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## The Wine Windows of Renaissance Florence Dispense Wine Safely Again During COVID-19

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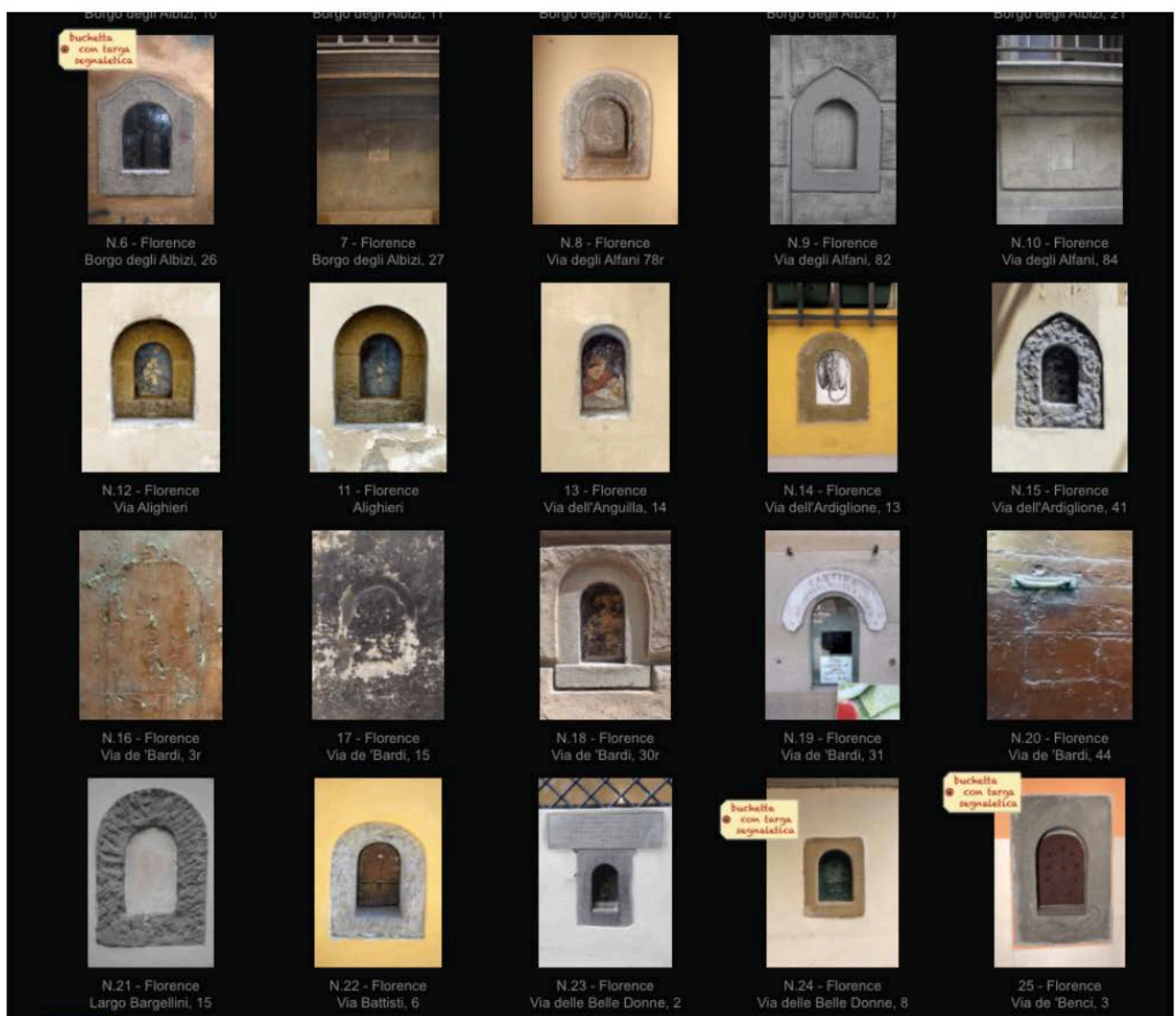
Everything old is new again and Tuscany's *buchette del vino*—wine windows—are definitely rolling with the times.

As Lisa Harvey earlier reported in [Atlas Obscura](#), *buchette del vino* became a thing in 1559, shortly after Cosimo I de' Medici decreed that Florence-dwelling vineyard owners could bypass taverns and wine merchants to sell their product directly to the public. Wealthy wine families eager to pay less in taxes quickly figured out a workaround that would allow them to take advantage of the edict without requiring them to actually open their palace doors to the rabble:

*Anyone on the street could use the wooden or metal knocker ... and rap on a wine window during its open hours. A well-*



respected, well-paid servant, called a *cantiniere* and trained in properly preserving wine, stood on the other side. The *cantiniere* would open the little door, take the customer's empty straw-bottomed flask and their payment, refill the bottle down in the *cantina* (wine cellar), and hand it back out to the customer on the street.



Seventy years further on, these literal holes-in-the-walls served as a means of contactless delivery for post-Renaissance Italians in need of a drink as the **second plague pandemic** raged.

**Scholar Francesco Rondinelli** (1589-1665) detailed some of the extra sanitation measures put in place in the early 1630s:

*A metal payment collection scoop replaced hand-to-hand exchange*

*Immediate vinegar disinfection of all collected coins*

*No exchange of empty flasks brought from home*

*Customers who insisted on bringing their own reusable bottles could do self-serve refills via a metal tube, to protect the essential worker on the other side of the window.*

Sound familiar?

After centuries of use, the windows died out, falling victim to flood, WWII bombings, family relocations, and architectural renovation.

The novel coronavirus pandemic has definitely played a major role in putting wine windows back on the public's radar, but **Babae**, a casual year-old restaurant gets credit for being the first to reactivate a disused *buchetta del vino* for its intended purpose, selling glasses of red for a single hour each day starting in August 2019.







Now several other authentic *buchette* have returned to service, with menus expanded to accommodate servings of ice cream and coffee.

Given this success, perhaps they'll take a cue from [Japan's 4.6 million vending](#) machines, and begin dispensing an even [wider array of items](#).

They may even take a page from the past, and send some of the money they take in back out, along with food and yes—wine—to sustain needy members of the community.

[The Buchette del Vino Associazi Culturale](#) currently lists 146 active and inactive wine windows in Florence and the surrounding regions, accompanying their findings with photos and articles of [historical relevance](#).

Via [Atlas Obscura](#)