

Medieval 'wine windows' are having another moment in Italy





To keep a safe distance from their customers, some enterprising merchants in Italy have revived a Black Death tradition: *wine windows*.

VinePair:

In Florence, the need for bars and restaurants to serve food and drinks in a socially distanced manner has seen a medieval architectural oddity revived.

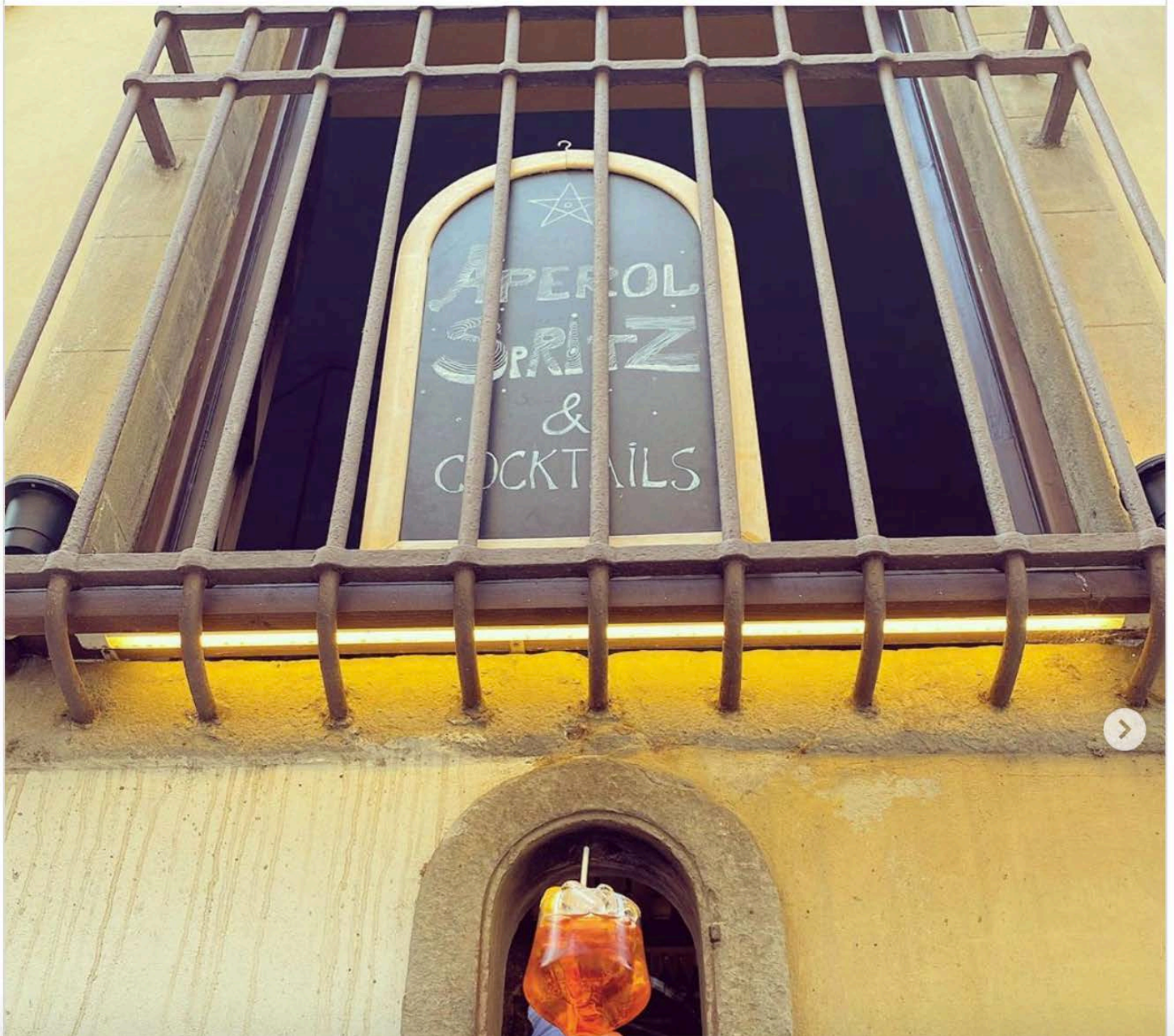
Wine windows, known locally as *buchette del vino*, are small hatches carved into the walls of over 150 buildings in Florence and Tuscany. First introduced in the 17th century, the windows were originally used by merchants to sell surplus goods, such as wine. During the Italian plague of the 1630s, the windows offered the perfect solution for stores to continue doing business while isolating from the public.

