

100 Bars in 100 Days

Hops MacBarley's 2012
Key West Bar Boondoggle
"The Peace, Love, and I.P.A. Tour"

BAR 60:

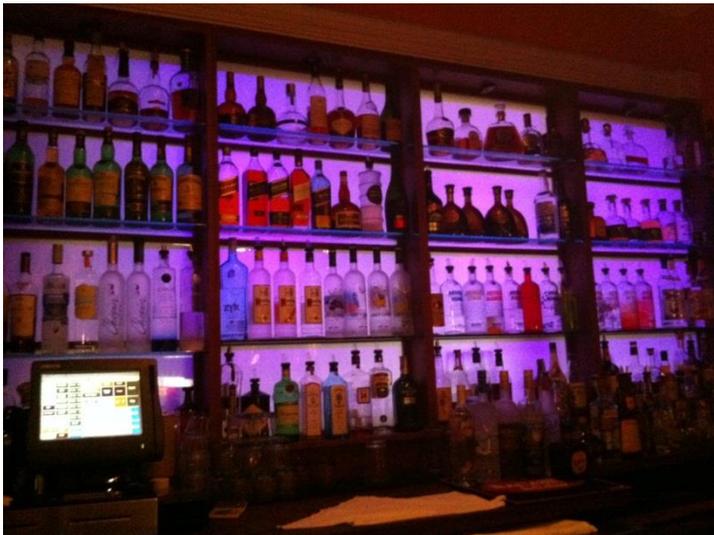
Bagatelle
115 Duval Street
Saturday 9/15, 10:15 pm

Key West Sunset Ale (bottle) \$5.00

This is a good example of how unscripted the *Peace, Love and IPA Tour* is. It was hours after leaving Dante's, and stopping "for one" (each) at Gecko, Krawl, and Grunts. I did some meandering around Duval, checking out the best of the herd of motorcycles that lined both sides of the street for seven blocks. The Street Fair was still going on, so that called for

a bit of perusing of the various wares in the various tents. There was actually a tent with a big sign saying only "KNIVES. Seemed like an odd idea to me, selling big sharp weapons with a herd of badass bikers about. Where was the GUNS & AMMO tent??

So, being kinda aimless, I found myself just walking by Bagatelle. I looked up at the sign, and decided that checking another bar off the Tour List would be efficient, practical, and, above all, thirst-quenching.



I wonder how many people really look at Bagatelle's sign. It's a flying fish, rolled back on its shoulders (fish have shoulders?) holding a booze bottle upside-down with its tail, and guzzling the gushing stream of booze. Yeahhh, fish!

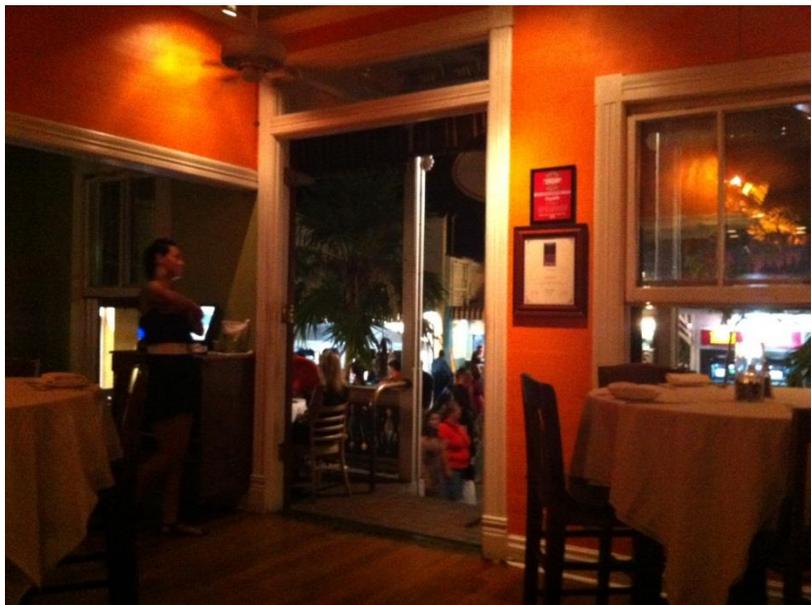
Bagatelle has a rather sophisticated reputation, with fine food and all that, so the

Inverted Chugfish sign is a head-scratcher. (If you were really tall, ha.)

The other eye-catcher is the backlit bar within. Very visible from the street, the purple back wall glows through the bottles, illuminating labels and contents in a colorful celebration of alcohol. Just makes you wanna drink it all. Like the Inverted Chugfish is.

The food here is "exquisite." Charley says so. Charley was a good friend of mine when I lived in Rochester. I met him when he hit on me in an anything goes bar up there. He was a really nice guy, so I politely declined him, but we kept talking and became friends. Well, shortly after I relocated to the Keys in 2001, Charley came down with some friends of his for a few days. His friends were all older, wealthy, gay men.

The first night, he insisted that I meet them all for dinner at Duval Square. Sounded like a *we're taking you out to dinner* thing to me, but I ordered prudently, just in case. Sure enough, when the check came, I had to pony up my share. Fair enough, I suppose. Never assume, you know?



