltit, Albalucia Angel, and Sylvia Molloy. Although Allende's *Aphrodite* escapes the confines of fiction and has not been included in the theoretical discourse of current literary traditions, in many ways it falls into the category of contemporary Latin American literature by women writers. With its mixture of autobiographical revelations, intimate tone, everyday issues, fantastic situations, and time- and world-travel in search of the secrets of aphrodisiacs, Allende's book embraces the postmodern tradition in a potpourri-style combination of recipes, erotica, and the numerous methods of research employed in the writing process.

Aphrodite: A Memoir of the Senses maintains a clearly defined feminine insight throughout the tone of the text: Allende's presence in her writing distinctly marks the point of view, the focus, the attitude, and the flow of the book. On several occasions, the author identifies herself as a representative of the female gender, more or less specified on the basis of ethnicity, age, and personal preferences. For example, in her assessment of culinary skill in men and women, she states that it is "fatal" for a woman to admit she can cook; however, men proficient in the kitchen are not only impressive, but irresistibly sexy as well. Allende describes the way she was smitten by her second husband when he prepared dinner for her, "an experience very few Latin American women have had" because "the machos of [their] continent consider any household activity a danger to their perpetually threatened virility." In the chapter "The Spell of Aromas," the author examines in depth the importance of smell in the female erotic experience, again providing personal anecdotes in support of her argument. Also, the sole chapter-length discussion of prostitution is entitled "The Gigolo." In the book's conclusion, Allende writes about love from the female viewpoint, stating: "I don't know how it is with men, but with women no aphrodisiac takes effect without the indispensable ingredient of the affection, which, when carried to perfection, becomes love."



The personal aspect of *Aphrodite* comes from the intimately autobiographical thread in Allende's writing: from the introduction to the final chapter, the author interweaves her recollections, emotions, and opinions on the book's topics into her "memoir of the senses." In the section "Mea Culpa of the Culpable," the author not only introduces the friends, colleagues, and family members who contributed to the book's creation, but also gives a highly personal account of her own motivation for writing *Aphrodite*: in great detail, she describes the sensual dreams that have brought her back into the world of senses, from the period of grief and depression after her daughter's death. Allende's memoirs further resume in almost every chapter, not following a temporal sequence but rather picked out from her memory according to specific themes in each of the book's sections. In an analysis of the cheese-making process, she remembers the sensuous experience of observing the handsome Don Maurizio, a great Venezuelan cheese maker, as he stirred milk with the whole length of his arm - "one of [the author's] most pleasant memories of that difficult period as an immigrant in a foreign land." Similarly, in the chapter "The Language of Flowers," Allende recalls how the forget-me-not flower became the symbol of her nostalgia after she had to flee Chile following the military coup in 1973, in which her uncle, socialist president Salvador Allende, was assassinated. Also, the author's family tree plays a consistent part in her sensual memoir: from table manners to attitudes toward food to relationships, Allende introduces her ancestors, grandparents, relatives and immediate family members' adventures to illustrate her own development as a gourmet-lover. The chapter entitled "The Orgy" begins with the author's childhood memory of her stepfather's elaborate preparations for romantic evenings with his wife, involving Turkish cushions, Peruvian waltzes, luxurious cocktails, and toast points with caviar - all of which sparked Allende's youthful imagination.

The everyday element of Allende's writing in *Aphrodite* is summed up in her statement that sex and food are the main pillars of existence; she argues that "all of creation is one long uninterrupted cycle of digestion and fertility," as well as that "everything in life [can be] reduced to a process of organisms devouring one another, reproducing themselves, dying, fertilizing the earth, and being reborn transformed." The author further writes that eating and lovemaking are the two things that men and women have in common; the text predominantly deals with heterosexual desire, as Allende identifies herself as such, save for a few mentions of homosexuality (see "The Gigolo" chapter). The book mainly caters to the heterosexual audience in discussing the male-female relationships; thus, sex and food as parts of the everyday life are explored within this realm. However, any discussion of fertility as a purpose of heterosexual union is dismissed early on in the introduction: the author announces that "everyone else, you will have noticed, already has too many children" and that she will instead "concentrate on pleasure" and write about sensuality in both men and women.

Allende proceeds to discuss everyday issues as she advises readers how to prepare a romantic meal and arrange a seduction, how to shop for the best ingredients, and how to "cheat" with truffle-scented oil. Among other things, the book includes basic descriptions of food groups, "Biology 101" analysis of the functioning of human senses, a brief lesson on which wine to serve with which dish, and the necessity of bringing some "spice" into long relationships. The author also writes in a general way about



various issues that are part of daily discussion and awareness if not practice, such as the effects of controlled substances on the libido, allergies to certain foods, religious differences and their influence on one's diet and sexual practices, and the impact of one's background on personal preferences - in cuisine and romance.

