

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

Bar #162:

Abbondanza

1208 Simonton Street

www.abbondanzakeywest.com

Saturday, 27 July, 6:30

Sam Adams Boston Ale (draft) \$5?

Consecutive Hops beginning with A. That alone warrants a hey-hey beer.

The daytime heat was softening a bit as we walked the two blocks here. Shadows helped.

There was still some uncertainty about whether Abbondanza had a viable bar, or if they just had a service bar. We had all eaten there, but none of us could remember seeing an honest-to-Normy bar in there. As we opened the front door, I was anxious. We paused wordlessly for a second, then laughed heartily at ourselves as we saw the center of the room directly ahead of us dominated by a full bar and a few high-top rounds. Barkeep, a round of *Duhhh*, please.

There have been a few places on these Tours where I/we were not able to state with certainty whether there was a bar. In a few cases, we had to do a head slap when we not only found the bar, but found that I/we had already been in the bar before. In this case, it was Jan. Once she saw it, she remembered waiting in here for a table at least once.



Such a wait is not surprising. Abbondanza packs in a good crowd for dinner, and packs a pile of food into its dinners. I have to wonder how many pounds of pasta this restaurant goes through in a year.



Gotta be close to a ton. Every time I've eaten here, the entree has been served atop a heap o' fettucini, vermicelli, spaghetti, or some angel's hair. Six pounds a night, on average, would give them tonnage. On busy nights, they might do 30 pounds. I dunno. What do you think?

But, tonight, none of that mattered. Booze

was the order of biznizz and the order of biznizz was booze. We didn't exactly have a biznizz-like demeanor, but we're better off without one.

The bar was untended when we walked in, and we saddled up on the tall wooden stools. They had green padding on the seats, and a single curved slat behind your back. There were eight of them, so the bar went from empty to half-full when we arrived. A few strings of what looked like Christmas lights gave it all some extra color. I have no doubt that they just didn't bother to take them down after Christmas, but I wondered: Which Christmas? 2012? 2005?

After a moment, a tall, slender, and lovely young blonde woman came into the room and walked behind the bar. I guessed European right away. Some of the Eastern Europeans, especially, just carry themselves a certain way; they walk tall and smooth, with excellent posture. Quite sexy.



Her name was Jola, but pronounced like Yola. I think we all wanted to sing *Yola-Yo-Yo-Yo-Yo-Yolaaaa*, but none of us wanted to be the idiot who actually did it. She probably gets that a lot anyway. Idiots.

Jola came here from Lithuania nine years ago. Lithuania's loss. The first true love of my life was tall, blonde and Lithuanian. No, not gonna go there, fret not.

Brian explained to Jola what we were doing, and she got quite enthusiastic about it. She seemed damn proud to be bar number 161. [Note that the *Flying Monkeys Adjustment* had not yet occurred.] I urged her to check for blog updates, and I'll bet she did, for a month or so before giving up on my lazy ass.



We were liking this little bar. When we were halfway done with our bevs, two more people came in and took the two seats on the side of the bar. This place was filling up,

and we were **all** here just to drink! Screw food. If you want food, go a restau-- uh, scratch that.

Maybe it was the direction I was facing, but it was easy to forget that we were in an Italian eatery and not some cool little bar. Jola wasn't pushing menus on us, she was just doing the barkeep thing, and I had no view of anyone at tables shoveling pasta into their gullets.

I could feel my anchor starting to drop, but we had a couple more hops to make before we could go out drinking, so my cronies dragged me away from Jola's bar. We waved a fond farewell, she called out that she would look for the blog, and we vanished into the gloaming. Whatever that is.

ADDENDUM: October 2013

As part of an organized Upper Duval Bar Crawl, I came back to the Abbondanza bar with my co-workers. Jola was working. After a little while, I said, "You may not remember, but I was here several weeks ago with my friends doing our own bar tour..."

"Yes!" she interjected happily, "We're Bar 161!"

I was floored. And flattered.

So FINALLY, Jola, you and your cool little bar have made the blog!