

COOKING THE WORLD

A Play for Two Chefs

By R.W. Berky

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ACT 1 SCENE ONE “THE KITCHEN”: A SHAMBLES,
A NEST, THE REMAINS OF A KITCHEN. JEAN-PIERRE
AND JEAN-FRANCOIS COME OUT OF THEIR
RESPECTIVE SLEEPING SPACES AND BEGIN
PREPARING FOR THE DAY.

JEAN FRANCOIS

My dear Jean-Pierre !

JEAN PIERRE

Good morning, Jean-Francois. **(4 DICINGS, TWO ELBOWS)** Are you well ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

Yes, very well, very well indeed. And you, how do you feel this morning ? **(WIPING THE EDGES OF THE UTENSILS)**

JEAN PIERRE

Very, very well. **(JP and JF DICE AND JP GOES OFF ON "CRAZY" RIFF THEN STOPS)** This morning...I am a hot little consomme'.

JEAN FRANCOIS

My, you are a hot little consomme' !!

JEAN PIERRE

Yes ? You see it ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

How can one not. So...clean, so crisp, so collected. Like peas and amber, sprinkled with pearl dust.

JEAN PIERRE

Why thank you, Jean-Francois.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Like the lightest angel pastry filled with fresh red currants....

JEAN PIERRE

No, no. You're too kind, too kind...And am I sharp ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

As sharp as a well-honed knife hovering above the yoke of an egg...

JEAN PIERRE

Stop, stop...Am I that sharp ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

Indeed you are. As sharp as the resounding crack of marrow bone.

JEAN PIERRE

Really, Jean-Francois ! Ahh !

JEAN FRANCOIS

Words are a spice, Jean-Pierre, and we who know this, grow fat on them. **(BOTH LAUGH)**

JEAN PIERRE

(GOES BACK TO THE RECORD PLAYER AND PUTS ON RECORD) And how was your trip ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

Oh, why thank you for asking. I had a wonderful trip. Wonderful ! And you ?

JEAN PIERRE

Yes, as a matter of fact. A clear, straight, unencumbered highway.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Ahhhhh, that's splendid ! It's another perfect day, Jean-Pierre.

JEAN PIERRE

Yes, it is.

JEAN FRANCOIS

And what day is it today ?

JEAN PIERRE

Tuesday ? **(PICKS UP HIS WHISK. PAUSING FOR J.F.)**

JEAN FRANCOIS

Why not. **(PICKS UP HIS WHISK)** And whirling the whisk
always widens the world!!

JEAN PIERRE

Absolutely.

**(WHISK DANCE TO CAMBODIAN MUSIC. THEY END
AT EITHER END OF THE TABLE AND BEGIN THE
CHANT)**

JEAN PIERRE

Blood pudding, green peas,

JEAN FRANCOIS

Blood pudding, green peas,

JEAN PIERRE

blood pudding, green peas, haute, haute, haute cuisine.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Blood pudding, green peas, haute, haute, haute cuisine.

JEAN PIERRE

Blood pudding, green peas,

JEAN FRANCOIS

Black cherries, Goose please,

JEAN PIERRE

Chinese duck,

JEAN FRANCOIS

Conger eel,

JEAN PIERRE

Mine is plucked,

JEAN FRANCOIS

Mine is peeled.

BOTH

Who's for mutton pie !!! Bravo, bravo, superb, superb.
(BLOWING KISS TO TABLE WITH WHISKS) Voila !!

REPEAT CHANT

AT THE END JEAN-PIERRE BEGINS TO FIDDLE WITH HIS HAT.

JEAN FRANCOIS

What is it, Jean-Pierre ? Jean-Pierre ?

JEAN PIERRE

Well, you know. I want to catch just the right feeling. **(ADJUSTS HIS HAT AS JEAN-FRANCOIS LOOKS ON.)**

JEAN FRANCOIS

Where is it. **(WATCHING JP CAREFULLY)** Mmmm...I feel you catching it....mmmm....maybe there....no...closer....mmm....closer...Aaaaaahh !!....No. **(JEAN-PIERRE CRUSHES HIS HAT DOWN ON HIS HEAD IN DESPAIR)** That's it !! Jean-Pierre, that's it. Exquisite. Yes !! **(THEY EMBRACE)**

JEAN PIERRE

Jean-Francois.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Jean-Pierre.