Overall, *Aphrodite* is composed of a loosely organized plethora of mythical, historical, and fantastic accounts on the nature, reputation, and effects of aphrodisiacs. In a postmodern style, the author casually and easily crosses the boundaries between the numerous fields of her research to combine erotic literature, folklore, anthropology, history, biology, and various theories in her writing. The items Allende lists in support of a single statement about the aphrodisiac properties of a certain fruit can range from historical anecdotes about the practices of rulers of antiquity, to anthropological examinations of certain patterns of human behavior, to conclusions drawn from personal experience, to scientific analysis of chemical elements of the aforementioned fruit. In a single paragraph in the "Etiquette" chapter, Allende mentions the joy she experiences when making cookies and cleaning vegetables, the sensuality of food eaten with one's hands, the touching of lascivious bodies and delicious dishes at Roman orgies, and the incestuous scene in the 1960s English film *Tom Jones* when the hero and his mother share a Pantagruelian meal.

The author draws on a variety of fields in her narrative to enrich the descriptions of the world's aphrodisiacs. From history, she takes the recordings of the use of love charms and potions; the impact of religious and class systems on the evolution of attitudes toward sex and food; numerous anecdotes from the lives of noted personages (from the notorious to the glorified); and the occurrence of miscellaneous trends in erotica, through the centuries and all over the world. From biology, Allende borrows the analyses of the functions of human bodies; the statistics on sensual and neural experiences, in humans and other species; and the properties and effects of various chemicals present in particular ingredients or substances. The study of anthropology comes in handy with reports on unusual dietary and sexual habits in remote places and times; a discussion of carnivorous, cannibalistic, and otherwise specific practices; the beliefs in certain aphrodisiac powers responsible for poaching, black magic, and fasting; and the notions of beauty, femininity, and masculinity in different civilizations. Further, Allende also turns to many examples in popular culture to prove her points, from the obsessive depravity of Howard Hughes to the fashionable nouvelle cuisine which the author strongly detests. The book is filled with references to movie scenes in which Epicurean characters devour lush meals, authors of erotica who defended their right to write about passion as they feel it, Latin crooners whose voices are a powerful tool of seduction, and film directors whose recipe for a perfect martini is "allowing a ray of light to pass through the bottle of vermouth and for an instant touch the gin." Allende also makes use of literature, taking excerpts from the Bible, poems by Pablo Neruda, passages from Oriental erotic texts, and various prose and poetry on the topics of romance and cuisine to diversify her assessment of the nature of aphrodisiac.

All in all, Allende's *Aphrodite* abounds with the characteristics that securely place it within the postmodern, Latin-American, female-authored tradition, despite the tendency at first glance to classify this work as a cookbook, a pillow book, or a self-indulgent, self-



help memoir - and, in most cases, as all three. The sense of Aphrodite's lightness is created by the author's casual tone and seeming disorganization of her prose; but the numerous threads of themes, arguments, and illustrations that comprise the colorful texture of the book imperceptibly carry the weight of a new theory of meaning. Allende's work reflects her own montage approach to replenishment and can serve as a piece in our own.

Source: Jeremy W. Hubbell, in an essay for *Literature of Developing Nations for Students*, Gale, 2000.



Critical Essay #2

In this review, author Michele Roberts calls Isabelle Allende's Aphrodite: A Memoir of the Senses a "charming" recipe book and treasure trove of advice for sharpening one's culinary and amatory skills. Roberts observes that for Allende, the real joy of the twinned themes of eroticism and food seems to be the words and stories she uses to prepare her novel recipes.

Just as the pleasures of eating can replace the pleasures of sex, so reading about food can provoke as much satisfaction as flicking through some soft porn. Isabel Allende's charming new book aims to reconcile the two appetites, offering sensual recipes to tempt jaded palates. I don't think her collection of tips and stories is meant to be swallowed too seriously; these are tidbits for grazers; amuse-gueules in the French tradition. Not a pot-boiler; rather, a spicy word-salad. The compilation opens with Allende's ruefully honest admission: "I repent of my diets, the delicious dishes rejected out of vanity, as much as I lament the opportunities for making love that I let go because of pressing tasks or puritanical virtue."

Her solution is that of the novelist: to fantasize, to write it all down, to make it all up. That way she can stay faithful to the husband she assures us she adores, while at the same time hoping to lure him from his computer to experience some new frothy sexual experiences. When you are 50, she explains, and have stayed married to the same man all your life, you have to pep up his flagging interest. So in one sense this is a manual for women in the old style: how to keep your husband interested.

