

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

The Keep Calm and Hop On Tour
Hops MacBarley's Ongoing
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Bar #311

Moondog Cafe and Bakery

823 Whitehead Street
Monday 2/11, 12:30 PM

Brooklyn Winter Ale, draft, \$6

How often do you get served by the Citizen of the Day? Actually, in KW, since the *Citizen's* selector seems to choose pretty randomly and often picks a food-n-bev industry worker, it's not all that rare. And she wasn't the Citizen of this particular day, but had been very recently, like, maybe four days ago. I might not have even noted her if I didn't have Moondog on the short list of imminent Hops. Her employment here — as well as her being a professional singer hereabouts — had been listed in her blurb.



I would have bet that this would be a team Hop, with B&J accompanying me on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. But circumstances conspired to send me hither solo. Monroe County had insisted that the judicial process required my presence on this Monday, and said process was taking its own sweet time deciding if it did indeed need me. I had survived the first two rounds — where you sit through one of those “reverse lotteries”, hoping that your number does not get called — only to be told (along with 53 others) to take a 30-minute break and be back at 12:15.

Well, where are you gonna go for 30 minutes? Maybe you could zip off to Subway, grab a 6-inch and wolf it on the

way back, but with a noon-time line, even that's doubtful. I could've taken a brisk six-block walk home, taken a whizz and scurried back, but all that would have gotten me was sweaty.

So I stayed. I moved from my back row seat to a much more comfortable seat at the prosecutor's table and put some of the finishing touches on the last couple of Hopters.



When everyone came back, we were told to take another break, this time till 2:00. WTF?

Well, 90 minutes was *more* than enough time to go enjoy a Key West lunch, and the Freeman Justice Center's location made this an obvious choice. Sorry, B&J.

I hastened down Whitehead, knowing this place would be crowded. The outdoor porch deck was full, but, of course, it was the inside bar that I was after. I climbed the couple of wooden steps, musing that this was probably the only *bakery* among the 312 Hops. I pulled open the windowed door, and spied one vacant seat at the back corner of the bar. Jackpot. All it takes is one, right?



Perfect placement too: nobody on my right, and the man on my left was occupied with the woman on his left. No one to ensnare me in idle conversation or ask me that dreaded question, "whatcha writin'?"

This place was rockin'! Not with music, but with biznizz! Damn, they were slammed. Nice decor too. The peaked ceilings on each end of the building were raw wood, and the flat white ceiling over the bar area had bird foot-prints painted across it. The bar itself was cement, with a pale whitewash

that was deliberately inconsistent for an aged appearance. The bar seats had curved backs and curved seats and looked like woodgrain Formica or something.

The jury selection process had put me in the mood for a good Ale, so I opted for the Brooklyn Winter Ale. It was dark and hearty, perfect for fighting off the deep-winter chill of a day like this. I mean, I was wearing *long pants*. What says "winter" in Key West more than long pants? Granted, they were required attire for the Courthouse, and hardly necessary otherwise on this mostly sunny, 77-degree day, but, hey, winter is winter.

The usual burger was what I figured I'd be ordering, but Moondog threw me a curve. Two, actually. First, all the burgers had some kind of exotic ingredients on them, so nothing was screaming "EAT ME!" The grilled pizzas looked good, but if I ate half, what was I going to do, bring the other half with me back into Courtroom "A"?

On a side note, it bothered me that the sign read *Courtroom "A"* and not *Courtroom A*. Why did they need to put the A in quotes? Is it not really A, but just nicknamed that? What's its real name? Fuggin' A, huh?

But, anyw-A, the second curve came on the back of the menu, among the breakfast lists. It was most definitely lunch time, but I had not yet consumed a single morsel of food, so my fast had not yet been broken. I'm not much of a breakfast guy, but an occasional dose of French Toast, or a waffle, or a short stack o' flapjacks can sometimes strike my fancy. So, when I saw "The Elvis French Toast" and read the description — banana bread, peanut butter, bananas, crumbled bacon, maple syrup — I heard the Sirens' song. Had to have it. A server described it to me as "quite decadent".

The banana bread was the blackest banana bread I had ever seen. With the Winter Ale, deeply brown and flavorful as it was, it was a very dark lunch.

On the other side of the bar was what you'd probably call the dining room, even though it's all one room in here. A very cool space it is. The lights dangling from the high ceiling are like inverted baskets, and the back wall is covered by a huge,



colorful, Caribbean-ish mural. And every table was full. I wondered how many Elvis fans were here.

On my way back to the door, I took a gander at the bakery counter. Behind the display glass sat deeelicious looking pastries. The croissants looked especially delectable. And that bakery aroma, ahhhh...

But I had some scoundrel to doom to the pit of misery, so I skedaddled back to Courtroom "A".

