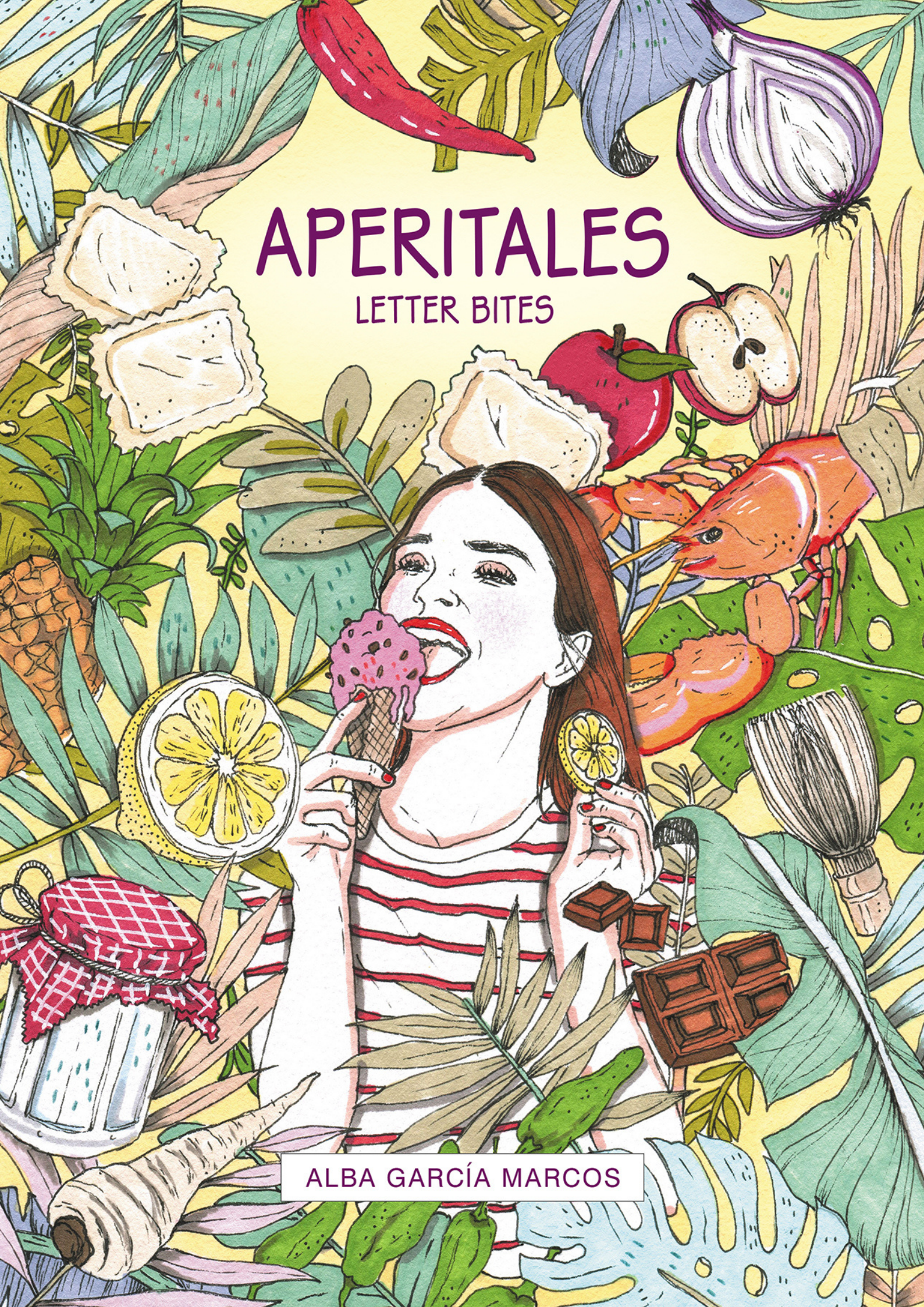

APERITALES
LETTER BITES
ALBA GARCÍA MARCOS

Prologue

The Flavors of my Life

I have a sweet tooth, but if I had to choose a flavor that defined my life, it would be a salty one; the pure salt flavor, and this never ceases to surprise me because almost all the dishes I prepare are quite tasteless.

But if I close my eyes to remember salty tastes, the first one that comes to my mind is that of salt water, every time a wave sent me tumbling and went through my nose and mouth. Also, the coarse salt of fresh fish and the sea bass in salt of any restaurant in Cadiz.

I remember other salty memories from my childhood, like the cheese puffs or the chorizo sandwiches I used to eat at recess. My grandma's mince soup. The popcorn at the cinema while watching Beauty and the Beast for the fourth time, or the macaroni with tomato.

After that, everything is candy and chocolate flavored. Like Ferrero Rocher chocolates, which indicated the beginning of Christmas, accompanied by coconut balls. The red jelly beans that I used to buy at the kiosk or the chocolate bars on Sundays while watching a movie. And, of course, those ice creams that melted in a few seconds during the summer (what a great discovery it was to realize that one could eat ice creams all year round).

