

Tuscany's medieval 'wine windows' have reopened to serve wine, Aperol Spritz, gelato, and coffee in a tradition that dates back to the Plague

Phoebe Hunt Aug 6, 2020, 11:39 AM



A Florence restaurant serves drinks through a centuries-old wine window as the city welcomes tourists. Associazione Buchette del Vino / Wine Window Association

FISHER INVESTMENTS ITALIA*

Calcolatore del reddito da investimenti

Per investitori che hanno 350.000 €: usa il nostro calcolatore del reddito da investimenti e i nostri aggiornamenti periodici. Potrebbero aiutarti a costruire la strategia adatta alle tue esigenze per il tuo reddito da investimenti.

Scopri di più >>

VIDEOS YOU MAY LIKE

INSIDER

- **Wine windows were used in Florence during the Italian Plague so palaces could sell off surplus wine without touching the lower classes.**
 - **Hundreds of years later, innovative Florentines have reopened wine windows to dispense everything from coffee to cocktails in a COVID-friendly way.**
 - **Wine windows, or *buchette del vino*, are totally unique to Tuscany, and haven't been seen anywhere else in the world.**
 - **A dedicated Wine Window Association now looks after the 150+ wine windows still found in Florence.**
 - **Visit [Insider's homepage](#) for more stories.**
-

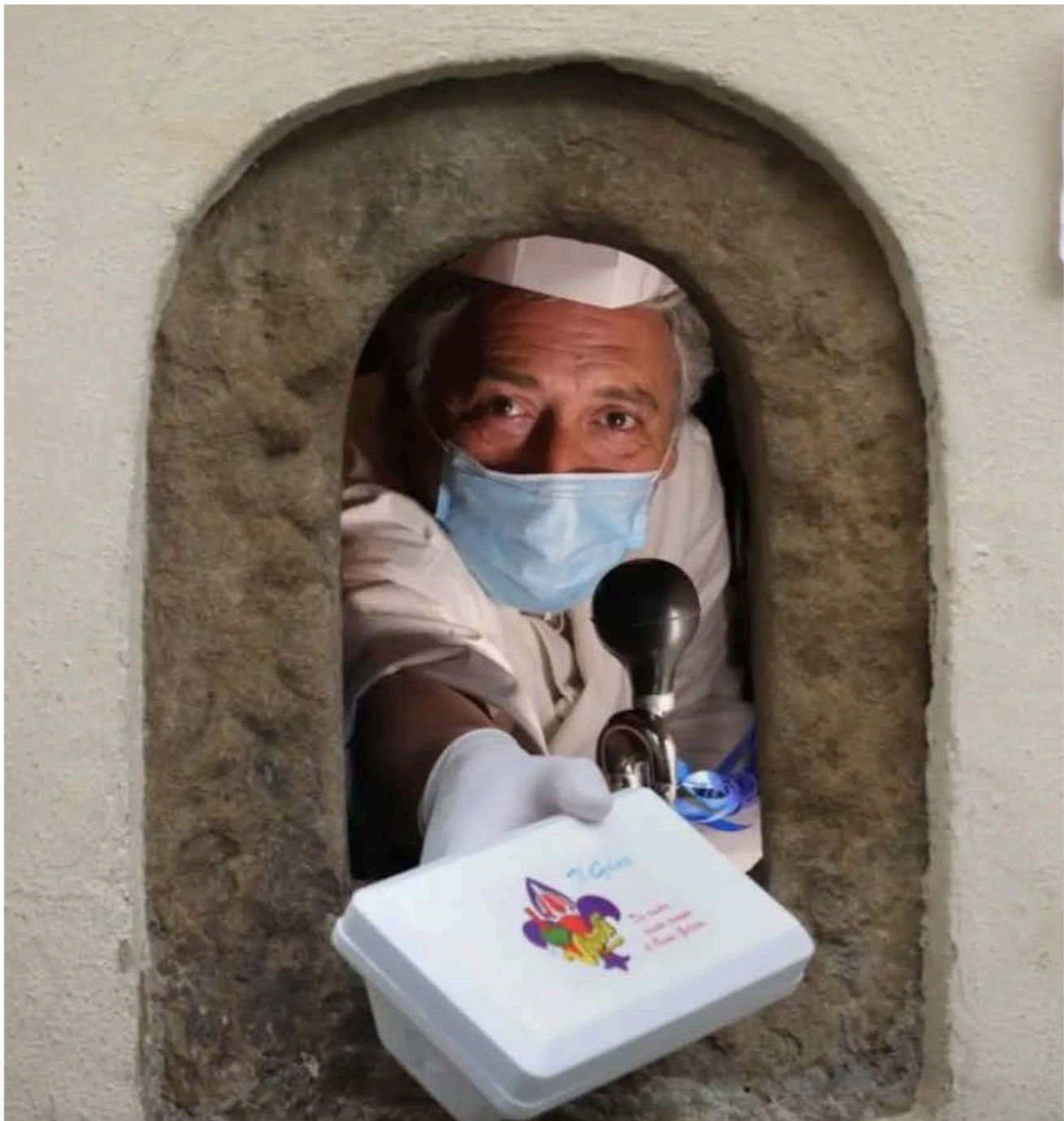


When Italy went into lockdown in February, the nation came together to battle COVID-19. Opera singers and musicians regaled neighbors from their balconies while rainbow flags hung from

INSIDER

windows with the words *andr  tutto bene* — everything will be alright.

