

ALCOHOL

# Florence's Plague-Era Wine Windows Are Back in Business

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AUGUST 7, 2020



A wine window in Florence's Via Santo Spirito.

Many bars and restaurants have started selling takeout cocktails and other alcoholic beverages to stay in business—and keep customers safe—during the coronavirus pandemic. Meanwhile, 17th-century Florentines are surely applauding from their front-row seats in the afterlife.

As Insider reports, a number of buildings in Florence had been constructed with small “wine windows,” or *buchette del vino*, through which vendors sold wine directly to less affluent customers. When the city suffered an outbreak of plague in the 1630s, business owners recognized the value of these windows as a way to serve people without spreading germs. They even exchanged money on a metal tray that was sanitized with vinegar.



Wine not?



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Things eventually went back to normal, and the windows slowly fell out of fashion altogether as commerce laws evolved. This year, however, they've made a comeback. According to *Food & Wine*, there are currently at least four in operation around Florence. Osteria delle Brache in Piazza Peruzzi is using its window to deliver wine and cocktails, for example, and the Vivoli ice cream shop, a go-to dessert spot since 1929, is handing out sweet scoops and coffee through its formerly dormant aperture.

The image shows a screenshot of a quiz card from the 'Mental Floss' app. The card has an orange background and a dashed white border. At the top left is the 'Mental Floss' logo, and at the top right is a share icon. The text on the card reads: '- HISTORY OR HOAX? -' followed by the question 'Do you know if these archaeological finds are real or fake?'. Below the question is a black square containing a photograph of a large, light-colored, irregularly shaped stone object, identified as 'The Cardiff Giant'. To the right of the image is a blue circular button with a white right-pointing arrow. At the bottom of the card are two orange buttons labeled 'Real' and 'Fake' for selection.

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Apart from the recent resurgence of interest, the wine windows often go unnoticed by tourists drawn to the grandeur of attractions like the Uffizi Gallery and the Florence Cathedral. So in 2015, locals Matteo Faglia, Diletta Corsini, and Mary Christine Forrest established the Wine Window Association to generate some buzz. In addition to researching the history of the windows, they also keep a running list of all the ones they know of. Florence has roughly 150, and there are another 100 or so in other parts of Tuscany.

They're hoping to affix a plaque near each window to promote their stories and discourage people from defacing them. And if you want to support their work, you can even become a member of the organization for €25 (about \$29).

[h/t Insider]