

Bar Hoppin' With Hops
The Keep On Hoppin' Tour
Hops MacBarley's 2014
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Bar 202:

Firefly

223 Petronia Street

www.fireflykeywest.com

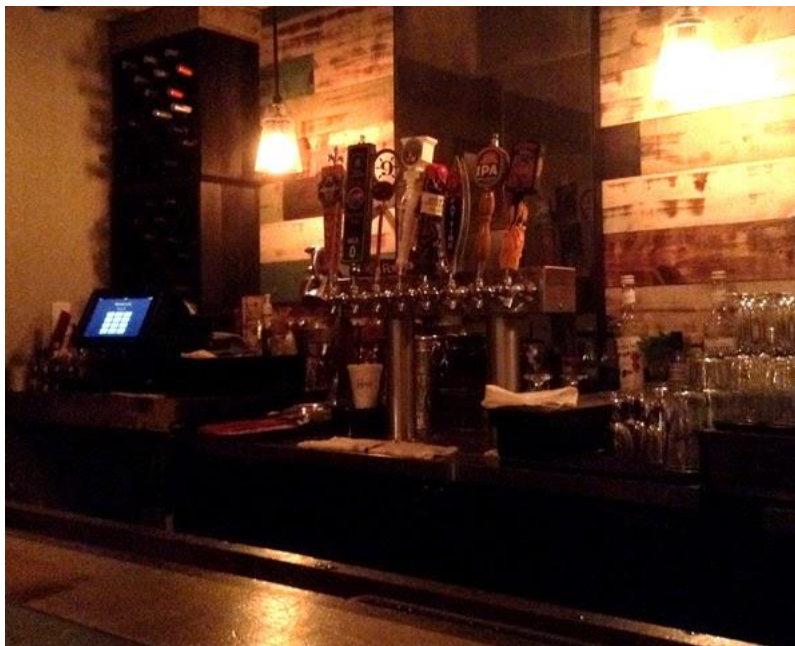
Saturday, 8 February, 7:00 PM

Fat Tire Amber Ale (draft) \$6.00

This place was another part of the impetus to resume hopping. It opened up just a few weeks ago, and I was eager to check it out.

Becca, whom I first met as one of the management team that opened World of Beer (#101) about a year ago, had relocated over here.

So it was that B&J and I ventured into Bahama Village on this cool Saturday evening. And it wasn't even Goombay! It seems the only time I walk down the lower blocks of Petronia is during that famous Caribbean festival that launches the annual Fantasy Fest week madness. The other preeminent places on Petronia -- Blue Heaven (#89) and Santiago's Bodega (#90) -- were both hopped on the Saturday afternoon of Goombay. The street was alive with booths and color and food and people, and it was fun to stroll



down and around amid the good vibes and hot autumn sunshine.

Four months removed from that festival, Petronia was a lot quieter. And darker. Wintertime sunsets were in effect, and the streetlights were on already. This street is quite well lit, and it needs to be. Some people would tell you to be wary of Bahama Village, that it is entirely too close to



Key West's more dangerous neighborhoods.

Yes, even paradise has its "ghetto," where drug deals and various other nefarious deeds are far too routine, especially at night. We all know that evil lurks in the dark. Light is its enemy. But Petronia Street is lined with really bright streetlights. They have the old style shape, to match the 100-year-old buildings, but they totally flood the street in light. Shadows are hard to find.



As a result, there was no trepidation in the walk to Firefly. This is another one of those house conversions: a one-time two-story residence that was turned into a bar and restaurant. And well done too! I liked the atmosphere right away.

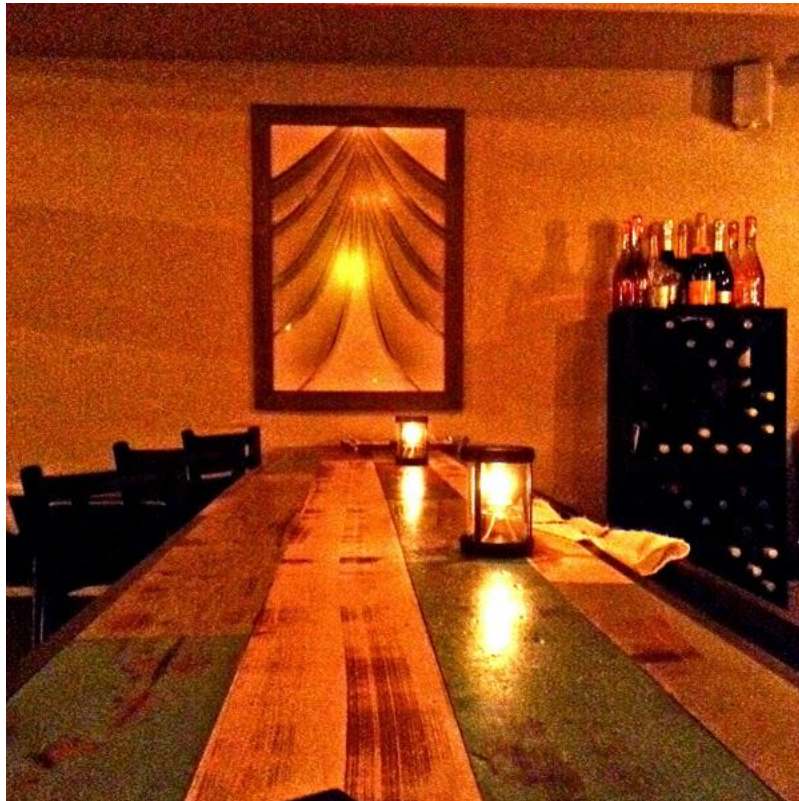
I arrived before my cronies -- it was an extra-long walk for B&J, who go everywhere on foot -- and I made myself comfortable at the end of the bar. It's not a large bar, with only six or seven tall, black, slat-backed seats. The bar top is made from different colored planks, varnished over. The plank motif continues on the back wall of the bar. It looks nicely informal.

