

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 74:

Braza Lena Brazilian Steakhouse
www.brazalena.com
421 Caroline Street
Monday 10/1, 9:00 pm

Sam Adams (bottle) \$5.50

Number 74. I can't think of anything famous associated with that number. I I googled it and got some really lame shit. So Braza Lena didn't have anything very difficult to live up to.



I was here for the bar, yes, yes, but I was at least as much here for the burrrgerrrr. The Filet Mignon Burger. Doesn't that just sound intense?

I've been a burger man since before I was born. Maybe longer. If I ever get in the unenviable position of being offered a Last Meal, I won't be asking for lobster or roast turkey or even lasagna (unless it was Mama McBarley's zag, mmmmm). No, sir or ma'am, I'll be ordering a big juicy bacon cheeseburger with cheddar and mayo (maybe a thin slice of pickle, placed underneath), medium rare, please, with a Harpoon IPA, or two. Then you can shoot a happy Hops.

So, when word reached me about this legendary Filet Mignon Burger, some sirens went off inside me. They were loud, too! (I faked that it was my phone making the noise and everyone seemed to buy it.)

Monday night, 9:00. Probably not going to be many people here. It was New Month Day, so everyone was probably all partied out from the night before.

Before heading in, I took a few photos of the outside. I tried to get the phony torches, but eh, not so good. I tried to get the sign, and that was mmm ok. The shot I coveted, though, was the head-on front door shot, with both torches. Woulda been a cool pic except that it said BRAZA ENA.



And the ho. See her standing in the doorway, wearing her tight shorts and tank top, and smoking her ciggy? When I went to go in, she asked, "Didja take my picture?" I smiled and said, "I sure did." She seemed very pleased.

I would have had no intention of sitting in the dining room anyway – *verrry* nice though it was – but Colette had told me that the FMB could only be ordered in the bar;

apparently a burger, even a Filet Mignon Burger, is beneath the dignity of the dining room.

That made me feel good, actually. I wouldn't be getting a snooty repast fit only for gentry; I'd be getting a common man's portion and presentation of reaalllly good beef. And I was psyched for it.

The amount of business in the bar surprised me. Almost every one of the dozen or so seats was taken. *MNF* was on the telly and a group of four businessmen-on-working-vacation types were front and center. I bellied up to their left and, just as I was settling onto my seat, their food arrived: four – I could tell by the look -- Filet Mignon Burgers. The guys looked primed to pig.



To verify, I asked my neighbor, who was the ringleader of the group as it turned out, if that was, in fact, the famed FMB of which I had heard so much. He replied with pride, "Yes, indeed! I get this every time I'm in town." The other three nodded in happy assent as they began to prep their burgers: ketchup, A1, salt, mayo, tomato on, tomato off, lettuce pulled apart, lettuce under, lettuce over, pickle yes, pickle no. Someone should have barked at me to "*stop gawking at our food*", but they were all too focused.

I ordered up my Sam Adams and declined the menu. "I want one of those," I stated decisively. My bar neighbor began to adopt a protective pose. "Ha, I mean, I want one just like those."

Monday Night Football wasn't holding my interest (I think Romolicious was playing *The Steel Curtain*), so I wandered a bit, snapping a few pics of the decorations. Nice place, this Braza Ena.



The four burger barons were in heavy Chow Mode. They were all decent sized guys – like maybe played-football-in-college size – and these burgers did not stand a chance. They had all spent the afternoon "pounding the dimples out of golf balls" and had worked up a thirst and an appetite. The ringleader said he was contemplating ordering a second FMB.

Then, I lost all sense of their existence because my own plate arrived. It looked huge, though I think the menu said a 10-ounce burger. Maybe it was 10 ounces before cooking and still 10 ounces after cooking, unlike more fatty beef that shrinks up when ya cook it.

Sometimes high expectation just damns something to fall short, but not in this case. Jesus H. Tap-Dancing Christ, was this deeeelicious! Mmmmmm. I won't waste adjectives on it because words are just too weak. Fantastic.

And then it was gone. My final bites got smaller and smaller. I held what easily could have been my last mouthful, and looked at it ruefully. I bit off half of it. Then half of that. I just didn't want it to be gone. Sob.



But one should not weep for the passing of a fine meal; one should rejoice in its memory and aspire to repeat it soon. And that's what I did. This will not be an Only Once Meal. Hops shall return.

It cost \$16, which was fine because it was worth it. Still, I won't be doing a \$16 burger every week. Plus beer, plus tax, plus tip, that's closing in on \$30. So I'll be picking my spots, but I will be back.

The same girl was standing outside the front door when I left. I wanted to ask her, "Are you still here, or here again??" She had a fresh ciggy that she was making love to. I gave her another little smile, just so she'd have something to fantasize about as she slipped under her sheet tonight...

