



1. Look, Ma! There's a Giraffe on Main Highway.

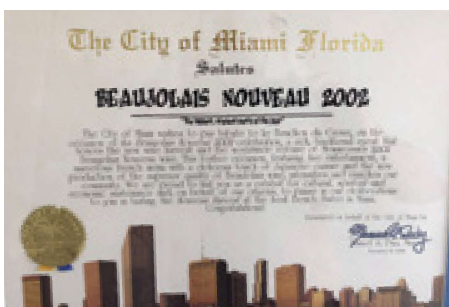
Le Bouchon du Grove was founded in 1994 at 3430 Main Highway by Georges Eric Farge, the one and only.

While it took awhile for it to become the go-to French restaurant with the wall-to-wall-to-ceiling road signs (Paris 10,500 km) and posters like the smiling Marseille paysan downing a glass of Pastis Olive, it started off quite humbly. The young proprietor and chef in those early days could be seen greeting customers at the door before seating them, taking their orders and hustling to the kitchen to cook. Times were so desperate that Georges featured a "Two 4 One Pasta Night" where you could buy two large dishes of fresh made pasta with snails or languste (or \$10 per person) when you also bought two glasses of vin rouge or, hopefully, a whole bottle.





Slowly Bouchon's reputation spread, like a great béchamel, as Grovites like Sue Billig, Antoinette and Gail Baldwin and Karl and Barbara Lange together with The Coconut Grover began spreading the news extolling both the food and its endlessly entertaining creator, Georges Eric. You want a fun joyeux anniversaire? Let's go to Bouchon! How about some champagne with your fricassee de poulet?



Once he was sure he could pay the rent, Georges Eric started to add the zany events for which Le Bouchon became famous. He hosted "Beaujolais Nouveaux" night, and then "Circus Nights."



One Saturday evening you might find an elephant outside the French doors blocking traffic on Main Highway. Another night it would be a giraffe, or a camel. He even got himself a gig at the Miami Zoo as a "trainee to be a trainer" so the zoo would loan him an orangutan and some baboons which he then delivered by limousine to the delight of his patrons and their kids. As Dave Barry would say "We're not making this up!"

And then came 1998 and football! Not the Dolphins, silly, but the Men's Soccer World Cup, with the fabulous French equipe Les Bleus about to make their triumphal march to la Victoire.



As each match was played, Bouchon was first packed to les branchies, then spilling on to Main Highway with a party that continued on til the champagne ran out. Georges Eric effervesced more each night, leading the cheers for each Bleus' goal and the groans when their opponents' ball found the back of the net.

The final match was held in the Stade de France on July 12, 1998. Les Bleus, led by the soon to be legendary Zinedine Zidane, beat Brazil 3-0. The noise coming from Le Bouchon that night could be heard all the way to Grove Isle, close to where Georges Eric lived on the top floor of a 3-story apartment building facing Biscayne Bay with a large sea grape tree in front. A smaller gathering of Bouchon faithful gathered there the evening Georges Eric got married. His best man, who lived in the ground floor apartment, raised his glass with this toast: "I'm so glad for Georges Eric, and also for myself, since I am tired of picking the panties out of this tree every morning."



So here's to Georges Eric Farge. A true Grovite de la tete aux pieds. He lives in Brazil now though he visits here occasionally. Maybe he'll ride in on an elephant!

Photos courtesy of Georges Eric Farge.

