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STUDENTS

PICKS & TIPS

EXPAT INFO

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A Look Through Florence's Wine Windows at a Current Show

09/11/2023



Until September 16: LE BUCHETTE DEL VINO IN MOSTRA. Palagio di Parte Guelfa – Sala Brunelleschi. **Open daily 10 am to 6 pm.** Free admission.

From allowing social distancing during the bubonic plague, to permitting the sale of wine without tax, to even helping people get food during the pandemic, wine windows, or *bucchette del vino*, have enjoyed a varied history in Tuscany. Invented as a safe means of vending wine, they are now a tourist attraction, albeit one that is dwindling in active use.

This antique drive-through window originated as a way for noble families to sell wine from their estates in Tuscany. Now sparse in number, 180 *bucchette del vino* can still be found in Florence, with only 13 windows which originated in the Middle Ages. The fascination with wine windows, nonetheless, only seems to grow. The Palagio Guelfa exhibition on wine windows

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illustrates not only their history, but the fact that many of them were closed and their current upsurge of popularity.

So, what exactly is a wine window? Or, moreover, how does a wine window work today? It's simple—customer put cash through the window and promptly receives the item of their choosing, usually wine but sometimes food. Due to the restricted size of the window, there was little exchange of breath and interactions do not need to be made face-to-face. Such an attribute made wine windows ideal for the COVID-19 pandemic, rekindling interest.

To see an image of the Vivoli gelateria's wine window being utilized during lockdown, click [here](#).

The exhibition showcases a variety of wine window-related items, some of which are from recent years. One may find paintings, including one by Florentine artist Ottone Rosai (1895 – 1947), necklaces, and artifacts. A door containing a wine window as well as a stone wine window frame may be seen up close, complemented by historical displays and photographs. The bulk of the information the exhibition offers is in one room, where infographic boards may be found adjacent to the art and artifacts. Some of the other displays include a life-sized replica of a wine window with life-sized cut-outs, a collection of wine flasks that illustrate their changing history, a case with historical documents, and more.

One particularly potent display shows wine windows past and present, making up a massive grid of images. The pictured collage photo by Robbin Gheesling taken in 2015 beautifully depicts their often overlooked presence in Florence.

The windows vary in color, material, and background, with many currently sporting a barrier to block its usage. Some of these contain painted artwork, some are mailboxes, while others are just filled in.

The *Buchette del Vino* cultural association was created for the preservation of these windows and this exhibition is a manifestation of their work. According to the *Buchette del Vino* association, it is beneficial to make the traditions better known not only among the visitors but even among the residents. (Daniel J. Capobianco)

Free guided tours of Florence's wine windows take place daily at 10 am, 1, 3 and 6 pm with the Palagio di Parte Guelfa as the meeting point. For more information visit www.buchettedelvino.org.

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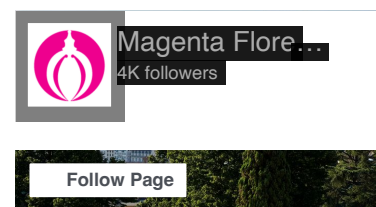


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