

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 17:

Grand Vin

1107 Duval Street

Wednesday 8/1, 9:30 pm

Staropramen Premium Beer (bottle)

This was an ice-breaking stop. I'm not a winer. Never developed a taste for it. Never actually tried. And no intentions in that vein.

But a bar is a bar. If craft beer havens like Porch and Krawl can have fine wines, maybe, just maybe, Grand Vin would have a semi-secret stash of extraordinary brews. It was worth a try. I mean, WTF, it's within belching distance of The Rum Bar, so not much would be lost if my venture were to fail.

I climbed the wooden steps into the tall classic white clapboard house. It's a nice place, for sure. I had been on the porch once before, but I'd never set foot inside.



There were a half-dozen people at the bar, a cluster of four yuppie-types, and a solo bearded man about my age. Is yuppie still a viable specie? Are there still yuppies out there, or did they flame out back in the 90s? I haven't heard the word for a while, so I have to wonder.

The barkeep finished his sentence, to the amusement of the cluster, and affably asked what he could do for me. For some reason, I was a little surprised when he didn't have a freaking French accent. I tried to sound more sophisticated than I am when I asked, *Do you serve only wine? Or do you also have beer?* I thought I sensed an eye-roll and chuckle among the yups.

The barkeep recognized my type, and nodded assuringly. *Go in the next room and look on the bottom shelf of the lefthand refrigerator.* Wow. Next room. Bottom shelf. Not exactly a prominent display.



The selection was lame: some of the way-too-usual American macrobrews, some more-odd-than-I-care-for fruity wheaty euro beer. And a “premium beer” from Prague in the Czech Republic: Staropramen. OK, never had this one before, and I’m not going back to the yuppies with a goddamn Bud.

When I brought it back to the bar and paid, I noticed that the bearded guy had the same flavor. We swapped a comment or two, and it turns out that I was an instant reply of him. He had asked the same thing, been told the same thing, and selected the same beer. That kind of explained the chuckling and eye-rolling.

We also agreed that Staropramen pretty much sucked. It had that sharp flavor that so many German and east Euro beers have. That must be popular over there, but it tasted like skunked Rolling Rock to me. My first Staropramen was definitely going to be my last



I had heard that the clientele here could “be a bit stuffy” but these people were cool. We were all watching the Olympics. Swimming was on, and it was a rare event that was not being won by an American. The eventual winner wore a white swimcap with a red-white-and-green flag on it. One of the yups said she thought it was Ireland. I



said, *No, those are Italy’s colors.* Beardman shot me down, *Nah, that’s not Italy.* I reiterated my belief that it was Italy’s palette, but he stuck to his guns, *Yeah, but that’s not their flag. Italy’s stripes are vertical, those are horizontal.*

The graphic finally appeared on the screen, and seven people said in unison, *Ohhhh, Hungary!* So we all learned the Hungarian flag. That is very valuable knowledge, and I can’t wait to wield it. I hope before the

Games are done, some Hungarian dude does something really whizbango and the roomful of people wants to know where he’s from. I want to boastfully bellow, *He’s Hungarian, ya dumb bastids! What are ya, retahhded?* That oughta win some friends.

Grand Vin has a nice front porch too. I might've set a spell, but the yups had adjourned thither and I did not want to seem like I was stalking them.

This was as far as I had gotten in my one prior visit to this property. I was walking by and I saw Barb sitting there enjoying a glass of wine, so I went up to say hi. I took the seat next to her and we chatted for a bit, watching Duval go by. After a few minutes, when I decided to move on, I noticed the sign on the wall over her head, as if it were a caption.

I had to look up the small top sign ("wicked cat") when I got home, but I thought the bottom one was hilarious.

