

**Bar Hoppin' With Hops**  
The Second Century Tour  
Hops MacBarley's 2013  
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Bar #129:

**La Trattoria Oceanside**  
3593 South Roosevelt Boulevard  
<http://www.latrattoria.us/>  
Monday, 24 June, 6:30 PM

*Yeungling (bottle) \$3.50*

Uncertain of what lay ahead, I took the walk next door from Benihana into the east-end, ocean-view branch of La Trattoria (#38 of the *PLIPA* Tour). Restaurant for sure, but bar? No outward sign of one, even as I walked past the front windows and around the corner to the entrance. Oh, the drama.



Just inside the door, I encountered the hostess. She was about my age -- maybe a little more -- slim and distinguished-looking. Her lean face was almost stern, reminiscent of Sister Helen Thomas, my 5th grade teacher. (Shudder.)

There was something Mom-ish about her, though. Maybe more like Grandma-ish. Kinda Barbara Billingsley-ish. It was a good fit, I reckon; makes ya feel like ya just popped into Mom's for her home cookin'. But when you're scroungin' for a bar, there's that maternal disapproval to deal with. I didn't need any *tsk-tsk*-ing.

So, when she gave me a small, professional, greeting smile, I spoke right up. "Hi! Got a bar here?" Screw it, who cares what she thinks. She ain't no freaking nun.

Bigger smile. "Why, yes! And it's a very nice one. Happy Hour too! It's right back around this corner. Enjoy!"

So much for disapproval. She probably speaks jive, too.



The restaurant was bright and clean and new and nice ... and mostly empty. Too early in the evening, too early in the week.

As I took the 90-degree right into the bar, the first thing that struck me was the Wall O' Wine. The entire wall to my left was devoted to the fruit o' th' vine: floor-to-ceiling, full length of the room. Nice cherry wood shelves and X-cubes filled with the dark glass bottles. If I were a wine drinker, it would have made me giddy. But I'm not, so I simply turned to the bar to get my beer.

[In case you're wondering, there is no Grapes MacBarley in the clan.]

It's a nice long bar here. A woman and two kids sat in the last three stools. They were tasting soup. The early-20's male barkeep was pointing out this-and-that's about each bowl. It took about a sentence-and-a-half of dialogue to give away that they were all related. Only brothers talk and act like that to each other. Only moms have that tone of voice and body angle when talking with a bartender in a nice restaurant.

He broke off from his soup session to get me my Yingle. "\$3.50," he proclaimed. "Deal," I proclaimed. That price is not all that cranking good of a deal, but it's getting so hard to get anything at all under four bucks now that you rejoice over a tree-fitty.

I soon found myself looped into the conversation. The woman was telling her son the barkeep about this show she had watched on Discovery Channel last night. I just happened to have seen the first fifteen minutes or so of the show, so when she couldn't remember the title, I interjected it.

"It was called *Naked and Afraid*."



"Ya, that's right, thanks. And the director got bit by some spider or something..."

"A snake."

"Ya, that's right, it was a ridiculously poisonous snake, and they *saw one* in the woods later..."



There were a couple of other small details that I helped out with. She was doing OK, but she just strayed off course every now and then and stalled out. She needed to be nudged back into the groove and then she was off and running again. Once she got past the first quarter of the show, though, she was on her own.

At that point, my mind was free to peruse the bar and its decor. The

bar top is polished marble, with a southwestern red rocks tint. Niiice. The stools are tall, cherry wood, with rounded slat-backs and black cushions to pad your posterior. Niiice. Glass shelves between cherry wood dividers take up the back wall, with some funky art top center and a curious, large, framed, sepia-toned photo of somebody's eyes staring out over the bar.



At one point, a young boy walked in and just kinda stood by the front of the bar. The barkeep gave him a big hello and called him by his first name. The mom and kids all echoed the greeting. He smiled and waved, then bounced out of the room.

The mom looked at me and said, "If you haven't figured it out, we're all the same family here." I gave her a *yup, got it nod*.

My beer was gettin' low when I got up to take a few more photos. As I walked towards the front to get a full-bar shot, the hostess asked nicely, "Were you surprised that we have a bar?"

I chuckled and explained the Tour to her. I wasn't quite so wary of the *you damn drunk* judgmental vibe this time.

"Oh, I have one for you, I bet!"

Grin, "OK, whatcha got?"

"It's a wood-fired pizza place now, I think, down an alley off Duval, in Key Lime Square. You know where I mean? I used to bartend in there years ago and they have the cutest little square wood bar. You have to check it out. I'm sure it will still be there."

I was impressed! Mrs. Cleaver with the bar score!!

When I went back in to finish my final ounces, the barkeep was tallying out the ingredients of a bowl of something that he had brought out from the kitchen for them to try. "I know, I know," he was exhorting, "they're are things that you *hate*, but when you put them together, it's *awesome!*"

They had each taken a nibble and did not look the least bit convinced. I was not getting looped into that one. I knocked off the Gling of my Ying, waved thanks, bid Beav's mom good night, and headed off for a Fort Zack swim.

