

## 100 Bars in 100 Days

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

### BAR 63:

Duffy's Steak & Lobster House  
[www.duffyskeywest.com](http://www.duffyskeywest.com)  
1208 Simonton Street  
Friday 9/21, 9:30 pm

Sam Adams (bottle – new label!) \$5.00

No virgin turf here. I've had many a dinner in this establishment, and most of them were on the house. That'll put a restaurant on your favorites list in a hurry.

I spent almost a year manning the front desk at Key Lime Inn, a cozy and rustic guest house property less than a quarter-mile up Truman. We had coupons from dozens of restaurants and attractions that we doled out to the guests. We put some sort of initials or code on each one we gave away, and urged the guests to use the ducats to glean delectable bennies, like a complimentary cocktail, or a free slice of Key Lime Pie, or half-price on a second entrée. The restaurants would collect the tickets, save and sort them, and every few weeks, they would kick us back our concierge commission, usually \$5 or so per ticket.



Well, Duffy's may not be rated #1 on a lot of *KW's Finest* lists, but it was the easiest one to get to for a couple who just arrived in town and wanted an easy feed on their first night. I always described it sincerely as "good, honest food, reasonably priced." I sold it pretty well, and, hence, I got a lot of kickbacks, which led to all those free meals.

It actually used to irk the hell out of our manager, Marlon, who could spy on all our conversations through the ceiling vent that led to his upstairs office. He had a little more elaborate tastes, annnnnnd a significant other who owned a restaurant just around the corner

on Duval, so he used to admonish us to take the guests' experience to a higher plane, ignore the opportunity for our own gains, and o'erleap the more common Duffy's. I always nodded and kept giving out their coupons.

I wasn't completely blind to other options. As a good concierge, I'd steer guests to different places each night, and often that other venue would be recommended on the second evening. I got just one free dinner from there, though – the \$30 GC *almost* covered the steak – so my motivation was a bit thin.

Anyway, this Tour visit would be my first return to Duffy's since the KLI job ended in favor of my current LAE gig – almost four years. Shame on me, huh? Food's not free, so fucketh thee? I *like* Duffy's honest food. WTF was I thinking?

Duffy's is mostly a place to sit down at the dinner table or in a booth and dine. It does, however, have a small, seven-stool bar just to right as you walk in. It has the tall, slat-backed stools, and the curved front edge that I like so much. It fits your folded arms so well as you lean forward on it, and – much more importantly to the staff – it blocks things from sliding off the front.

Overall, the bar is primarily a service station for the food-wielders, and secondarily as a place where a customer can swill a little while waiting for a table. But you can also get your food *at* the bar, and that's what I was aiming to do.

The Tour really had not had a dinner stop yet, even though I was in my sixth dozen. Some HH wings at Kelly's and Boathouse, a bowl of Beer Cheese Soup at Flats, a yum JDL BLT, a peck of bar-snack bacon at 2-Cent, and some good free buffet food at T's had been about it for food. The rest were just beer, here-here! So dinner was long overdue.

I ordered my usual (if you can have a "usual" four years later): Marinated Sirloin Tips, medium rare, with rice, and a salad with 1000 Island. Mmmm. Sets the mouth to watering, duddinit?

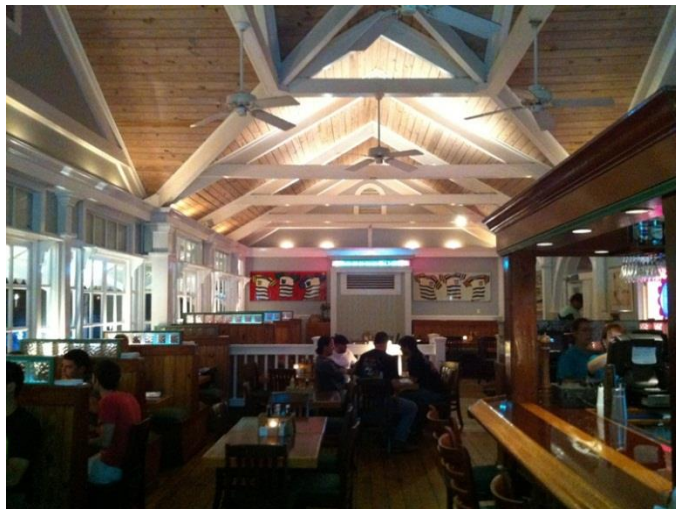
But first, there would be – yes, Sam Adams, but even more key to the repast – **breadddd**. Oh, yes, a long loaf of warmed bread with eleven – count 'em, 11 – pads of butter. Yessss.

I've sometimes chosen dinner venues just on a place's bread. There was a place in Quincy, MA called The Hollow that used to bake their own mini-loaves of white bread in stone ovens and serve them still hot to your table. I could never finish my prime rib because I was always stuffed to the gills with bread. But Fredrick The Great, my trusty Lab-Shep mutt, was always willing to do his doggy bag duty. What a trooper.



Give me good bread and me be happy. Salad was crisp and cool and just the right size, too. Steak tips arrived, juicy and hot. A bit heavy on the marinate, but tender and grand. A small mountain of rice helped deal with the excess sauce. All for \$19.99, baybee.

In my ongoing assessment of The Ceilings of Key West Bars, I'd be remiss if I did not thumbs-up Duffy's. A slightly different category, I reckon, being so predominantly a restaurant and so little a bar, but a fine ceiling nonetheless. It's high and steeply sloped, with multiple peaks of light wood, central lighting, and clean white beams. Nice.



A couple of gray-haired gents sat around the corner of the bar from me, so we were kinda facing each other, but kinda not. They had already finished, and were engaged in a jovial, goof-on-each-other conversation. They eventually figured out that I was listening in, so they extended their range and included me. Turns out that they were Canadian but owned a place on Truman.

At one point, one guy asked me who I favored in the fall election. His friend rolled his eyes with an *oh no, here he goes* look. I told him that I thought, being middle class and all, that I was fucked either way. He was surprised at my non-partisan opinion, and seemed disappointed that he had not stirred

up a passionate political exchange. He did say that Romney would be better for Canada. I replied, "You can have him, then."

I asked him if they, being Canadians, were big hockey fans. He scoffed. "Hockey is just a big waste of water." I had to laugh at that.

They excused themselves and walked, just a tad unsteadily, out the door.

As I finished up and made ready to affect my own exit, my barkeep wished me "Good luck on your Tour!" I gave her a big thank-you bow, but chuckled in reply, "I'm not sure how much 'luck' I will actually need. I'm just going to bars."

"Well, you neVERRRR knowww," she winked.

So, here's hoping that her luck comes in handy.