JEAN PIERRE

Let's talk food ! "Mise en Place"!!!

JEAN FRANCOIS

Yes, Jean Pierre. "Mise en Place"!! **(JP BRINGS BELL TO TABLE/FRONT. BOTH GET PADDLES AND MOVE TO EITHER SIDE OF THE TABLE)**

JEAN PIERRE

Broiling

JEAN FRANCOIS

Braising

JEAN PIERRE

Boiling

JEAN FRANCOIS

Basting

JEAN PIERRE

Steaming, Streaming

JEAN FRANCOIS

Time for tasting !!

BOTH

Ahhhhhhhh!!

JEAN PIERRE

Grilling, slicing

JEAN FRANCOIS

Stewing, Dicing

JEAN PIERRE

Mincing, Pinching

JEAN FRANCOIS

Your way

JEAN PIERRE

Your way.....Ahhh!!!Saute, flambe

**USE TABLE FOR BOAT AND MIXING PADDLES FOR
BOAT PADDLES...AS IF GETTING AWAY FROM
SOMETHING OR SOMEONE**

JEAN PIERRE

Saute !!!!

JEAN FRANCOIS

Flambe !!!

**REPEATED AND ACCELERATED, REACHES A
FRENZY OF ROWING, PADDLES BECOME SAILS
THAT ARE BLOWN INTOENDS IN LAUGHTER**

JEAN PIERRE

Jean Francois, remember the “Agile Rabbit”?

JEAN FRANCOIS

Oh yes, Jean Pierre, of course ! And the “Blackened
Boar”.

JEAN PIERRE

Yes, oh yes. The Twice Humped Bunny.

JEAN FRANCOIS

The Wizeded Whore.

JEAN PIERRE

Mimi's Backside ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

The Immaculate Moon.

JEAN PIERRE

Petite Anglais

JEAN FRANCOIS

The Hopeful Envelope ?

JEAN PIERRE

Ah, such fine restaurants !!

JEAN FRANCOIS

They were...they most certainly were.

JEAN PIERRE

Packed to the rafters every night.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Cheek to cheek.

JEAN PIERRE

Jowl to jowl. There wasn't even room to chew !

JEAN FRANCOIS

Ha. They went outside to chew...(laughter) What a time.

JEAN PIERRE

Here we go, Jean Francois! **(BELL.PLAYING WAITER AND CUSTOMER)** More wine here.

JEAN FRANCOIS

That was the “1958” ?

JEAN PIERRE

Yes, thank you. **(BELL)**

JEAN FRANCOIS

That’s my veal, I believe.

JEAN PIERRE

It is indeed, sir !

JEAN FRANCOIS

Divine !!

JEAN PIERRE

As close to heaven as possible, sir. **(BELL)**

JEAN PIERRE

With the Chateauneuf, please.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Of course, and madame ? **(BELL)**

JEAN FRANCOIS

Ahhhh, this sauce!! How it floats above the plate like a...a...revelation.

JEAN PIERRE

Thank you, General. **(BELL)**

JEAN PIERRE

My turbot. My lovely, steaming little turbot.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Harcourt.

JEAN PIERRE

Mmmmmm.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Verte.

JEAN PIERRE

Mmmmmmm.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Almandine.

JEAN PIERRE

Mmmmmmm. And to top it all off, a delicate Creme Breule, served in the shells of a pheasant's eggs. **(BELL)**

JEAN FRANCOIS

Where's my wife ?

JEAN PIERRE

Your wife ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

My wife.

JEAN PIERRE

Where's your wife ? **(BOTH LOOK OUT INTO THE VOID)**

BOTH

Outside chewing !! **(BELL)**

JEAN FRANCOIS

And we, my dear Jean-Pierre, watched over them all.
Exciting the palates of hundreds.

JEAN PIERRE

Thousands, Jean-Francois.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Tens of thousands, Jean Pierre.

