

## Bar Hoppin' With Hops

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

Bar #289:

### House of Wu

500 Truman Avenue  
Saturday, 3 March 2018, 5:45 pm

*Jai Alai (draft) \$5.50?*

To all outward appearances, House of Wu is your typical Chinese restaurant. You might even catch yourself wondering if they even have a bar. Quite a few of this genre don't; you get your drink brought to your table when you sit down to eat. But as soon as you walk in here, those fears are dashed. The bar dominates the left half of the room.



In fact, there aren't really many tables or seats, so the bar seems all the more like the main focus of the room.

I had parked Zdog right out front. That's not usually a big deal, but this is one tiny parking lot. A large vehicle looks even larger in such small spaces, and, of course, all parking was for customers only. Again, not a big deal, since I was

about to become one, but I had arrived a few minutes ahead of the designated rendezvous time with my esteemed co-hoppers, B&J.

Any bar here on the "south side of the hill" is a long walk for them, but they are intrepid souls, recognize the bennies of the exercise and plan their time accordingly. Living in Old Town, and not having one of those *jobs* to worry about, they walk everywhere. Key West is a great place for that approach.

So, as I killed time by tidying up the van, I noticed one of the Wu personnel giving me a wary eye. Was I going to be a sleazebag and leave the van there while I sauntered off to some other place? My friend Ron once got towed from a similar lot, over at Duval Square, because he had parked there and walked off towards Simonton Street instead of towards the colony of

businesses. Someone noticed and rang up Arnold's Towing, who happened to be nearby.

Ron had walked over to First State Bank to hit the ATM, and then came back to have dinner at NY Pasta Garden (#131). He took the scenic route back, though, out to Duval and in the front entrance, so the eagle-eye-caller did not see him return. When he came out after dinner, his car was gone. You'd think he'd be upset, and you'd be right. He was livid and let the proprietors know it. They never did admit any wrongdoing, so Ron was just porked. Sometimes in life, you are just plain porked.



But not me. I was parked legit, as my watcher found out when B&J arrived and we stepped inside. We were happy to see the prominent L-shaped bar and strode thither forthwith. There was one other customer in there, and we picked the three bar seats farthest from him.

Kristina was our barkeep. In her mid-20's, with fairly long, straight, blonde hair and a cute smile, she did not fit the stereotype of a House of Wu-ish employee. She was Russian, having lived most of her life near frigid St. Petersburg and having arrived in K-Dub just six months ago. She was

delighted with the KW winter experience.



Paradoxically, though, she was wearing a zip-up jacket, zipped about halfway up. The AC was on in here, but it wasn't exactly frosty. Perhaps she was still accustomed to rooms being heated rather than cooled. Gonna have to get past that, Kristina.

I've lived in a half-dozen abodes in my nearly two decades in the Lower Keys and not one of them has had heating. Well, one did, but I didn't live there long enough to benefit from it. Space heaters, baby. Heat that space with a little electric box. A definite advantage to living in a 300-square-foot domicile.

Kristina asked us what we wanted to drink. The Tsingtao brand was everywhere to be seen. Only sensible thing would be to order one, yes? Brian got Coors Light, Jan got water, and I had a Jai Alai. What? You think I'm gonna drink Tsingtao when I can have Jai Alai? All about the hops, Pops.

The sun was lowwww in the western sky and it was downright dazzling as it beamed through the large plate glass panes that comprise Wu's façade. It made for a cool photo of my glowing Tsingtao glass ... filled with Jai Alai.

Normally, we eschew food in our Hops, but, damn it, I was hungry. Trouble is, I'm not particularly fond of Asian food. Kristina suggested dumplings, citing them as one of the house specialties. She was cute, so I went with it.



I don't think I had ever had dumplings. They're pretty bland. I guess you're supposed to put all this crazy sauce and stuff on them to give them pizzazz, but crazy sauce is not my thing. And I used chopsticks! I had never done that before, but I just picked them up and started using them. I never even thought about it till Jan commented on my proficiency with them. Then I started thinking about what I was doing and got fumbly. Brain gets in the way sometimes, y'know?



So, with dumplings dumped and drinks drunk, we bid Kristina farewell, and started our long journey to the next Hop.