

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

Bar #161:

Ambrosia Sushi Restaurant & Sake Bar

1401 Simonton Street

www.keywestambrosia.com

Saturday, 27 July, 5:45 PM

Sapporo Light (bottle) \$4.00

This hop took some convincing. B&J and Big Dog and I had just left The Strip Bar at the Reach and were headed northwest up Simonton. My own bar-stincts were clear and functioning fine, but those of my fellowship seemed to be in neutral.



If you know Brian, you know that when he deems it Time To Go, he just goes. If you have to finish your beer, hit the head, give someone a goodbye hug, pay your tab, whatever, he ain't waitin'. It's just the way he rolls, and I know it and deal with it. This time, the roll was aimed at a couple of worthy bars a few blocks up, but that final block of Simonton had one more itch to scratch. And it took more convincing than I thought it should.

For my own part -- which, let's face it, is the focus of this whole dang thang -- I wanted to scope out and jump on any bar that crossed my path. And here one was, on my right, tall and white, and they wanted to walk on outa sight.

Hey hold, hey hold, I tried to scold. A bar is here, they must have beer. Come back, please stop! Here we have a bar to hop!

They were already at the South Street intersection. I dashed ahead and said, "wait, wait, I'll be right back," knowing that I had a slim chance of reining in the Brian bulldoze.



I zoomed back to Ambrosia, opened the double glass front doors, leaned in and asked the hostess, who was drop dead gorgeous, "Does your sake bar sell beer and wine?"

She smiled strangely at me, which made sense since my approach was pretty strange, and said "oh, yes, we have a full bar."

Armed with that knowledge, I ran back to my teammates, who were just about to bag me and

move on. In the middle of South Street, I convinced them. "They have cold beer and a beautiful hostess." (I know what buttons to push.)

Brian and Big Dog heard the key words they needed to hear, arrested their momentum, and turned Ambrosia-ward.

In a way, I can't blame them. Ambrosia is well known as a fine sushi restaurant. Their sake bar is often mentioned in the same breath (or printed on the same line, as it is on their front wall), but the word *sake* comes across as a limiter, as if that one beverage is all they serve. I would have given this place a miss if that had been the case, but once I heard "full bar", I knew we had to hop it now. When would we be back on this block?

This is a very nice place. The atmosphere is cool and quiet. The back wall is floor-to-ceiling glass, there is a stand-up glass pane waterfall in the middle of the room, next to this bulbous, straw-ish chair that looks like it was woven by weevils. The bar is in the far left corner. So focused were we on it, that we walked right past the drop-dead gorgeous hostess without so much as a glance.

The whole place was pretty empty. There were a few diners way over at the far end of the room. There was no one seated at, or anywhere near, the bar. It is primarily a service bar, it would seem, with just a half-dozen seats. It can't happen often that a party of four comes in here just to drink.

Our barkeep was a sweet young blonde named Katie. She had a cute face that was made a tad less cute by the bright red skin around the bottom of her nose. Allergies were ravaging poor Katie, but she was a trooper and came in for her shift when no substitute could be found. She claimed that she didn't mind; busying herself at work could take her mind off her miseries.



And she was right. She served us with good cheer and eagerly went over menu items with Jan and daytime specials with Big Dog. Brian and I were content with beer. I knew I'd never be here to eat. Their reputation is excellent, but I don't even do cooked fish; raw fish would make me gag. Sushi lovers must think that is totally whacked. Hey, all the more soosh for y'all. Eat up!

The beer selection at the bar was a bit thin. No crafties. Far Eastern beers were it. Actually, they may have had Bud or Bud's ilk, but that doesn't even register with me. I opted for a Sapporo. It won't become my "usual" anytime soon, but it was cold and ... well, it was cold.

We chatted with Katie for a while and took our time with our beers. It was a pleasant place to hang. When they weren't quite so cold any more, we killed them off.

We were a little more come-as-you-are than the standard dinner crowd, but Ambrosia also serves as the on-property bar for the Santa Maria Suites, and their courtyard and pool are right outside that glass back wall. I'm sure they get some very casual tanners and swimmers popping in for a cooling cocktail.

Santa Maria has some damn nice rooms. Mama MacBarley and big bro Malt Jr. stayed in a two-bedroom suite on their second visit to the Conch Republic. Layout was a tad strange, with an enormous kitchen counter dominating the living space, but it was pretty swank.

When the place was being built, there was talk about a selling price of a million dollars per unit, but the real estate market tanked and they got a fraction of that. I dunno, though. If I were going to spend a million dollars on a residence, I would **not** be sharing my swimming pool with more than thirty other units' tenants and guests.

So, anyway, we were all glad that we had hopped Ambrosia, but we had more Simonton swilling ahead of us, so we waved bye to Kate the Red Nose Barkeep and moved on.