Allende doesn't really seem to imagine that her husband will enter the kitchen and whip up these little feasts for her, though she declares what every woman knows: that a man who cooks for you is a desirable creature. Women are sexier if they don't let on they know how to cook, she warns, but nonetheless her book seems aimed at female chefs. Its male readers, of whom I imagine there could be many, will find it a treasure trove of advice on sharpening up their amatory and culinary techniques. It is, indeed, just the thing to read in bed.

Allende's humour and self-deprecation enliven her pages. She's never known anyone who cooks or makes love from a manual, she tells us, so why should we buy her book, we "people who work hard to earn a living and who pray in secret, like you and me, improvise in casseroles and bedroom romps as best we can, using what we have at hand, without brooding over it or making too much fuss, grateful for our remaining teeth and our enormous good fortune in having someone to embrace"? Her modesty gives a shrugging answer: "because the idea of poking about a bit in aphrodisiacs seems amusing to me and I hope it will be to you as well."

So right away we know that really it's the art and pleasure of reading that's being offered. Allende's testers only found the recipes sexually arousing when told that they were meant to be; the control group reported no surges in libido, though they enjoyed their exquisite dinners and conversation. Telling stories, playing verbal games and



flirting with words like shuttlecocks, these are the real turn-on for Allende. In between offering up light, well-flavoured reminiscences sauced with humour she imparts a certain amount of kitchen lore and suggests new ways to make roast chicken romantic; one technique is to call the bird Valentino.

This is mainly a delightful book, juicy with affectionately prepared vignettes that turn out well every time like an expert chef's souffles. Occasionally you can feel there are too many loving descriptions of bourgeois dining tables loaded with fine silver and plate and you long for Allende to describe, instead, the stern delights of eating fish and chips in a howling gale on the beach at Skegness.

Her only contact with English eroticism, however, is a practice from "certain rural areas" whereby "the woman kneads flour, water and lard, sprinkles the dough with her saliva, then places it between her legs to endow it with the form and savour of her secret parts. She bakes this bread and offers the loaf to the object of her desire." Have Delia and Sophie been keeping this recipe to themselves all this time? I think we should be told.

Source: Michele Roberts, "Keeping Sex on the Menu," in *The London Times*, April 30, 1998, p. 45.



Critical Essay #3

In this brief review of Isabelle Allende's Aphrodite: A Memoir of the Senses, Leslie Chess Feller summarizes Allende's non-fictional exploration of the world of sensual experience using food as an erotic catalyst.

If this is just a cookbook, then Allende's novels are just potboilers! From the author of such incomparable novels as *House of the Spirits* (1985) and the highly evocative collection *Stories of Eva Luna* (1991) comes a luscious book about aphrodisiacs—the bridge between gluttony and lust. To care less about food preparation with seduction in mind would not prohibit any appreciator of beautiful writing from thoroughly enjoying this extraordinarily seductive book. Yes, Allende does provide recipes, and many of them may spark chemistry between two individuals. But more important than the recipes are her historical and biological ruminations on the inseparability of food and eroticism. With her "sole focus [being] on the sensual art of food and its effects on amorous performance," the author wanders delectably through the ways food arouses the senses, citing tales and truths, folklore and science, and drawing into her discussions other topics such as the role of language in seduction, the need for physical touch, and the pleasures of drinking wine—an act that "lessens inhibitions, relaxes, and fosters joy, three fundamental requirements for good performance." Readers may view their lunchtime Big Macs and fries in a different light after enjoying Allende's pages, for, as she posits, "all of creation is one long uninterrupted cycle of digestion and fertility."

Source: Leslie Chess Feller, "Books in Brief: Nonfiction," in *The New York Times*, April 5, 1998, sec. 7, p. 25, col. 4.



Critical Essay #4

In this brief summary of Isabelle Allende's Aphrodite: A Memoir of the Senses, Brad Hooper describes Allende's work of non-fiction as a cookbook which, while also providing actual recipes, most importantly provides historical and biological rumination on the "inseparability of food and eroticism."

"Eggs"□from caviar to the kind produced by chickens□"lend themselves to all sorts of naughtiness," Isabel Allende writes. (She prefers hers "served on my lover's navel with chopped onion, pepper, salt, lemon and a drop of Tabasco.") In *Aphrodite*, Allende turns the joyous preparation and consumption of fine food into an erotic catalyst; it culminates in a collection of serious recipes for your first□or next□bacchanal. Illustrated by Robert Shekter's bold nymphs and mischievous satyrs, *Aphrodite* discusses forbidden fruits, orgies, whispers, pheromones, erotic poetry and Indian tantric rites. Be warned: some aphrodisiacs require more courage and dedication than others. In China, baby cockroaches are tossed into warm rice wine and downed in a single swallow. Although Allende mentions exotica like shark fins, baboon testicles, eye of salamander and the urine of a virgin, her recipes use ingredients that "can be ingested without peril." Serving suggestions, however, can be bold. Regarding a mouthwatering *arroz con leche*: "You can cover your lover from head to foot. . . and slowly lick it of."