JEAN PIERRE

With your fish, Jean-Francois. Mmmmmm. So light, so alive.

JEAN FRANCOIS

And your sauces, Jean-Pierre. Rivulets of ecstasy. **(BELL)** Michelle ! Michelle ! Michelle !

JEAN PIERRE

Michelle !

JEAN FRANCOIS

Not too hot an oven for that.

JEAN PIERRE

Not that.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Let it rise gently in the pan from desire, not from pain.

JEAN PIERRE

No pain.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Heaven has heat, I hope, but not the glow of Hell.

JEAN PIERRE

Not Hell.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Richard...

JEAN PIERRE

Richard...

JEAN FRANCOIS

Before you apply the sauce, Richard...let Jean-Pierre taste it...Jean-Pierre ?

JEAN PIERRE

If you wish, Jean-Francois (**LOOKING AT AN IMAGINARY "RICHARD" OF THE SAME HEIGHT**) So, Richard, if you will, let me...

JEAN FRANCOIS

No, no, Jean-Pierre. Not that Richard.

JEAN PIERRE

No ? Not Richard from the Half Moon ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

No.

JEAN PIERRE

Ahhh. So Richard...(LOOKING TO A TALLER
"RICHARD")

JEAN FRANCOIS

No, no, no.

JEAN PIERRE

Richard from Caesar's Stump ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

Impossible.

JEAN PIERRE

Well then. (SEARCHING SPACE FOR THE PROPER
HEIGHT OF

RICHARD) Richard....Richard...

JEAN FRANCOIS

You're getting warm...warmer....that's it. **(RICHARD IS VERY SMALL)**

JEAN PIERRE

Ha !! Richard from the Blue Mango. Well then, Richard, a taste, please. **(TAKES AN IMAGINARY SIP FROM THE SPOON OF A VERY SMALL ASSISTANT)** No, no, no. It needs something. A bit more salt. But not much. Only half a pinch.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Half a pinch, Richard. And how do we arrive at a half ?

JEAN PIERRE

We take a pinch...

JEAN FRANCOIS

We do.

JEAN PIERRE

Roll the forefinger back along the thumb...

JEAN FRANCOIS

Yes, then blow away the exposed particles...

JEAN PIERRE

Yes...(BOTH BLOW)

JEAN FRANCOIS

And roll the forefinger back. What remains constitutes...

JEAN PIERRE

“Half a pinch” (PLACES THE REQUIRED AMOUNT IN THE IMAGINARY MIX)

JEAN FRANCOIS

Brilliant !! And the sauce now ?

JEAN PIERRE

(TASTES) Perfect !

JEAN FRANCOIS

Yes. Yes. Yes. For in the proper sauce, a fish comes to life and swims again.

JEAN PIERRE

YES !! Yes, it most certainly does.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Ah, and listen, all of you. You must feel, feel the fish's glow grow on the palate...like...like

JEAN PIERRE

Whispers that drive the heart to dream.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Yes, (ASIDE TO J.P.) Very nice. Like...like...

JEAN PIERRE

The infinite hour at the end of time.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Yes. Very nice, Jean-Pierre. Carefully, carefully coax the fish, my dears, coax it into life. Listen to its further journey. Feel the moisture swell in the flesh. Mmmmm...Oh, so close you begin to taste it.

JEAN PIERRE

Mmmmm.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Mmmmm.

BOTH

Mmmmmm.

JEAN FRANCOIS

(A RITUAL) We are finished, ripe and ready.

JEAN PIERRE

And we're glowing.

JEAN FRANCOIS

It's from knowing that we're finished.

JEAN PIERRE

But perhaps one last sprig on top...

JEAN FRANCOIS

Behind

JEAN PIERRE

Offset

JEAN FRANCOIS

Below

JEAN PIERRE

No, no.

JEAN FRANCOIS

We're finished.

JEAN PIERRE

Now?

JEAN FRANCOIS

This second.

JEAN PIERRE

So...

JEAN FRANCOIS

Don't touch it.

JEAN PIERRE

Please don't touch it.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Right !

