

Of Morsels and Marvels

Maryse Condé

Richard Philcox, Translator

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As a child, Maryse Condé found the family kitchen to be a refuge from a frightening, confusing world. Surrounded by enticing scents and comforting arms, she discovered her love of cooking and came to realize that she was a rebel at heart.

Born on the sleepy island of Guadeloupe, Condé recalls her demanding mother saying that “only stupid people like to cook.” She defied that notion, followed her creative spirit, and broke with tradition to travel the world seeking new experiences and exotic ingredients. She turned traditional foods into culinary marvels.

While some called her elevation of cooking to a place among the arts an “act of treason,” she brought her love of travel, literature, and cooking together to demonstrate that experiencing a country’s cuisine is one of the most potent ways to get to know its true character. “Visiting a supermarket is just as transformational as going to a museum or an exhibition,” she writes.

Condé’s narrative is replete with entertaining stories of great meals and conversations shared with people all over the world. Her travels to far-flung lands are related in terms that are full of color, poetry, and wry humor.

Condé’s desire to share culinary pleasures with as many people as possible has a delightful, promiscuous quality. Recollections of Condé’s favorite stop—Portugal—whose men she found most attractive are shared, as well as thoughts from her travels to America, where she “found her freedom of expression.” Even descriptions of a market are sensual and intense, reveling in the luster remaining in the eyes of freshly caught fish and sniffs made to rate the freshness of meat.

An honest, forthright, and entertaining travelogue, *Of Morsels and Marvels* imparts a real taste of the world.

KRISTINE MORRIS (January / February 2020)

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