In Florence, creative restaurant and bar owners have now taken inspiration from a medieval architectural quirk to keep their businesses and the spirit of the city alive. According to Florence's [Wine Window Association](#), a handful of wine windows have opened across the city — some for the first time in living memory.



Centuries-old wine windows found across the city have been reopening as an innovative

INSIDER

way to serve food and cocktails. Vivoli Gelateria

Wine Windows, or *buchette del vino*, are little hatches which were originally used to sell surplus wine direct to Florence's working class.

The Wine Window Association's president Matteo Faglia told Insider: "People could knock on the little wooden shutters and have their bottles filled direct from the Antinori, Frescobaldi and Ricasoli families, who still produce some of Italy's best-known wine today."





The windows are also serving coffee. Associazione Buchette del Vino / Wine Window Association

Wine windows are unique to Tuscany, but often go unnoticed

These wine windows are unique to Florence and Tuscany, and were once a normal part of everyday life here. Overshadowed by Uffizi Gallery's renaissance wonders and the beauty of the Duomo, they are a much-overlooked part of Florentine architecture.



Attached to old palaces and noble households, wine windows can be spotted around Florence, with many dating back to medieval times. Over 150 wine windows can be found within Florence's old city walls alone, with many more across the region. A full map can be found on the [Buchette del Vino](#) website.

INSIDER



These wine windows don't exist anywhere outside Tuscany. *Associazione Buchette del Vino / Wine Window Association*

As laws on selling wine changed in the early 20th century, Matteo Faglia told Insider: "The wine windows gradually became defunct, and many wooden ones were permanently lost in the floods of 1966."

Now, several wine windows have re-opened for the first time in generations, and are being used to serve food and drinks in a socially distanced way.





A post-COVID answer to Italy's aperitivo hour. [Babae Firenze](#)

The windows are now serving gelato and coffee, too

Ice-cream parlour Vivoli near the Duomo and Uffizi Gallery owns one such wine window, which they've opened up to sell gelato and coffee.