JEAN PIERRE

Just rush it to the table.

JEAN FRANCOIS

As quick as we are able.

JEAN PIERRE

No wind.

JEAN FRANCOIS

No, no.

JEAN PIERRE

No jolts.

JEAN FRANCOIS

No, no.

JEAN PIERRE

It's perfect.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Ahhhh !

JEAN PIERRE

Absolutely.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Infinitely.

JEAN PIERRE

Perfect. **(PAUSE AND RELAXATION)**

JEAN FRANCOIS

I'm rather full, Jean-Pierre. **(TAKES PADDLES AND BELL TO BACK OF THE KITCHEN)**

JEAN PIERRE

And so am I, Jean-Francois. Perhaps a lazy walk as a digestive. **(JP AND JF, ARM IN ARM WALK ABOUT IN AN ARC IN FRONT OF THE TABLE. THEY STOP.)** Want to hear about my trip ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

Splendid. Your trip. Yes, of course. Your trip. A good trip is such a positive sign. And where did you go ?

JEAN PIERRE

I went...to the circus.

JEAN FRANCOIS

The circus ?

JEAN PIERRE

Exactly.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Brilliant ! Where was it ?

JEAN PIERRE

Monte Carlo.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Ahh, Monte Carlo. That jewel on the coast.

JEAN PIERRE

Indeed !!

JEAN FRANCOIS

And how was the circus ?

JEAN PIERRE

It was fantastic...really fantastic ! There were horses juggling plates with their tails, andand Tigers growling excerpts from Riggoletto, 166 Carpathian midgets on stilts all holding hands and diving headfirst into a tub of...of rendered lard. And one act that was unbelievable.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Only one ?

JEAN PIERRE

This act topped all of the rest and it was only one person.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Only one?

JEAN PIERRE

A clown.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Just a clown?

JEAN PIERRE

No, actually, an exploding clown.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Really? He exploded?

JEAN PIERRE

He just waved his arms and then blew up.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Imagine that? My goodness! What was his name?

JEAN PIERRE

Whose name?

JEAN FRANCOIS

The clown's name, Jean-Pierre.

JEAN PIERRE

I don't recall.

JEAN FRANCOIS

You don't recall? Jean-Pierre, you counted all those midgets and you can't remember the name of the most incredible act you saw all night!?

JEAN PIERRE

Well the midgets...the midgets...had little numbers on their little smocks, and, besides, I didn't read the program. So what. His name must have been Pepe, Momo, Bimbom, or something like that.

JEAN FRANCOIS

There should be a name to hang onto; makes for a richer trip, a richer recipe, a more gratifying experience. Don't you agree?

JEAN PIERRE

All right, for your sake, let's call him Bimbim. Oh, and you should have heard the circus band.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Bimbim. No, not Bimbim.

JEAN PIERRE

What ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

Bimbim. No. It's a bit thin. Flat tasting, don't you think?
Bimmmmmmbimmmmm.

Eh ?

JEAN PIERRE

Alright. We'll call him....ahhhh....Pepe. Pepe. That's hot!
That'll do.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Pepe? Weeeeeell, it just seems watery.

JEAN PIERRE

It's hot!! Pepe!! Pepe!!

JEAN FRANCOIS

Too watery.

JEAN PIERRE

Hot.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Perhaps a little hot, but nonetheless...watery. Too watery
in fact. Pepe. Pepe It needs thickening...

JEAN PIERRE

Binkie then.

JEAN FRANCOIS

No.

JEAN PIERRE

Twinkles.

JEAN FRANCOIS

No, no.

JEAN PIERRE

Snuffles. ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

WeIII...

JEAN PIERRE

Kinkie?

JEAN FRANCOIS

Kinkie the Clown ?! Absolutely not !

JEAN PIERRE

Koko. Zuzu. Bobo. Jimmy. Jocko?

JEAN FRANCOIS

Wait, wait. Hmmm, Bobo. Bobo. That's ...Bobo...much better. Bobo. In fact, it's just right, Jean-Pierre. Bo-bo. Not too sharp, rounded, embraces the mouth. Boooboooo. It's full bodied. Rich. Promising. Bobo. Bobo. Bobo.