Source: Brad Hooper, "Aphrodite: A Memoir of the Senses," (book review) in *The Booklist*, Vol. 94, No. 11, February 1, 1998, p. 875.



Critical Essay #5

*In this brief review, authors Stuttaford, Simson and Zaleski call Isabelle Allende's *Aphrodite: A Memoir of the Senses* a "sophisticated defense of pleasure," mixing recipes, anecdotes, and advice together for a whimsical view of romance and sex.*

Sex and food, once celebrated as two of life's great joys, suffer a lot of bad press these days. Genuine epidemics, coupled with monthly findings of new things that are bad for us, have pushed otherwise happy souls into programs of agonizing denial and, in severe instances, abstinence. Thankfully, in this sophisticated defense of pleasure, novelist Allende (*The House of the Spirits*) puts the joy back into eating and loving with all the panache that marks the best of her fiction. Though passionate about her subject, she remains consistently whimsical with this mix of anecdotes, recipes and advice designed to enhance any romantic encounter. As always, her secret weapon is honesty: "Some [aphrodisiacs] have a scientific basis, but most are activated by the imagination." Allende's vivacity and wit are in full bloom as she makes her pronouncements: "There are few virtues a man can possess more erotic than culinary skill"; "When you make an omelet, as when you make love, affection counts for more than technique." Her book is filled with succinct wisdom and big laughs. Despite sections titled "The Orgy" and "Supreme Stimulus for Lechery," Allende comes down emphatically for romance over sex and for ritual over flavor in a work that succeeds in being what it intends to be—fun from the first nibble to the last.

Source: Genevieve Stuttaford, Maria Simson, and Jeff Zaleski, "Aphrodite: A Memoir of the Senses," (book review) in *Publisher's Weekly*, Vol. 245, No. 3, January 19, 1998, p. 360.



Topics for Further Study

Some people believe that aphrodisiacs made out of the body parts of rare animals have amazing powers. Do some research on poaching. How has the belief in these aphrodisiacs led to the endangerment of particular animal and plant species in certain areas of the world?

Review the recent news (in the past year or two) and find any references to the use of illegal or potentially dangerous stimulants in reported rape cases. According to the news, what are some of the modern-day "love philters"? Are they in any way similar to those of the past? In what way is their reputation today different from their "older relatives," described in Allende's book?

Research the popular drug Viagra. How does it function? What are its ingredients? Are they in any way related to the aphrodisiacs in *Aphrodite*? What do you think Allende would write about the "erection pill"?

Conduct an anonymous survey (as broad-based as possible) about what people consider aphrodisiac in today's society. In your questionnaire, include sections for each of the senses (e.g., "What kind of scent turns you on?") as well as about food, drink, drugs, gestures, situations, media representations, etc. Are your findings different than Allende's? Does the author report aphrodisiacs that your subjects did not mention? Have you received any answers that you did not find in *Aphrodite*?

The author states that her aphrodisiac recipes worked only when the diners were told what the results should be. Put her statement to the test: prepare a meal following the recipes given at the end of *Aphrodite*, serve it to two middle-aged couples (because, as Allende claims, "even a cup of chamomile tea turns on the young"), and make sure that only one couple knows that the meal is supposedly an aphrodisiac. You don't have to ask them to report to you the next morning, but observe their behavior at the table. Is Allende right?



Compare and Contrast

Chile: Often heralded as a glowing example of free-market capitalism, 21 percent of this nation's 15 million live below the poverty line; per capita purchasing power is \$12,500. In a recent World Bank study, Chile tied with Kenya and Zimbabwe for seventh worst in its list of income distribution: 40 percent of national income goes to workers and 60 percent to capital. According to the *CIA World Fact Book*, that disparity breaks down to the lowest 10 percent of income earners controlling 1.4 percent of the wealth while the highest 10 percent control 46.1 percent.

United States: The most powerful nation on the planet is no paragon of wealth distribution. Per capita purchasing power for this nation of nearly 273 million (13 percent of whom live below the poverty line) is \$31,500. According to the *CIA World Fact Book*, nearly all gains in household income have accrued to the top 20 percent of the income bracket. In other words, the lowest 10 percent of income earners control 1.5 percent of the wealth and the top 10 percent control 28.5 percent.

