

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

Bar #125:

**Seven Fish**

623 Olivia Street

[www.7fish.com](http://www.7fish.com)

Saturday, 22 June, 7:00 PM

*Peroni (bottle) \$5.00*



When I worked a couple of blocks away, at the front desk of the Key Lime Inn, I routinely recommended this place to guests, often touting it as having "the best seafood on the island." Trouble is, I never ate here. I was never even inside until tonight. To me, *the best seafood on the island* is a Wendy's fish sandwich. I never acquired the taste for ocean food.

I had no qualms (or trepidations) about the recommendation, though; I was passing along the say-so of people that I knew who *did* like seafood. Some people would take a stand for A&B or Commodore, but more in the context of *as good as*.

So, here I was, to find how out just how good their ... **bar** was. Me, eat? Ha. I do that in the privacy of my own home. The public doesn't need to see me eat.



And, hey, it's *nice* in this place! When I would tell guests how to get here, I'd tell them to walk down Elizabeth Street for a block, look left, and when they saw a little white building that looked like a dry cleaners, they were there. So plain and tiny looking on the outside, but roomier than expected inside and done up in a simple and modern style.

And *crowded!* Biznizz be good at the Fish! I reckon the place can hold close to fifty fine folks, including the five-seat bar, and it was filling up fast.

I got the final available seat at that bar. Good thing, too. At a place that is primarily a bar, if all the stools are taken, you can just bellow over somebody's head, procure a bev from the keep, and go stand somewhere to watch the game, dig the tunes, or do some good ol' gawking. That bushwa wouldn't fly here: no place to stand without looking like a total dork.



I suppose if it was a packed house and you were waiting for a table to open up, then having a husband or two standing next to their bar-seated wives would seem pretty normal. But a solo dude standing behind five strangers, while a few tables were available, nahhhhh, that would be frowned upon. *Even I* would feel awkward trying to make that work.

When I worked at Uno's in Woburn MA, we were subject to a ridiculous city law that limited service to only the people who were seated, and prohibited standees to be in possession of a drink -- even water! Ya think that caused some umbrage on a busy Saturday night? A couple has a twenty-minute wait for a dinner table, and there is one seat at the bar. She sits, orders wine. Fine. He stands, orders a Manhattan. He is denied. He is miffed. He tries to share a seat with her. He is denied; one person per seat, the law says.

She finishes her wine and offers to stand so he can get a drink. He can now sit and swill to his heart's content, but is even more pissed off because he looks like a lug making his wife stand. How much of a tip do you think I'm gonna get off this guy? Ya. Not even.

Their table is ready now. Can he carry that half-finished Manhattan to the table? Of course not! Do you think you're someplace sensible?? The host or hostess has to carry the drink for him until he is seated at his table. Now he feels as if he's being treated like a child, like the clumsy bastard would spill it if we let him carry it. City law or not, we still took the fallout for it.

And we couldn't just blow it off because the ABC was constantly on patrol for violators. Often, the miffed man in that couple was the ABC operative. What a nightmare.

But then I woke up and I was in Seven Fish in Key West. Ahhhhhh....



The bar top here is very industrial. It's made of the same shiny silver metal that you see on the big tool boxes in big-ass pickup trucks. Aluminum Diamond Plate, I think it's called. At first glance, it looked odd, but I like odd, so I went with it. It's clean and bright, and the lights that dangle from the ceiling above it made me think of *The Jetsons* for some reason.

The barkeep was a pleasant, dark-haired woman, more young than old. She greeted me with menu in hand. With a look that would assure her that I knew how odd it was, I smiled, "I'm only here for a drink." I detected an askance glance from the woman seated next to me. I bristled at her temerity and wanted to tell her where to stick her askance glance. But, then, I reasoned, what can you expect from someone who eats in public?

The beer selection was craftless, so I chose a Peroni, believing, for a moment, that I was in an Italian restaurant. Italians eat fish too, do they not? Maybe not seven of them, though.

It wasn't till I was prepping to depart that I noticed the most prominent window decoration: strangely cut, and very strangely colored, wooden or metal fish -- 7 of them (of course) -- hanging side-by-side-by-side-etc., in the large window up to the left behind the bar. Good, funky, display. The kind of thing you seldom see at a dry cleaners. So maybe my description was a tad off if you approached from that direction.



I also noticed a plaque high up on the wall behind the bar, declaring that Seven Fish had earned a Top Food Award from the Zagat folks. My description may have been shaky, but my recommendation was right on, after all.