Now, for the first time in generations, a handful of wine windows across Florence are once again being used for their original purpose...



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Osteria Delle Brache

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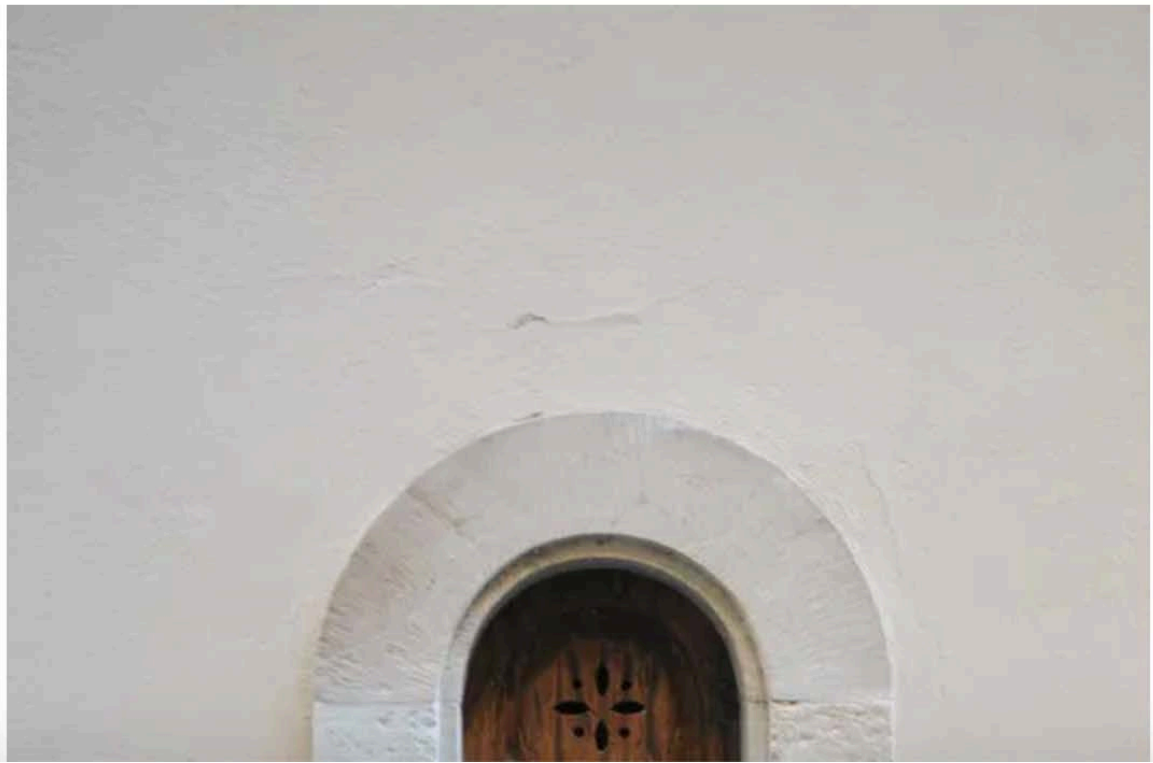
And it's not just wine they're serving through these stone windows, it's also coffee, ice cream (gelato), and Aperol Spritzes. The [Wine Window Association](#) writes:

Today, during our period of covid-19 pandemic lockdown, the owners of the wine window in Via dell'Isola delle Stinche at the Vivoli ice cream parlor in Florence have reactivated their window for dispensing coffee and ice cream, although not wine. Two other nearby wine windows, that of the Osteria delle Brache in Piazza Peruzzi and that of Babae in Piazza Santo Spirito, have taken us

back in time by being used for their original purpose—socially-distant wine selling.

Francesco Rondinelli, the Florentine scholar and academic, in "Relazione del Contagio Stato in Firenze l'anno 1630 e 1633", during the terrible bubonic plague epidemic occurring in Europe at that time, reported that wine producers who were selling their own wine through the small wine windows in their Florentine palaces, understood the problem of contagion. 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. Wine purveyors also attempted to avoid touching the wine flasks which were brought back to them by the client, in two different ways. Either the client purchased wine which was already bottled, or the client was allowed to fill his or her flask directly by using a metal tube which was passed through the wine window, and was connected to the demijohn on the inside of the palace. So, the wine merchant either filled new flasks for direct purchase or placed the demijohn in a slightly raised position so that the wine would flow down the small metal pipe into the client's bottle.







(*Nag on the Lake*, *New York Post*, *Insider*)

image via Buchettedelvino.org

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