



Wine

Italy's plague "wine windows" make a comeback

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By Alana House

Bar owners in Florence have revived medieval "wine windows" in the city to serve drinks and food safely during COVID-19.

The wine windows, known as *buchette del vino*, are small hatches carved into the walls of more than 150 buildings in Florence and Tuscany. First introduced in the 17th century, the windows were originally used by merchants to sell surplus wine. During the 1630s, the windows allowed stores to continue doing business while isolating themselves from potentially plague-ridden customers.

Now bars such as [Osteria delle Brache](#) (pictured main and below) are offering wine and Aperol Spritzes through the windows.



A [cultural association called Buchette Del Vino](#) has mapped them all out and notes that in the year 1634: “The Black Death or Plague has passed through the city of Florence, leaving death and havoc in its wake. The Florentine scholar, Francesco Rondinelli, writes a report about disease contagion and describes the use of the abundant Wine Windows in the city for the safe sale of wine, without direct contact between client and seller.”



The association adds that in the year 2020: "The COVID-19 pandemic arrives. Italy is under lockdown starting March 8. Everyone is confined to home for two months and then the government permits a gradual reopening. During this time, some enterprising Florentine wine window owners have turned back the clock and are using their wine windows to dispense glasses of wine, cups of coffee, drinks, sandwiches and ice cream—all germ-free, contactless!"



Matteo Faglia, president of the Wine Window Association, told Insider, “People could knock on the little wooden shutters and have their bottles filled direct from the Antinori, Frescobaldi and Ricasoli families, who still produce some of Italy’s best-known wine today.

“The wine windows gradually became defunct, and many wooden ones were permanently lost in the floods of 1966.

“We want to put a plaque by all the wine windows, as people tend to respect them more when they understand what they are and their history.”

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