Preface

Our very first experiences with food are purely visceral—we cry for our mother's milk or else we will starve. If we are lucky, food quickly becomes something we take for granted because our days are centered around it. As we grow older, the repetition of this necessary pause in our day ritualizes a basic act of survival. Food is a religion everyone can believe in, and meals are a kind of daily prayer. Meals, like prayer, are at times thankless and empty gestures when we forget how fortunate we are to have them. In this book, our stories affirm and celebrate the power of food, calling to mind both its beauty and its necessity.

The daily tradition of preparing meals causes food to become a signifier, a physical presence endowed with cultural, historical, and personal depth that transcends the immediacy of chewing and digesting. To convey that process here, through literature, is perhaps even more appropriate given the way in which language embodies that same transcendent quality. Words, in essence no more than a spattering of symbols, come to represent concepts with richness and complexity far beyond the simple ink on the page. In the same way, meals come to symbolize deeply rooted and long-standing patterns of living.

This relationship between food and language extends even further with the notion that, while food takes on deeper meaning and becomes its own singular kind of language, words themselves can also be consumed and become nourishment for us. The recipes on these pages can translate into an array of tangible and edible dishes, yet they also invite you to partake in a more abstract sharing of experience through the more concrete mediums of food and the written word. We literally invite you to eat our words.