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Italy revives its 17th-century wine windows to serve drinks to passers-by

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Businesses in [Italy](#) are reviving the tradition of selling wine and other drinks from tiny wall hatches known as wine windows. The tradition dates back to the 1600s when Italy was in the grip of another pandemic.

Wineries, gelaterias and bars in [Tuscany](#) have found a neat way to serve drinks and treats to customers while maintaining a safe physical distance by using wine windows or *buchette del vino* as they're known in Italian. As the region come out of lockdown, these windows have been serving contactless wine, Aperol Spritzes, gelato and coffee to customers in need of a pick-me-up.





It's cocktail hour at this wine window in Florence ©Buchette del Vino

There are about 150 of them in Tuscany, according to [Buchette del Vino](#), a non-profit, cultural organisation that was set up by three friends — Matteo Faglia, Diletta Corsini and Mary Christine Forrest — in 2015 to promote, preserve and highlight these pint-sized windows. More than 100 of these architectural quirks can be found in [Florence's](#) historical center alone.

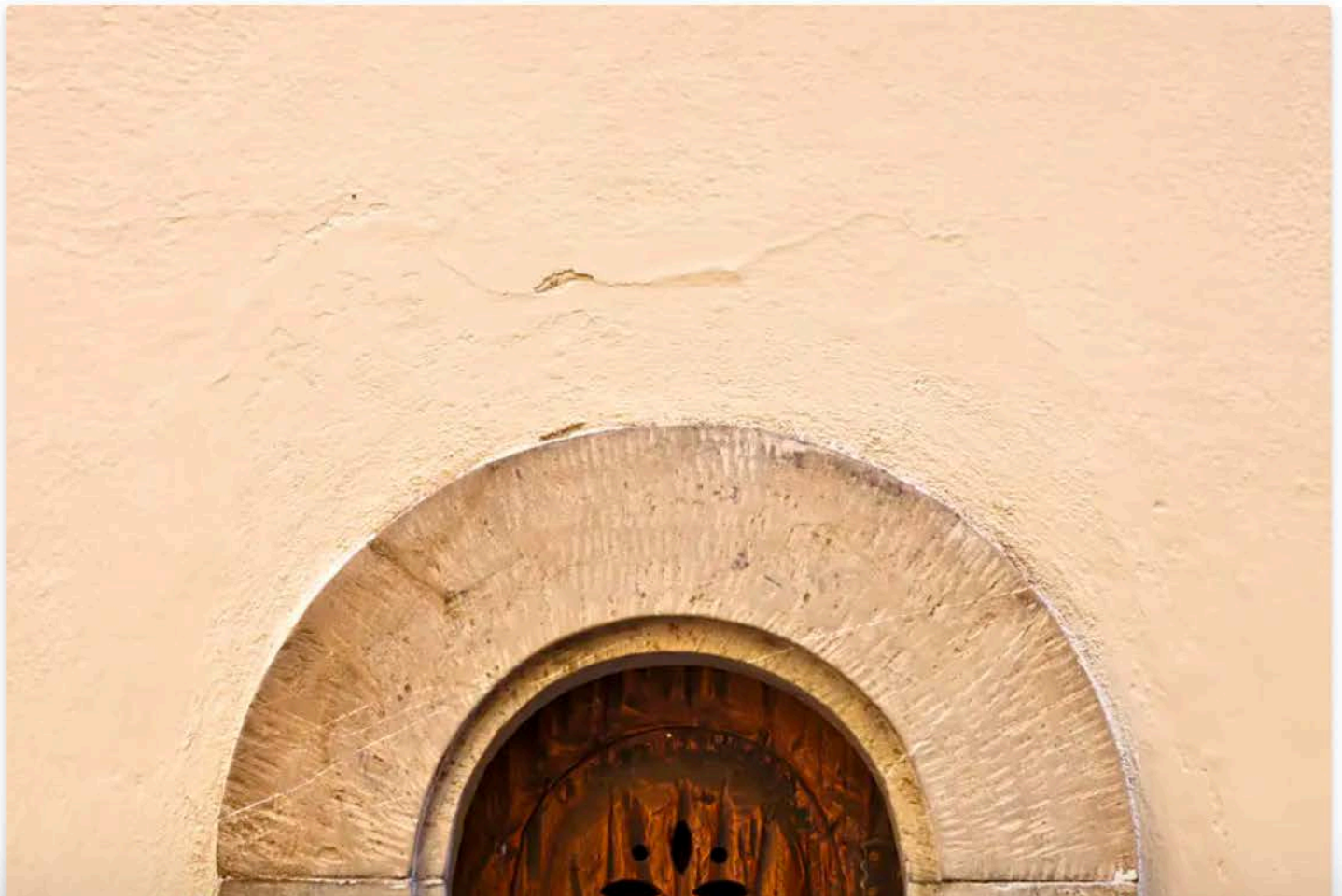


Detail of an old stone wall with a wine window in Florence ©Simona Sirio/Getty Images/iStockphoto

The wine windows first came about in the 17th-century when quick-thinking wine merchants decided to carve little openings in the walls of their premises to continue serving drinks to the public during the Italian Plague of 1629–1631. These wine merchants understood the problem of contagion, say Buchette del Vino.

"They passed the flask of wine through the window to the client but did not receive payment directly into their hands. Instead, they passed a metal pallet to the client, who placed the coins on it, and then the seller disinfected them with vinegar before collecting them."

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Most of these windows can be found in Florence's historic center ©Getty Images/iStockphoto

Over time, as the demand for them diminished, the windows were bordered up. They're often overlooked by tourists and even some locals as they go about their business. But today, as Italy grapples with a new pandemic and fresh fears of contagion, some Florentine businesses including [Osteria delle Brache](#) and [Babae](#) have opened their windows again to serve drinks, while the owners of the [Vivoli](#) ice cream parlor are serving coffee and gelato to passers-by.



 BUCHETTA del VINO
WINE WINDOW
www.buchetta.com