



Wine windows: why the historic plague-inspired booze holes are back

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▲ Drink it in ... a Florentine wine window. Photograph: Reda & Co/Universal Images Group/Getty Images

Name: Wine windows.

Age: 391, give or take.

Appearance: The must-have plague-related architectural feature of 2020.

Hey, I like wine. Of course you do. Everyone likes wine. But drinking wine these days is fraught with danger.

Not for me. My streaking and puking days are far behind me. No, not because you're an obnoxious blackout drunk. Because of coronavirus.

Oh yes. For a brief moment I forgot about that. Exactly. Sitting in a bar with a bunch of droplet-spreaders sounds like hell on Earth to a lot of people.

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But I have to have alcohol. Enter the wine window.

The what? Cast your mind back, if you will, to the Italian plague of 1629-1631. The bubonic plague tore across what is now northern and central Italy, killing

possibly as many as 2 million people - [about one-third of the population](#). It was a dark, fearful time. But, you know, people still wanted to get drunk.

And so? And so enterprising merchants struck upon the idea of the *buchetta del vino*: a hole in the wall through which flasks of wine could be passed to people on the street. The Italian newspaper La Repubblica says they were first mentioned in a book published in 1634.

I suppose that, in those days, the *buchetta del vino* was the only thing that could offer residents even the tiniest crumb of respite from the merciless spectre of death. Yes. Anyway, they're back - and you can Instagram them now. Cute!

They are? They are! [Restaurants](#) have started to reopen their wine windows as a way to serve customers during the Covid-19 outbreak. According to Lonely Planet, in Florence alone you can find windows serving wine, cocktails, coffee and gelato.

Amazing. The answer to all our problems can always be found in history. Well, no. I'm pretty sure the answers to this specific problem can only be found in cutting-edge medicine. But, still, it's great news for anyone who ever dreamed of being handed an ice-cream through a wall.

It just goes to show, there's nothing like a health crisis to get people drunk. You're right. [Sales of beer, wine and spirits have soared during lockdown](#).

I want to see a wine window. But aren't you worried about travelling abroad at the moment? As an alternative, you can lie down by my front door while I pour some pinot grigio through the letterbox.

Do say: "Italy is reviving the wine window."