

Bar Hoppin' With Hops
The Second Century Tour
Hops MacBarley's 2013
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Bar 118:

Cafe Sole

1029 Southard Street

www.cafesole.com

Wednesday, 19 June 2013, 6:00 PM



Michelob Amber Bock (bottle) \$2.50 HH

Spaten Lager (bottle) \$2.50 HH

B&J Inc. would join forces once again with Hops & Associates -- in fact, they were the associates -- this time, for the *Tour de Southard*. Within two blocks of that street, we'd be hopping through three of Key West's favored restaurants, and, of course, we wouldn't be eating a damn thing.

I donned one of my nicer running shirts, my cleanest pair of athletic shorts, and my least-stained canvas slippers, shouldered my olive drab US Army surplus ammunition bag -- the common man's purse -- and biked on down to Southard Street to rendezvous with my associates.



Appropriately sweaty, I entered Cafe Sole. I should point out that both Cafe and Sole should have an *accent ague* over the final letter, so they would be pronounced like *Caf-AY, So-LAY*. The problem is, though, that I don't know how to do that in this blog set-up, so you'll have to do your part as an interactive reader and insert them as you go. Good luck.

It was not a first-time visit, but I do think it was a second-timer. I don't do "nice" restaurants much. For one thing, I'm more comfortable being "not so nice". For another, I'm more comfortable spending less money. Nice restaurants price their food

higher (a) because it's better quality and better prepared, and (b) to keep Hops' ilk out. It works too.

The only other time I had been here was about eight years ago, armed with a \$50 GC that I had won in a road race (raffle). George and I availed ourselves of splendid victuals and easily surpassed the value of the coupon. He ordered some fish thing, and I ordered the roast duck. I dunno why. It's not like I'm crazy about duck. I think I had tried it just once before. Maybe I was just feeling ducky -- as opposed to feeling just ducky. Ha.

Anyway, we were doing drinks and bread and salad and digging it all when our waitress came to our table carrying George's fish. (It was cooked and on a plate, of course, I don't want to you picture this chick waving a wet fish at him.) She placed his platter on the table, then looked at me and said kindly, "Your steak will be right out."



"My what?"

"Your filet."

"Filet of Duck?"

A pause. "Oh, shit."

We laughed. Rarely do you hear a waitress at a nice restaurant say "oh, shit." I assured her that steak would be just fine and that I wasn't all that sold on the waterfowl anyway. I also suggested

that she not tell the cook, though I did hint that getting the steak for the price of the duck might be a nice touch. I did, it was, and the steak was deeeeelicious.

So, back I was (though *sans* GC), and full of zeal for the *Tour de Southard*. I strode right in only to find that the bar was already full. B&J had gotten here ahead of me and had taken the only two seats at the tiny bar. The seats were very French: tall, thin, loopy wire rounded backs and light colored cushions. They looked comfortable, but no match for those bouncy beauties at The Grand.

Our barkeep was also the host. The staff all dressed in black. I assume it was not a coincidence. B&J had already apprised the keeper of tonight's quest. He seemed to think it was a beer tour as well, because he immediately suggested one of his more obscure beers, Michelob Amber Bock. How European. I gave him the *That'll be fine, pal* wave and spent about sixty seconds wandering around and photographing the place.

Sometimes I get odd looks from the staff and guests as I snap my pix. They're not always disapproving, but mostly just a WTF. They draw whatever twisted conclusions their minds cook up and shrug it off, though. They probably just assume that I'm collecting photos to use in the blog of the 150 bars that I'm touring. Ya think?

Sometimes I'm a tad self-conscious about it and try to use the cam discreetly, which isn't the easiest thing with this iPad, mini though it may be. I can hold it upright on the bar like I'm reading something and slyly take a shot, but the angle is pretty limiting, and it's not very convincing. Nobody reads at that angle. Dumbass.

Part of the issue is that people don't always like being in a picture taken by someone they do not know. But nobody seemed to mind here at Cafe Sole, maybe because I was being bold and not sneaky. People don't like sneaky. Maybe, though, nobody minded because nobody was here.

Also, discreet pics are extra tough indoors since the camera has to be held still for several minutes (it seems) while the auto focus snuffs around and the shutter shuts for six forevers. Move before that thing releases and your pic is history, my friend. That might explain some of the not-quite-so-crisp images in the various hop accounts.

The lay of the land is nice here. There's a great-looking row of two-top tables by the latticed wall, all draped with white tablecloths and accented by red pillows. There are some enormous utensils hanging from the lattice: a 48-inch fork, a 60-inch spatula – must serve big food here.

In the corner of our bar room stood a small round table with four wrought-iron chairs. The metal was formed into a nice sun shape. The whole thing looked totally French, *ca va*?

Pics acquired, I returned to the bar to find Jan perusing a menu. This seems to be standard procedure. Jan gives us legitimacy with an honest scout- out of the board of fare "for future reference." She is sincere in her scouting, and Brian likes it because he might get a good meal out of it some day. I just stand by, saying, "This bar does food too? Why?"

My Bock went down quickly. Ha. Surprise. Our barkeep, a very fit, short-haired German dude, noting that I had had the final MAB, suggested Spaten Lager as a follow-up. Another wave, another pour, another tall thin chilled glass. Good drinking, yahhh.

At times, B and I pace off of J. Two beers for each of us, one glass o' wine for her. Depends on the wine, the mood, and the position of Neptune at sunrise, but if she's on pace, we be rockin'.

This time, we all knocked off our last yummy ounces together, paid up, and rocked on outa Cafe Sole. We headed south down Southard to the next Tour stage. It would not be a mountainous stage.





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