Chile: Chile, El Salvador, Malta, Andorra, and Vatican City are the sole remaining countries where a woman cannot obtain an abortion even if her life is in peril.

United States: Although abortion opponents have succeeded in limiting abortion rights, the procedure is still legal throughout the U.S.

Chile: There is no middle class to stabilize the economic disparity, and the working class is poorly paid. Free market policies have caused a dismantling of welfare, which leaves the poor to survive on handouts and solidarity with each other.

United States: The middle class and working class mesh in the U.S. and, although besieged, are still vibrant. Recent economic growth has brought the unemployment rate down to record lows, but most of the increased employment has occurred in temporary staffing positions and in the service sector. The unskilled are paid a minimum wage, while highly-skilled technology jobs go unfilled.

What Do I Read Next?

The House of the Spirits, Allende's debut novel published in 1982, became a bestseller and won much critical acclaim. Written partly in the magic realist tradition of the so-called Latin Boom, partly as a social and political representation of the Chilean post-revolution reality, the novel is a semi-autobiographical view of four generations of women.

Paula (1997) is the story Allende intends to tell her daughter if she ever wakes up from a coma. She tells Paula about the kooky relatives she has, about the demise of Salvador Allende, and about growing up in Lebanon and Chile. Amidst the sadness, Allende also tells about her personal love affairs as well as her tale of becoming a writer.

Laura Esquivel's first novel of 1990, *Like Water for Chocolate: A Novel in Monthly Installments, With Recipes, Romances and Home Remedies*, was a run-away bestseller in Mexico. The novel, set in Mexico around 1900, tells of Tita De La Garza who, as the eldest daughter, must remain single to care for her mother. Therefore, she is reared by the cook, Nacha, and knows all the recipes of the family. But romance cannot be kept from her or her cooking.

Salman Rushdie's 1980 Booker Prize-winning *Midnight's Children* is an epic novel about the partition of India by the British in 1947. At the stroke of midnight, two children are born into this new divided world. Their life stories in India revolve around the daily happenings of their separate households and the way those households revolve around food.

The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover (1990) is a lush, colorful, and often gruesome film by Peter Greenaway about love, lust, cruelty and cannibalism. The film stars Helen Mirren and features magnificent costumes by designer Jean-Paul Gaultier.

Elizabeth Nash delves into the archive in *Plaisirs D'Amour: An Erotic Guide to the Senses* to reveal the secrets of historical sex icons. Amidst the detailed discussions of the varying qualities of aphrodisiacs and biographical notes on Limt, Courbet, and Rembrandt, the guide includes reprints of selections from Anais Nin and Sappho.



Further Study

Ackerman, Diane, *A Natural History of the Senses*, Vintage Books, 1991.

Ackerman tours history to point out the role the senses have played in historical events. She reports on the curious habits and sensuous delights enjoyed by famous people like Marc Antony and Cleopatra.

Allende, Isabel, *Infinite Plan: A Novel*, translated by Margaret Sayers Peden, Harperperennial Library, 1994.

Allende's first American novel, *Infinite Plan* records the saga of Gregory Reeves. Set in post-WWII America, Gregory has devised a philosophy of life, an infinite plan, and attempts to gain adherents. Then reality begins and Gregory survives law school, Vietnam, two marriages, and the loss of a great sum of money.

Suleri, Sara, *Meatless Days*, University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Another work about the partition of India that also deals with the centrality of the senses and food. Suleri's novel takes place in Pakistan and focuses on a girl coming of age and her role in food preparation in a house that is both Welsh and Hindu.

Toussaint-Samat, Maguelonne, *History of Food*, translated by Anthea Bell, Blackwell, 1994.

Toussaint-Samat's book encompasses, as much as anyone can, the history of eating in Western civilization. The focus of the work looks at the transition of humans to a meat-based diet. Another area of concern is the historical role of culinary habits in the everyday life of humans.



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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Literature of Developing Nations for Students (LDNfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's □For Students□ Literature line, LDNfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and



undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on "classic" novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of LDNfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of LDNfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members "educational professionals" helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized



Each entry, or chapter, in LDNFs focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by LDNFs which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).



- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an "at-a-glance" comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

LDNfS includes "The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature," a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Literature of Developing Nations for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LDNfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LDNfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.



Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Literature of Developing Nations for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Literature of Developing Nations for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from LDNfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Literature of Developing Nations for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from LDNfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Literature of Developing Nations for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of LDNfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Literature of Developing Nations for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of LDNfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Literature of Developing Nations for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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