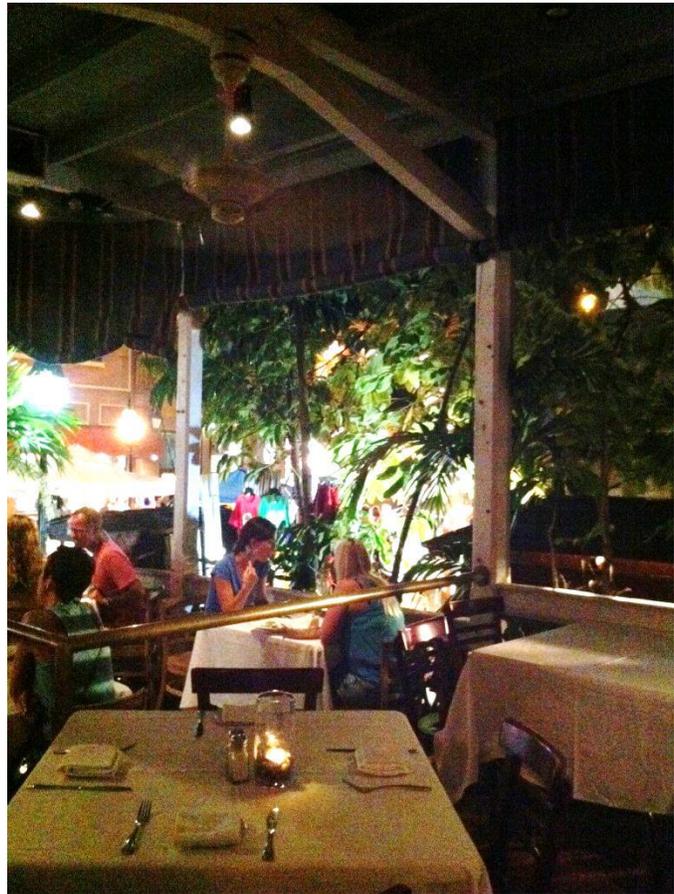
So, the next night, when they said, "Hey, meet us at Bagatelle," I knew my stretched budget was going to meet another challenge. We were upstairs, on the porch, on a beautiful early evening. I got the duck, partly for the thrill of blurting out the monosyllabic, "Duck!" when the server looked my way for my order. It was fairly affordable (with water instead of a beer), and, unlike most of the items on the menu, I knew what it was.

The duck was good. I forget what Charley ordered, but when one of his friends asked him how it was, he drew in an appreciative breath, puckered his fingers and thumb together, and exhaled, "Exxxquisite."

I thought, "Are you serious? *Exquisite??* I am very much outa here." When they ordered desserts, I pulled the nice-to-meet-you-all-I-gotta-go-polish-my-doorknobs ploy, left ample cash, and skedaddled.

Bagatelle is an odd name for a restaurant. A bagatelle was a children's game back in the 1600's and beyond, that involved rolling a ball through pegs without knocking them over. Somewhere along the line, it came to mean something of insignificance, like the game was so easy that it was of no consequence or worthy of attention.

I looked it up on www.m-w.com and was stunned by one of the synonyms: *trifle, child's play, frippery, nonproblem, nothing, picayune, shuck(s), small beer, small change, triviality*. I think you know which one made me gasp. *Small beer??* Arrrgh. Although small beer is still better than no beer.



Bagatelle is one of those words that you didn't really know what it meant, but you picked it out from context. And it was always with the word "mere" – *Ha, a mere bagatelle, my lady!* pretty much meant, *Ehh, it's nothin', toots*.

But some of us learned it from Ralph Kramden's dumbass misuse of it in an episode of *The Honeymooners*:

Alice: Ralph, I'd be very proud of you, you know, if you answered the first two questions and came home with \$600.

Ralph: \$600? A mere bag of shells!

Yeah, the name is funky and the sign is quirky. The building is really cool, too. A classic Old Town extra-tall, two-story house, with the high ceilings and ornate trim, with big wraparound porches upper and lower. Sweet. All in all, a very inviting place.

So, I invited myself in for a small beer.

A pretty, young, dark-haired woman was doing the tending. I recognized her from somewhere, but couldn't place it. This happens to me all the time.

I'm such a spazz with matching faces and names with anything. If I've met you, I'll recognize you – maybe even years later – but even a day later, I might draw a blank on the where's and who's.

I pulled up the stool on the far left and the barkeep came right over. "Hey!" I said, with an *I-know-you* tone. She responded in kind, with a little light-up face. It was damn clear, though, that neither of us was placing the other.

I ordered my KWSA and we swapped a couple of *how ya doin's*, but she had to attend to some tables, so I never got to ask her where the hell I knew her from. I was pretty sure she had come into the shop for something or other, but I couldn't place that either. Maybe she tended elsewhere at some point and I knew her from there. Now, that's a strong possibility. After, not many of these 100 bars will be virgin ground.

The name Angela was on the printed receipt, but you can't always go by that. All that tells you is that, at *some point*, *somebody* named Angela *probably* worked there.

I sat there looking at the closer view of the backlit bar, and snapped a quick pic or two of the room I was sitting in. But that was all Bagatelle seemed to have to offer on this night. The fun was out in the street, not in here. Angela might have been abducted by aliens because I never did see her come back. I left my standard buck on the bar, and headed back onto Duval. At least all the people that I wouldn't know there would be people that I honestly don't know.