

Untold Italy Episode 144 - Sip Your Way Through the Wine Bars of Florence

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 144.

Ciao a tutti and Benvenuti to Untold Italy, the travel podcast, where you go to the towns and villages, mountains and lakes, hills and coastlines of Bella Italia. Each week your host Katy Clarke takes you on a journey in search of magical landscapes of history, culture, wine, gelato, and, of course, a whole lot of pasta. If you're dreaming of Italy and planning future adventures there, you've come to the right place.

Katy

Ciao everyone. Katy here Wondering... are you interested in Italian wine?

I definitely am but, I have to confess, I'm not really an expert and have had no formal training. It's really been an informal appreciation gained by enjoying wine bars in Italy and around the world. And that, actually, has been one of the great pleasures of my life.

Nevertheless, I do love talking to experts about wine because I always learn something new and let's face it, in Italy wine is an integral part of the culture - especially in Florence - surrounded as it is by some of the most iconic, and I don't use that term lightly, wine making regions in the world

So when I had this idea for a podcast episode on the wine bars of Florence I knew there was only one person I wanted to talk to and that is our guest today.

Robbin Gheesling is a sommelier and photographer who is truly living her best life working on projects that combine her interests living in Florence. She was on [episode 92](#) of Untold Italy talking about the famous wine doors or windows of the city but her latest project is documenting the goings on and people behind one of the oldest wine bars in Florence.

She's a true expert on wine and wine bars in the city but what I love most about Robbin is she keeps everything low-key and relaxed and not at all intimidating which can be the case with some wine-related discussions.

So, let's dive in and find out where we should enjoy our wine tasting in Florence.

Katy

Bentornata Robbin. Welcome back to the Untold Italy podcast.

Robbin

Good morning from Italy. I'm glad to be back.

Katy

It is so great to be chatting with you again, direct from Florence. I just love how you came to be there, Robin. And so can you remind our listeners what brought you to the Renaissance city and all about your wonderful projects?

Robbin

Well, I first came here to get my master's degree in Italian from Middlebury College, which is out of Vermont, and they have their Florence school here. And it's when I discovered the wine doors and was writing my thesis on wine marketing and ended up staying. Left for Covid and then come back just in the last year.

Katy

Yeah. And you're working on a pretty cool project now, aren't you?

Robbin

Yeah, I've got two going in parallel. I've got the wine doors photography project that I completed some time ago. I'm now trying to get that rewritten into a proper guidebook so people can actually go around and see all the one doors and have little blurbs of history on each one. And then additionally, I'm working on a documentary, a photography documentary on a historic wine bar next to the Mercato Centrale.

Katy

Yes. And so for those of you who haven't caught up on all the episodes of Untold Italy, Robbin was on earlier last year, around this time last year, actually, and she told us all about the wine doors or the wine windows of Florence that she's documented in photography and it's absolutely beautiful and I do have a copy of that, and you should grab one, too, because it's really very interesting. So what I thought we would do today is because Florence is a city surrounded by vines, and this is a little bit selfish, this conversation, to be honest, Robbin, because I just want to know the answers to all these questions. But what I thought we would do is talk about the wine bars of Florence, and you are seriously living your best life over there with wine doors, wine bars, Italy and photography - all your passions rolled into one. So I couldn't think of a better person to share all your knowledge about wine bars. Now, before we get started on that, can you tell us a little bit about why wine is so important in Florence? What makes it such an important aspect of the city?

Robbin

Sure. Part of the aspect of the wine doors, wine windows, depending on who you ask, is how the noble families, when it was a walled city, had the agricultural land outside of the walls. So they were doing all of their produce, including grapes and wine, and bringing it into the city center. So with all of that out there, wine was still even much cleaner than water for a very long time. So you would rather drink wine instead of water out of the Arno say. And so it was just an important caloria. It was an important beverage. A lot of people would truly only have bread and wine. And that sounds kind of scrimpy or an appetizer, but wine was actually a calorie. It was actually food stuff. And then so once things got more organized, then you have Bettino Ricasoli who actually codified the recipe of Chianti Classico of, like, the 70% Sangiovese, the Colorino and the other grapes. And that's why Florence became such a center point for wine.

Katy

Right. So he actually made the first kind of recipe of how do you make this typical wine? That's really interesting because before then, were people just making their own blends and mixes and all sorts of ...

Robbin

For a long time, it was just agriculture. So it was just whatever grapes were out there got picked and squished. And so he was the first one that truly said, okay, well, Sangiovese has this kind of characteristic, and Colorino is what they call it Colorino, the little colored one. So Sangiovese can be very thin unless you add some Colorino, which has more tannin and more color, so it will add certain flavors. And so he actually kind of sat down and then was literally making blends. So it was almost even for Tuscany, one of the first proper blends that was paid attention to, other than what's called a field blend.

Katy

Yeah. And so what was that? That was, like, hundreds of years ago, right?

Robbin

It wasn't that long ago, but yet.

Robbin

Again, that's in the canon of Italian history. Right?

