

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 53:

Pepe's Cafe

www.pepescafe.net

806 Caroline Street

Sunday 9/9, 12:30 pm

Yuengling (draft) \$1.50!



Tour Stop #53 was Pepe's at lunchtime on a gorgeous, hot, late-summer Sunday. I had never been in Pepe's before. The outer façade is a tad shabby, but it's that way by design, I'm sure. It's been in business for over 100 years, so why look new? The old-style look gives you a sense of



history, as well as a common-sense nudge to remind you that restaurants don't stay open for 100 years if the food sucks.

I took a few photos out front before going in. One small sign near the front door read, *Local Prices For Everyone Since 1909*. I liked the sound of that.

As soon as I walked through the gate, I liked this place. It has a backyard quality to it. The front half is brick underfoot with old blue cloth canopies overhead and a few well-varnished wood tables in between. One even has a fancy glass chandelier hanging over it. The back half, where the bar is, has more varnished tables under a sloped overhang with wooden walls that match the tables, and several glass-windowed cabinets filled with Pepe's souvenir merchandise. It's all held together with bright white beams and posts. It may be backyard, but it's clean and nicely kept backyard.



The bar sits low under similar white-beamed roof, with about eight or nine regular chairs – not stools, mind you,

chairs; it's a low, table-height bar. The space behind the bar was only about 4' by 8' – and there were two people working it.

This was just a quick-stop-drink-n-go. I was on the way to IDs for the Pats opener, and I was running short on time. As decreed by Tour rules, I sat at



the bar. Three quarters of the tables were taken, and only two bar seats were open. Plates with food sat in front of everyone. As I settled in, the young lady barkeep looked my way, and asked, *Lookin' for some brunch?*

No, I smiled, just a Yuengling, please.

She gave that pursed-lipped *fair enough* look, and put a frosty mug under the tap. As she set it in front of me, I asked, *What do I owe ya?*

Dollar-fifty.

I was stunned. I had wallet open and bills in my hand, ready to count out four, five, or more, as necessary. After a second, I said happily, *That is ouutstanddding*. A buck and a half. You can't even buy a Powerball ticket

for that. Granted, the Yuengling won't make you wealthy, but, realistically, neither will the ticket.

I put two dollar bills on the bar, and started mucking around with my phone, looking at the pretty pictures and composing my Facebook update. The barkeep took the two bucks, went to the register, came back and laid two quarters softly on the bar. I did the right thing: took the coins and put down a dollar in their place. Buck a beer; it's Hops' way. Just cuz the beer is cheap, doesn't mean I'm gonna be.

Pepe's web site says:

The eldest eating house in the Florida Keys.

A fairly good place, for quite a long while.

Open under old management.

The white lettering painted on front door proclaims the place as *Pepe's Café and Steakhouse*. I'm gonna have to come back sometime and eat here. It's way wrong that I haven't done so in my decade-plus here. And Hops wants to do things right.

The Peace, Love and IPA Tour has discovered -- or rediscovered -- several places that I'm eager to return to, but I still have almost *four dozen* damn bars to get to! **Seven more weeks** of dedicated bar-Hopsing.

Dayummm.

I'll either have to start double- or triple-timing my drinking -- which just might get dangerous -- or hold off till the Tour is over, and do my encores.

Given that Day 100 will be the climactic night of Fantasy Fest, I just might take a couple of days off before I get around to those encores...

