

## Bar Hoppin' With Hops

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

Bar 233:

### **Nook E**

925 Simonton Street

[www.betterthansexkeywest.com/](http://www.betterthansexkeywest.com/)

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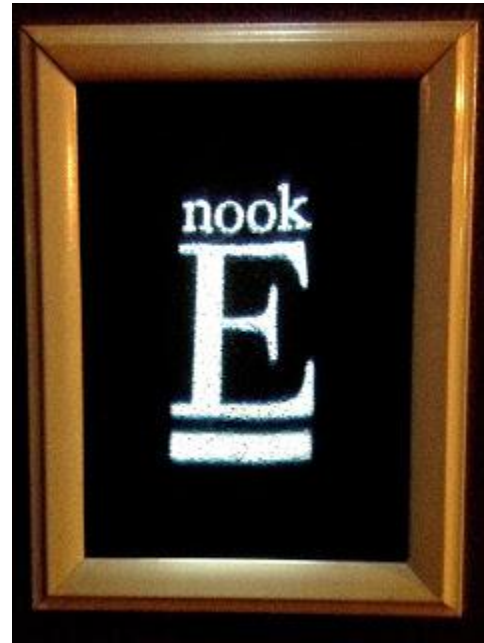
*Sprecher's RB with Irish Cream Ice Cream*  
(\$8)

Better Than Sex. What a name for an eatery, huh? *Better* than **sex!** What we offer inside these doors is going to be preferable to a good shag. Dayumm. Gunna be goooood. And they were thriving so well at their off-the-beaten-path location on Petronia Street -- where you had to go there looking for it rather than fortuitously stumbling across it (and which, as you recall, would go on to become Salsa Loca (#165) and Bliss (#224)) -- that they had to move to a larger and more prominent location. They moved into the erstwhile home of The Deli, at the corner of two of KW's busiest streets, Truman and Simonton.



The relocation definitely helped with the crunch -- though you still better have a reservation or a good Plan B on weekends -- annnd it left Dani and Len with an odd little space out back: a nook, if you will. (But a cranniless nook.) Time and vision turned that space into a bar: Nook E. Don't go looking for Nooks A, B, C, and D; they don't exist, at least by name. Better Than Sex is a place rife with innuendo -- "Best Rim Job In Town", for example -- so Nook E is a good fit. ;]

There was eagerness in our step as B&J & I walked here from the blah Hop at



SoMo Inn. Dani had spoken with great enthusiasm and pride about their new expansion -- and, like most projects in KW, it had gone through a couple of delays -- so I was itchin' to get it on the docket.

Jan, though, had the most eagerness of all. There would surely be chocolate and at least something close to Bailey's to be had within that nook, and she was hell-bent on gettin' some.

E is an unassuming Nook, one of those places that you have to know is there or you wouldn't know it was there. The old wood door is a hundred-plus feet back from the restaurant entrance on the corner, and there is no overhead or protruding sign. On the frame beside the door, about chest-high (if you're the same height as me) there is a foot-tall, modestly-lit sign identifying the location. It's a cool speakeasy kind of feel.



The inside just floored me. Black is the dominant color, with white furniture, silver ceiling and a crystal chandelier. The lighting is candlelight dim. Cool and classy decor.

Even cooler, though, were the bar seats! These things are sweet. They are bright white, tall (Jan needed a boost), nicely-cushioned, with full backs. The best part, though, is that they have bouncy-springy things (at least that's what they're called in the catalog) that allow you to sinnnnk into your nicely-cushioned seat (yes, similar to the ones at The Grand, Hop #55). It must have been due to our weight difference that Jan and I ended up the same height. She is light as a featha.

A lovely young woman named Tia was our barkeep extraordinaire. For me, her reputation had preceded her. Dani had come into the shop a few months ago looking for "something extra special" for an employee who had been with them for five years and had been above-and-beyond for every minute of it. She chose this reallllly nice piano-finish, laser-engraved wine box, into which she intended to place an even nicer bottle of wine. I was impressed. (When I hit *my* five-year mark, *my* boss bought me a

beer. Ha. BUT he also granted me a third week of annual vacation, which *rocks*.)

So, anyway, Tia greeted us and handed us these wicked cool iPad Mini menus. What a great idea these things are! (As long as they don't walk out the door. But BTS customers are not the kind of folk that would do that. Tia probably has some secret silver dart gun stashed under the bar just in case that happens.) The menus are well-lit and can be read easily in low light; they are the same size whether you have two pages or a hundred; the chef can change an item or two without having to do a full reprint; and they are fun to peruse. I tried to get on the net and open this blog, but to no avail.

I do that whenever I can, though. If I see a public computer left unattended, bingo, I cue up a random bar for the next user's viewing pleasure. I don't lurk about and giggle with glee when someone steps up to the screen -- that would be creepy -- but I wonder if anyone ever reads it,



or maybe even reads about a few other bars. Never know.

Tia knew every menu item by heart, and graciously presented answers to every little question we had. Brian was blown away by her service. Jan ordered a chocolatey-creamy thing, and was in happy happy land. I strayed a bit from the hops and barley from which my name is derived -- yes, really, I know, not many people figure that out -- but stayed with a brewed beverage: Sprecher's Hard Root Beer, served over a "dollop" of Irish Cream ice cream. Mannnnnnnnnnnnn, was it goooood.

I had had the Hard RB before. Poured into a tall tumbler of ice, it does not seem like a 5% ABV drink. Swirling and foaming around that creamy dollop, it was all dessert, baby. Something about having alcohol in my dessert really appeals to me. I'll have to put some IPA on my apple pie and check that out. I bet it's yum.

Word got out that the Hoppers were in the house and Dani came back to give us a hey. She was hip to the Tours and was happy to be hopped. We had a great little chat as we finished off our goodies, then we had to fasten our seat belts because it was Tammy Time. Yes, that sassy vixen who keeps popping up in these bloggings like it was a game of Whack-A-Mole, was now in the employ of Better Than Sex. Dani had told me about that already and had sung her praises for the great job she was doing. So good to hear. It

made sense too. She never was short on edgy quips, and, here, they were all part of the atmosphere.

And she burst into the room with her usual verve, gave us all a big hug, gushed on and on about the job, her puppy, this, that, and I can't remember what-all, and then had to skedaddle back to work. She looked fit and happy as a clam.

Jan finished making love to her dessert-drink, still a little glazey-eyed from the chocolate drizzle around the rim, and I gurgled down the last drops of my dollop. Brian's esoteric beer was long gone.

We bid Tia a fine good evening and went to settle up. Dani had picked up the tab for mine and Jan's. Mine was kind of a "delivery fee" for some small signs that I had dropped off -- the same kind of arrangement that got this whole Hopping thing started back at Bar #1, The Porch, about 30 months ago. Jan's was just because, well, Jan is so Jan. Ha. Brian had no problem whatsoever paying for his; he got off cheeeep.

Great stop. Great Hop.