The barkeep introduced himself as Kevin, and poured me the Fat Tire that I asked for. We chatted a bit, and then I made myself busy with my camera while he did other bartenderly stuff. That pic of the glass with the candle behind it came out awesome, doncha think? Especially given the name.

B&J arrived and we took a gander at the apps menu. Mmmmm, Mac & Cheeeese. Sounds like a spot-hitter. The spot was purdy big, so why not? Jan heaped praise upon it, based on a prior visit, so I ordered me a skillet o' MacChee. And a plate of assorted breads. Why the hell not, Spot?

A few minutes later, Longhorn John showed up and plunked his lanky frame onto the seat next to Brian. This was becoming A Gathering. Not quite like the Gathering in the cult classic movie *Highlander*, though; there would be no sword fights nor decapitations that I foresaw.

I love that movie. *MacLeooooood!!!* And the freaking uglifuk villain Kurgan with the damn safety pins in his stupid neck. Or the duel on Boston Common where Connor keeps getting stabbed through the heart and just keeps getting up, all wobbly-legged and shitfaced, until he finally just says, *I*



apologize for calling your wife a bloated warthog, and I bid you good day, and stumbles off. Hard to believe that Sean Connery was in that flick, and in a supporting role. Damn, I gotta watch that one again soon.

So, yeah, then the food arrived. If presentation means anything, then this was going to be one goooood M&C. A small, black, iron skillet, filled with Mac that was drowned in thick, lava-ish Cheee -- can't be too thick or thin, gotta be like lava -- and all crusted on top. Yahhh. It was the

type of thing you have to look at for a while before you dig in.

And once I dug, it got even better. This was one deeeelicious plate of MacChee. I ate with zeal, smiling my way through the cheese, the Mac, and the Fat Tire. Life, at least for the moment, really was good. Life was yummmm, in fact.

I was mildly saddened to learn that B&J were having a much lesser experience with their order. B&J's M&C, for some reason, came with some jalapeñish topping that infiltrated the whole dish, effectively poisoning it. I was only mildly saddened because, hey, mine was fine, but I did feel a wave of compassion for my suffering friends.

But, like a trooper, I tried not to think about it, and continued wiping my skillet clean with my bread. The bread, by the way, was just OK. Coulda been warmer, maybe coulda been a tad fresher, I dunno. Some bread just never seems like it's as fresh as it could be, ya know? Then again, maybe things had been a tad slow and they were just trying to get onnnnnne more



night out of Thursday's batch. Can't blame them for that, but they mighta nuked it for 20 seconds or so, just to try to fool me; I woulda been cool with it.

I like cornbread. I mean, I *really* like cornbread. I used to get boxes of Jiffy Corn Muffin mix and say, screw the muffins. I'd pour it into the same dish that I baked my brownies in -- heh heh, yah -- and bake a corncake. Then I'd grab it while it was still hot, break off chunks the size of Hawaii, slather them with butter, and guzzle it down while the butter was still melting in its own gleeful ecstasy.

Butttttttt, I do NOT tolerate cornbread that has real kernels of corn in it! Ugh!! WTF, Chuck? I've been on this Earth for more than half-a-century, and up until the last year or two, I had never been ambushed by that. Cornbread, wherever I ate it, was just the plain and delicious muffin-cake that I had had since Mama MacBarley first set one on my plate, hot and buttered and full of flavor and a mother's love, when I was a wee nip of a Hops, back in our Beantown home.

Then, not long ago and not far away, at some buffet, I grabbed a cornbread hunk and eagerly chomped into it. *Waaaaait a tick*, I thought, *this shit is **chunnnky***. It briefly reminded me of the dorm party at BC decades ago, at an end-of-season track team party, when Manny had also baked brownies. While mine were smooth-and-yum butterscotch with chocolate chips, with the special ingredient puréed in the blender to the consistency of flour, Manny's were done with, ummm, less care. I took one bite and was similarly stopped in my tracks. It was not corn kernels this time, though. I felt like I had bitten into a divot. I was an avid golfer in those halcyon days too, and as my teeth crunched through the unmistakable twisted



strands on garden variety weeds, all I could think of was, *It ain't sposta feel like this.*

Corn kernels in corn bread. Please, no. Do you put pepper in your peppermints? Eggs in your egg nog?

Anyway, I was in bigtime Savor Mode as I slid my wiped-clean skillet into Kevin's eager hands. I ordered up another Fat Tire in celebration.

There were only a few small tables here in the bar area, so we took a walk up the steep wooden staircase to check out the upstairs dining room. Mannn, it is *nice* up here! I mean, it's nice downstairs too, but it is swanky nice up here. Polished wooden floor, high peaked ceiling with modern-art light fixtures and a big balcony overlooking Petronia Street. Plenty of tables too. You could fit about seven volleyball teams up here. Maybe eight.

It was a good and worthy Hop.
We headed off for the nextly stop.
I vowed out loud I would be back,
for more good cheese and mac, Zack.