Other flavors came late to my palate, like butter, croquettes or lentils. I suppose that you eventually rediscover them or admit that you don't know how you could have lived so long without them. And, when you admit that now you like what you used to hate, you'll want to try different dishes, cuisines and flavors; I call that maturing your taste.

Prologue

The Flavors of my Life

And now that I'm in this search for out-of-the-ordinary restaurants and chefs who don't just do the usual in their kitchens, I also intend to give value again to the flavors that are stuck in your head and accompany you along the way. Like the spiciness of the stinky cheese top in the crappiest bar of your town, or the warmth of the glass of wine that you toast for no reason. Like the tastiness of fried food in a beach bar or the succulent grease of that bacon sandwich; the greasier, the better.

I miss them, all those flavors and the memories linked to them.

APERITALE

THE LIFE-SAVING SANGRIA

"My family love the fact that I grew up to be a chef because I was a very picky eater as a child, and quite awkward"
James Lowe

Let me give you some advice: don't ever host a dinner party at your house if you live in a foreign country, in a tiny apartment, and don't know how to cook. I'm being serious. Don't even try it. Don't get carried away just because you have something to celebrate, have a special guest or want to show your foreign friends that your country's food is the best in the world. That's why restaurants exist. And if you don't trust me, I'll tell you everything that can go wrong.

You're in a bar drinking a beer with your friends from the office and suddenly the conversation shifts to Mary's trip around Andalusia and how well she ate there. You don't know a damn thing about cooking, but, come on, if they're talking about the food of your country, you have every right to be an authority on the subject and list all the dishes that are a must if one goes to the south of Spain. The beers are doing their thing, and the gazpacho with the Valencian paella and the tapas with Basque skewers are beginning to get mixed up. Next thing you know, you get up to propose a toast and invite everyone to come to your house for dinner next week.

Don't panic, three friends having some tapas is not a big deal. However, without knowing how, the three English friends turn into ten, and you find yourself looking for a table and folding chairs at Amazon to accommodate them all in eight square meters. You haven't even started to make a shopping list yet and you know that dinner is going to cost you an arm and a leg.

Apericuento

La sangría salvavidas

Now let's move on to the menu. After convincing them that paella is not eaten at night and that there will be sangria, you think of a tapas dinner and some portions, as if they were at El Pimpi or Columela's Tapería. You write down the basics: bread for the sandwiches, some good ham, Manchego cheese, tomatoes to make salmorejo, shrimps, squid, etc. When you finish, you realize you need to start crossing things off your list because it is something informal, not the banquet of the Last Supper.

With the menu already decided, it's time to go shopping. As you've always hated traditional markets and you don't intend to get up early on the weekend, you have no choice but to go to a supermarket. And here begins the nightmare: the bread is anything but bread; if you really want some ham, you have to at the very least sell a kidney; the fish is all frozen and you want to cry when you get to the seafood aisle. However, you quickly remember that you are wearing Morrison shoes on a Saturday morning, so you can't afford to make a scene. Besides, your friends have only been to Spain once in their lives, so it won't be too hard to impress them.

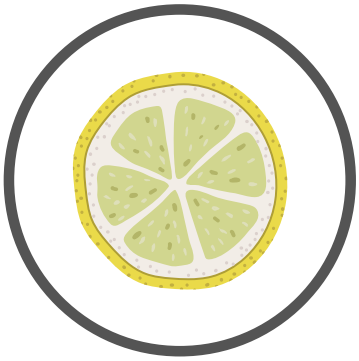
In the middle of this crisis, you think of buying some British meat and sight a duck on sale. You quickly look for a recipe on your phone and, after a moment, you freeze. Where exactly are you going? You haven't eaten duck your whole life, except for pâté! Now dinner has become a Hispanic-British mix, but you head for your mini-apartment to spend the rest of the day in the kitchen anyway.

Apericuento

La sangría salvavidas

You put on some music in Spotify, put on some comfortable clothes and start the dinner ritual. You wash all the ingredients, organize them by dishes, write down the recipes on post-its and stick them on the containers, and pour yourself a glass of sweet wine to get inspired. The duck is still defrosting, the oven stops working and you just realize that you don't have enough cutlery and glasses for everyone. With each setback, you drink another glass of Canasta to drown your worries.

You don't even know how many hours have gone by, but your time has come to a head. When the first guests arrive, you receive them with a table without a tablecloth, since you had also forgotten to buy it, full of bread and two burnt potato omelets. Luckily, there is so much sangria that you hope that soon nobody will know the difference between an anchovy and a sardine.



THANK YOU FOR READING ME
IF YOU ARE MORE HUNGRY..

If you liked this little aperitif, in the book Aperitaless. Letter bites you will have 60 stories full of sweet loves, spicy revenge, bitter memories, acid encounters and salty dreams to savor at your own pace.

You can see the book trailer for the book **here**.

You will find it by ordering on **Amazon**.

You can continue reading more stories, apericuentos and others, on my **blog** Las letras de Alba, on my Instagram profile **@alba_escritora** or on **Facebook**.

Enjoy!