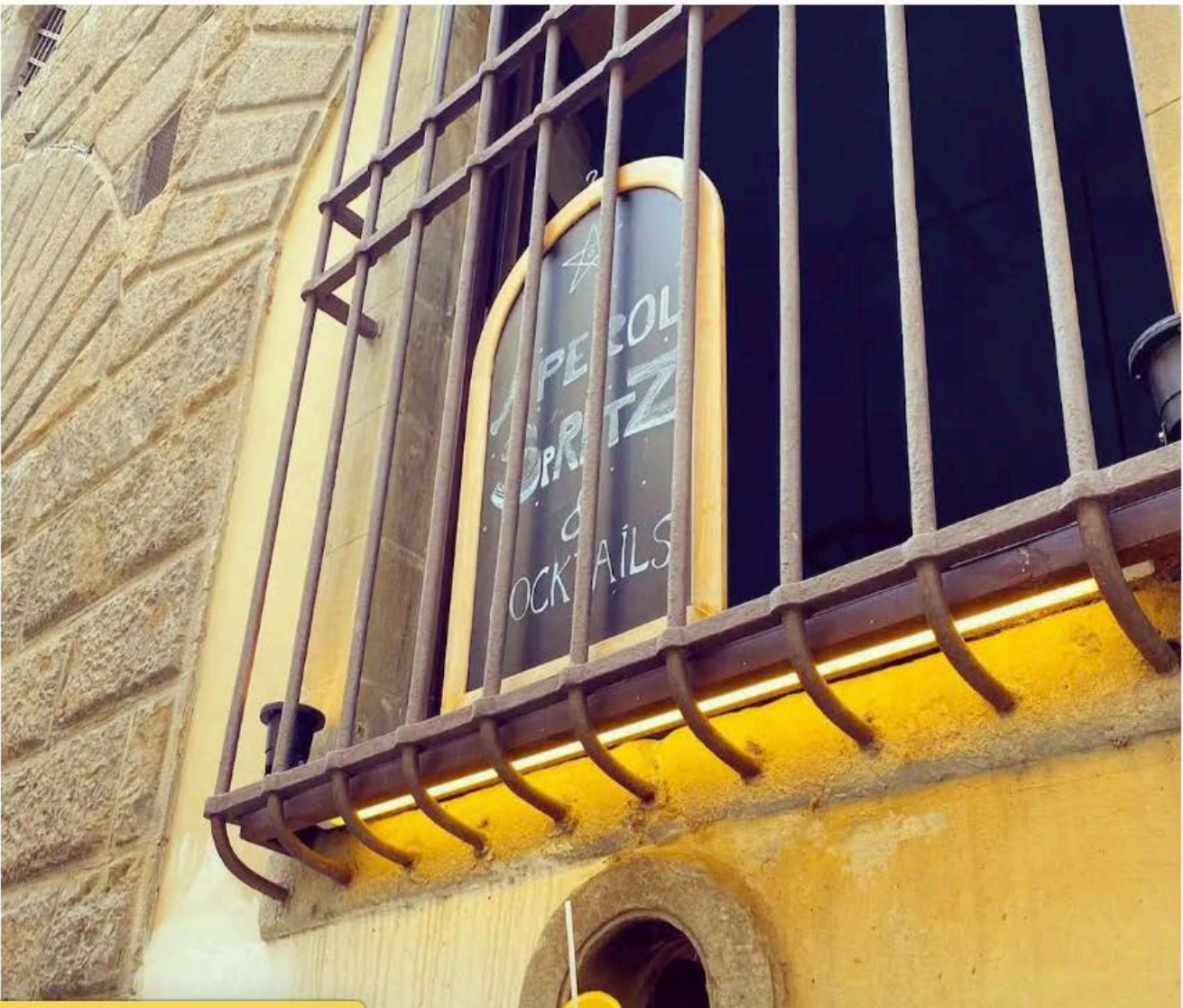


INSIDER



Much-loved Florentine gelateria Vivoli serves ice cream through the window. Vivoli Gelateria

Nearby, tourists and locals are enjoying cocktails from Osteria delle Brache in Piazza Peruzzi — served through a hatch which is both Instagram and COVID-friendly.



INSIDER



Osteria delle Brache isn't letting COVID get in the way of a good Aperol Spritz. Osteria delle Brache

Over the river in the Santo Spirito, restaurant and wine bar Babae serves glasses of wine through their wine window from 7 p.m. – 8 p.m. each evening.



INSIDER



"L'Ora della Buchetta," or wine window happy hour, at Babae in Santo Spirito.
Associazione Buchette del Vino / Wine Window Association

The windows were used for a similar purpose during the Plague

This isn't the first time these windows have been used to stop the spread of disease in Florence. As the Italian Plague swept through the country in the 1630s, historians noted that the wine sellers understood the importance of self-isolation, and used the hatches for this very reason. Instead of taking payment by hand, the wine sellers would pass a metal pallet through the window and disinfect it with vinegar.



All this has been documented by the Wine Window Association, set up in 2016 to help raise awareness with both tourists and locals.





These tiny "wine windows" attached to palaces and noble homes in Florence were used to sell germ-free wine to the city's workers. [Wine Window Association](#)

Florentines are rightly protective of these unique pieces of history, and the Wine Windows Association is on a mission to preserve

INSIDER

them. All the windows now have a protected status, but vandalism is still a problem.



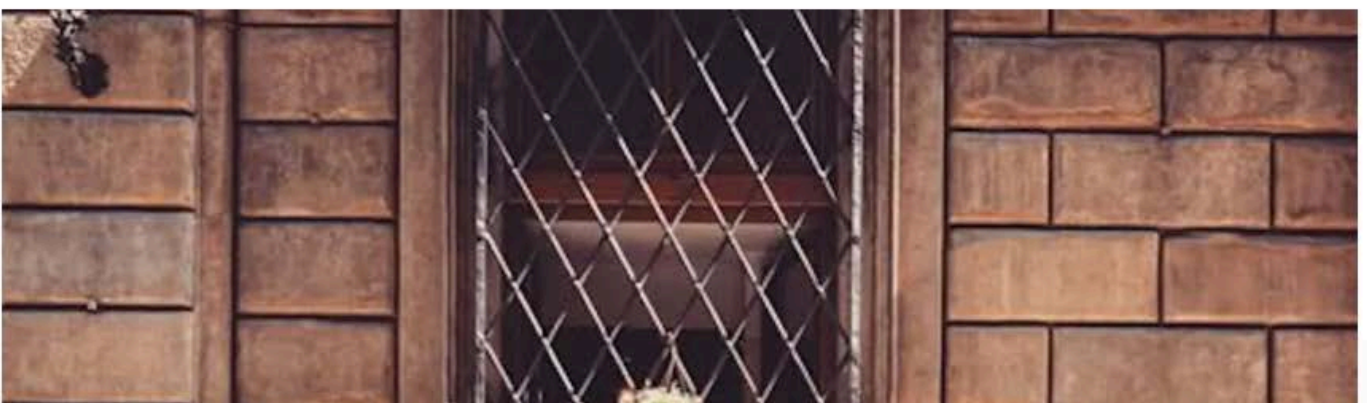
The Wine Window Association is working to protect the city's 150+ wine windows from graffiti. *Associazione Buchette del Vino / Wine Window Association*

The association's president Matteo Faglia hopes that after COVID, attitudes to the wine windows will start to change.

"We want to put a plaque by all the wine windows, as people tend to respect them more when they understand what they are and their history," he told Insider.



Perhaps wine windows will be part of Florence's "new normal."



Perhaps wine windows will be part of Florence's "new normal."



Will wine windows become part of the future of Florence's restaurant scene?

Associazione Buchette del Vino / Wine Window Association

Read more:

[Sparkling red wine flowed from the taps in this Italian village](#)