JEAN PIERRE

Jean-Francois.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Bobo.

JEAN PIERRE

Jean-Francois ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

Yes ?

JEAN PIERRE

May I continue ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

Bobo.

JEAN PIERRE

That's enough I think.

JEAN FRANCOIS

So tasteful.

JEAN PIERRE

Thank you.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Bobo. Bobo.

JEAN PIERRE

Bobo is gone, Jean-Francois. Blown up. Disappeared.

JEAN FRANCOIS

What did you say ?

JEAN PIERRE

Bobo is no more.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Surely there was something left. A shred of cloth, a bit of paint, a relic.

JEAN PIERRE

Nothing.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Please, Jean-Pierre.

JEAN PIERRE

No, I don't think so.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Check again, please. Please.

JEAN PIERRE

Alright, there was something.

JEAN FRANCOIS

I knew it. What was it?

JEAN PIERRE

A small piece of his...

JEAN FRANCOIS

His nose !!

JEAN PIERRE

Yes, his nose.

JEAN FRANCOIS

It would be red.

JEAN PIERRE

It was.

JEAN FRANCOIS

And it's safe.

JEAN PIERRE

Yes, put away.

JEAN FRANCOIS

EXCELLENT!

CUE 4 LIGHTS DIM TO 3/4

JEAN FRANCOIS(CON"TD)

And not a moment too soon. Everything put away until another day.

JEAN PIERRE

It wasn't very long.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Nothing to do about that. Off you go.

JEAN PIERRE

The days are shrinking more and more. **CUE**
5 BLUEOUT

JEAN FRANCOIS

Never mind. This day is gone and that's it. **(MOVING TOWARD HIS SHELTER)** Get out of the dark, Jean-Pierre. Go take a trip.

JEAN PIERRE

(GOING TOWARD HIS OWN SHELTER.) I can't think of any place.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Of course, you can. Go on. Go back to the circus, or go...

CUE 6 LIGHTS UP FULL SAME AS CUE 3 - NEW DAY)

JEAN FRANCOIS

My dear Jean-Pierre !

JEAN PIERRE

Jean-Francois.

JEAN FRANCOIS

A lovely morning, isn't it ?

JEAN PIERRE

Yes, it is. **(DICING:4HOMES, 2 ELBOWS)** How are you this morning, Jean-Francois ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

I'm well. No, I am "very well" this morning.

JEAN PIERRE

And you were very well yesterday.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Was I ?

JEAN PIERRE

You were.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Well, what can I say. Consistency is the foundation of good cooking.

BOTH

HA !! **(ONE ELBOW)**

JEAN FRANCOIS

Did you have a good trip ?

JEAN PIERRE

Yes. A clear, straight highway. You ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

Marvelous. Can't wait to tell you about it. And what day is it today?

JEAN PIERRE

Tuesday?

JEAN FRANCOIS

It was Tuesday yesterday.

JEAN PIERRE

Was it ?

JEAN FRANCOIS

Yes, it was.

JEAN PIERRE

What can I say. Consistency is the foundation of good cooking.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Well said. Tuesday. Why not.

BOTH

Ha!!! (1 ELBOW)

JEAN FRANCOIS

And how are you this lovely Tuesday morning ?

JEAN PIERRE

Potent...potent.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Ah, I sensed that you're potent this morning, so we must have received a new shipment. Have we ?

JEAN PIERRE

(JP MOVES TO VIEW HIS HOVEL) Ah, yes, yes we have. A shipment of new beans.

JEAN FRANCOIS

New beans ! Splendid !....Ah, the new beans.

JEAN PIERRE

Ah yes...the new beans.

JEAN FRANCOIS

And how do they look ?

JEAN PIERRE

Well...a lot like the old beans really.

JEAN FRANCOIS

No discernible differences ?

JEAN PIERRE

It's a bit dark in the bags to tell exactly, but they are green.
A shade of green reminiscent of the bluegrass of
Kentucky.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Very nice, that green of the bluegrass.