

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

Bar #165:

Salsa Loca

411 Petronia Street

www.salsalocakeywest.com

Friday, 2 August, 6:00



Dos Equis (draft) \$5.00

The trouble with being ahead of schedule is that you get lazy and fall behind schedule. Then you have to gird up your loins and make another rally. Ha, the trials and tribulations of bar hopping. Not exactly stressful.

That's *loins*, not lions. You could gird up your lions, too, if you're into that kind of thing. Not sure how the lions would feel about being girded up. Let me know how it goes.

So. Yes.

Another hot summer night in Cayo Hueso. Go figure. This one was a rendez-hop. Big Dog, Brian, and I would be convening from different directions at this designated Loca-tion. Ha. A couple of texts crossed paths, our plipped words bouncing off satellites and back to earth, as if they had some kind of importance, and the time was loosely agreed upon. [I have never deemed my words satellite-worthy; it just seems like those billion-dollar space thingoes should have something better to do than redirect my stupid bullshit. Hard to imagine that all those scientists had trillions of dumbass texts in mind when they concocted all this, but I reckon they did.]

Salsa Loca has a loyal following, and that is a good thing because they got a little hard to follow for a while. They had the little alley off Angela Street when I first made note of them. The same spot that was once Awful Arthur's and would later be inhabited by a rapid succession of bar blunders. Then, they did kind of a merge with Cowboy Bill's for a while and shared the vacant hall of death (which would become The Rose Tattoo). Then the shit hit the fan with the Cowboy, and the whole property got zippered up, so SL was SOL.

Plucky folks that they are, though, they found new ground to call their own. It took a few months, but they finally recently opened up on Petronia

Street. Most people know it as the place where Better Than Sex used to be. Some of us also remember it was the place where a funky little bar called The Bayou used to be.



Salsa Loca -- which, I guess, the Spanish people just hear as *Crazy Sauce* -- is best known as a restaurant, featuring some kick-your-ass Mexican

food. The Big Dog loves their stuff, and absolutely demanded that he be included in the SL Hop. So, we set it up around his schedule. I got to the new locale about 6:30, figuring they'd be there already.

Not so. Hm. I knew how to handle a situation like this, though -- (Why, Hopsy, been *stood up before*??) ((Piss off, psyche.)) -- and belted up to the bar to order me a beer.

"Dos Equis, por favor," I said in my best American accent. I think I was pretty convincing as a gringo. The keeper may have heard it as *Two X's, please*, anyway. Sometimes people just think in other languages. Weird.

So, I was late, but they -- Big Dog and B (without J tonight) -- were even later, making me look early. Somehow, I had gained the upper hand. Made me feel smart, or something. Nothing like drinking alone at a bar to make you feel smart, right?

After a while, they still hadn't arrived, so I started waiting again. If you only wait a short while at a time, and then start over, it doesn't seem like as long a wait. Wait ten minutes three times. I guarantee it will feel less than one 30-minute wait.

I sent another text out into space, aiming for some satellite, trying to angle it jussssst right, so it would bounce back somewhere within a couple of blocks. I must have missed -- I'm usually a pretty good shot -- because no replies came back. Maybe *they* missed. (Why accept the blame when you can swat it someone else's way.)

The barkeep slipped me a basket of chips and bowl of salsa. I do *not* dig Mexican food. I munched on a few chips, but dry, eschewing the salsa. They were damn boring that way, but I'd rather be safely bored than ambushed by searing spices.

My co-hoppers' delay gave me a chance to get a good look at some of the decorations. Plenty of bright and witty signs adorn the wood-slat walls, and the far wall is painted in a comic-ish style mural. It's a happy vibe. They want their customers to smile.



The place was getting *muy* busy. It was almost half full when I arrived, and in my fifteen minutes of toe-tapping and finger-drumming, the rest of the tables filled up. I was beginning to worry that my associates would get shut out of sitting space at the bar.

Soon, a text from B told me that they were on their way. He and Big Dog had arranged to meet at the stairs of Pincher's and come here from there, but the Dog had gotten there a little early and employed the same strategy

as me: when in doubt, hit the bar. B waited on the sidewalk for a while, then went up to the bar himself. So it goes. Nothing wrong with an unofficial hop to warm up for the real thing.

Not long thereafter, they arrived and, as luck would have it, got the last two remaining bar stools, which were, as luck would have it, beside me. That was kind of planned, but I didn't have high confidence about it working.

B wasn't hungry, but it was time to, truly, let The Big Dog eat. He was in chow-down mode and ordered up accordingly. This would be entertaining: a large guy eating a lot of hot, spicy food. Brian and I were content with chips and beer, though he sauced his chips.

Bizniz was good here. Plenty of clink and clank and kitchen clatter, the mumbly mix of the voices of servers and customers, with frequent pops of laughter here or there, and the sizzzzzzle of food passing by. By the time Big Dog's order arrived, I thought he was going to eat the bar. B and I kept our hands and feet away from his mouth and tried to maintain a casual convo while he chomped away between us. He was one happy dude, occasionally pausing to utter some contented sigh or a *man, oh, mannnnn* kind of appreciative moan.

We all had more beer. Dog needed his for fire control; B and I were just our usual thirsty selves.

With the Hop mission and the Feed mission both accomplished, we proffered our bar seats to some waiting patrons and moved off Duvalward.

ADDENDUM: February 2014

Never mind. CLOSED. Walked by on the way to Bar Hop #202 (Firefly) and there was brown paper blocking all the windows. Will Crazy Sauce reappear somewhere else? Stay tuned.

ADDENDUM ADDENDUM: November 2016

Salsa Loca lives! It's back in the Angela Street alley that it occupied once before. They are once again affiliated with Cowboy Bill's, which is also, somehow, back from the dead.