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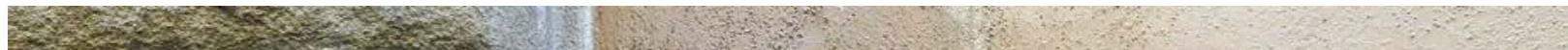
Italian city reopens ancient ‘wine windows’ during Covid-19

Once used during the bubonic plague, restaurants in Florence have resorted to traditional ‘wine windows’ to serve socially distanced drinks to thirsty residents.



Chris Mercer

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One of the many wine windows in Florence. This is located at the Palazzo Mellini Fossi. Credit: Simona Abbondio / Alamy

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From cocktails and wine to coffee and ice cream, some restaurants in the Italian city of Florence have reopened centuries-old 'wine windows' to serve customers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to the city's Wine Windows Association, the move has taken us 'back in time' by reviving a method of socially distanced wine selling seen during outbreaks of bubonic plague in the city in the 17th century.

An Italian academic at that time, Francesco Rondinelli, wrote of how wine windows in the city's palaces were used during the plague between 1630 and 1633; seemingly to help prevent contagion.

Wine producers 'passed the flask of wine through the window to the client but did not receive payment directly into their hands', wrote Diletta Corsini in a recent article on the Wine Windows Association's website.

'Instead, they passed a metal pallet to the client, who placed the coins on it, and then the seller disinfected them with vinegar,' wrote Corsini, who cofounded the association in October 2015.

There are more than 100 wine windows in the centre of Florence, according to the group.

Restaurant Osteria Della Brache is one of those to have revived the tradition in 2020. It recently posted a photo of Instagram of its staff serving a takeaway Aperol Spritz through one of the small windows.





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Another restaurant, Babae, has also been using its window, although the venue had embraced the concept back in summer 2019, before the coronavirus outbreak.

In the past, it's believed wine windows were predominantly used by the region's noble winemaker families to serve city residents – and not only in the time of plague.

Matteo Faglia, president of the Wine Windows Association, told *the Insider* publication that people could bring their own bottles for filling at the tiny, shuttered windows.