

375 views | Aug 17, 2020, 11:46am EDT

# Florence Rediscovered Plague-Era 'Wine Windows' To Drink Safely



**Irene Dominioni** Contributor

Travel

*I write about lifestyle in all its forms, from social to cultural aspects*





TOPSHOT - A waiter puts a glass of wine in the "buchetta del vino" a small window to serve wine, a ...

[+] AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

As the summer season goes on in Italy, the city of Florence has rediscovered one heritage from the past which is proving very useful to further protect tourists from the coronavirus. It is the so called "buchette del vino" (wine windows), small openings carved in walls and doors, which were widely used during the 1600s plague. Nowadays, bar and restaurants owners have started using them again as an intriguing and safe way to serve drinks, coffees and ice cream to their customers, minimizing the risk of infection.

"Buchette del vino" are just as big as a flask, and they started appearing in the second half of the 1500s to sell wine. "It was Cosimo I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, who first introduced them: since he was keen on excluding the aristocracy from political business, in order to keep them quiet he allowed noble families who were producing wine to sell it directly from their buildings, without having to pay any tax", explains Matteo Faglia, president of the "Associazione Buchette del vino", the association devoted to preserving and promoting this peculiar heritage.

At the time, the trend became so popular that over the years wine windows started appearing in numbers around the city. So far, about 180 have been

counted, of which 150 are in the old town of Florence alone. “In the 1600s Florence was the city that drank the most wine in the world”, continues Faglia. “It wasn’t the same wine as today, it was lighter and it was considered an actual food, not simply a drink. It was served to soldiers and also to pregnant women”.

#### Recommended For You



**Why Tokyo’s New Transparent Public Restrooms Are A Stroke Of Genius**

**On A ‘Flight To Nowhere,’ Airlines Innovate Against Travel Bans**

**9 Best Beach (and Beach-View) Restaurants In Portugal**

The windows proved extremely useful also during the big plague, because they allowed for no contact between the seller and the customer. The bartender would pass a flask of wine through the passage, and the client would put coins to pay in a metal tray filled with vinegar, as it was believed it would disinfect the money.

Over the years, commerce evolved and the Buchette del vino lost their purpose, to the point to which the citizens of Florence started barely noticing them. But also thanks to the work of the association, which was born four years ago, they are now coming back. And their use to serve

cappuccinos, ice creams and drinks while ensuring “social distancing” during the coronavirus epidemic is proving very successful.

PROMOTED

UNICEF USA **BRANDVOICE** | Paid Program

**Burundi Needs More Soap To Stay Safe. A New Partnership Aims To Help**

Civic Nation **BRANDVOICE** | Paid Program

**It's Not Easy Being Green: Let's Not Gatekeep Sustainable Fashion**

Grads of Life **BRANDVOICE** | Paid Program

**Leveraging Opportunity Employment To Advance Racial Justice In Corporate America**

Among the bars and restaurants which have started using them again, there are [Osteria delle Brache](#), [Babae](#) and [Vivoli](#), [Lonely Planet reported](#). About 20 of them are currently operative. “There are also new requests from more bars to renovate them. To do commerce exclusively this way would be anachronistic, but the main objective is to make them known and safeguard them”, observes the president of the association.

On the association’s website there is an [interactive map](#) where all the wine windows are located. Faglia definitely recommends the one at Palazzo Antinori (a historic wine seller in Tuscany), at the crossing between the Antinori square and the small via del Trebbio.

“We are still counting them through rigorous work, because with some, it is

not clear whether they are really wine windows, while others were used for other purposes”, concludes the “buchette del vino” president. “We haven’t yet found who made the first wine window, but Florentians are loving it and we hope that the trend will stay even after the epidemic. This visibility is a good thing and it would be a waste if these windows were forgotten”.

## Get a First-Class Guide to Luxury Travel

Explore the finest destinations and experiences around the world in the Forbes Passport newsletter.

You may opt out any time. [Terms and Conditions](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

*Follow me on [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#).*



**Irene Dominioni**

I am a freelancer, hence a free spirit, contributing to Italian and international media alike. I write for Linkiesta.it, Business People and Euronews.