Katy

Yeah. Wow. Okay. So we have this tradition of agriculture and people bringing their wine and having it as part of their daily meal, and then it starts to become a little bit more sophisticated with this new recipe. So it's like an evolution. It sounds like what's happening in

Florence, and it's why it's becoming more important, wine's becoming more important - in a different sense, it's becoming more sophisticated, a bit more part of dining out culture, maybe.

Robbin

Yeah, for sure. And I think that's also one thing that's interesting about the ebb and flow of the wine bars of Florence is that if you want a rustic one where you're just tossed a bottle wine and hope for the best, you can get that easily. Or you can even get the Casa Del vino, where I'm doing my project - tiny, historic but the owner is very specific in what he carries and how he serves it and all of those things. Or you can go super high end and get super nice glassware and a guy with the tie, all that stuff. So you can get the entire gamut here, which is quite nice.

Katy

Yeah. And I think it's a little bit different to, say, somewhere like Rome, would you say? Because Rome, I don't feel like it's as serious about wine as, say, Florence. So maybe - correct me if I'm wrong.

Robbin

Well, I mean, that might also depend on I- don't want to say the attitude of the market, but traditionally, the wines of Tuscany are considered better quality than Lazio, which is changing. I do know where there is one wine bar in Rome, near the Colosseum, where you can get it's all Lazio products, which is really quite great. But there's going to be a producer who barely makes enough to sell out the cellar door, much less export. So that's kind of maybe part of the difference between Rome and Florence, where Florence has always had this Chianti Classico structure. And also, if you think about the 70s with the flask and the candle, just worldwide brought more money to the region. So that might be part of why the wine culture is a bit different.

Katy

You're going to love those flagons. I call them a flagon with the sort of raffia around the outside. Yeah, it was a great marketing ploy. Whoever invented that was a genius.

Robbin

However, that's actually historic. It just turned into bad wine because that's when they were actually bottled out in the countryside. And I always called that Renaissance bubble wrap. So the ratio around the bottles, they were all stacked in a wagon and it kept the bottles from breaking. So, yeah, that's actually classic. But then, whoever it was, I think it was Ricasoli that started exporting. Instead of exporting, like bulk wine, they started exporting the bottle and then the marketing went nuts on the bottle and the candle and the tablecloth.

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Katy

Everyone wanted one, but they didn't know what they were drinking. I love it. So great. So you mentioned that you can discover the whole gamut of experiences in terms of wine bars. So you can go from really rustic to really fancy wine bars in Florence. What other things are cool and different about wine bars in the city?

Robbin

Well, there's the two wine bars that still have that made their wine door active, so that was pretty cool. One was completely walled in on the other side when I was doing the photography project, and they didn't know where it was until wine doors became popular again and then they restored it and are still serving out of it. Other than the two bars that have their wine doors active, I still think that there's a couple of wine bars here where you can actually get some wine that's not only Tuscany, whereas if you go to some restaurants, you're going to see nothing but a Tuscan list, because it's convenient where getting wine from another region in Italy is actually quite difficult. So there's some good ones here that if you're looking for wine for the entire country to compare and contrast, you can do that here, right?

Katy

Yeah. I think most people know that when they go to Italy, they should stick with the local wines because it pairs well with the food. And like I myself, I'm really keen to learn more about wine. I'm not an expert like you, in any sense of the word, but I do appreciate learning from you all the history and the nuances around local wines. But, yeah, you're right. I hadn't thought about it like that. You don't really see wines from different regions when you're out and about. Say, if you're out in Emilia Romagna, you definitely don't see Tuscan wines really at all.

Robbin

Yeah, I mean, I saw them in Bologna, but if you go any further out of the city, forget it.

Katy

Yeah. If you were doing a short trip and you really wanted to say, well, hey, what's the difference between this Chianti and this Brunello or Nebbiolo? Yeah, like, you wouldn't know. You wouldn't know how to try. Yeah. And I think if you've got a passing interest in wine, it's nice to do that comparison, too. Okay, so we're at these wine bars. What are the local wines that we should try? What are some of the things apart from Chianti? Because I think most people know Chianti, but what other local ones should we try?

Robbin

Well, I will say one thing about Chianti is getting specific because Chianti is actually several sub zones. So if you just say Chianti, or if you just see Chianti on a good wine list, because a lot of wine lists aren't complete in their naming of the wines let's say it'll just say, like Chianti, but you can have Chianti Classico, you can have Chiant Colli Senesi, you can have the Colli Aretini. These are all sub zones of Chianti as a larger whole. So if you have a wine that just says Chianti DOCG, that can come from anywhere in the Chianti region. If you have Chianti Classico, it can only come from that tiny sub zone. The Colli Senesi is another sub zone, so it has to come from those specific areas. And also, the other thing is one thing is you need to learn if you are getting into wines that you're trying to pin down something you like. I did not like Chianti in general for a long time, but then once I started doing more professional work, I pinned down that I realized that I was tasting producers that were making the wine in a way I didn't like.

Katy

Aahh

Robbin

It wasn't that I didn't like Chianti. I had to find the right producer. So it's like, I know. I don't like, say, 70% minimum Sangiovese, as Signo Ricasoli said, you can be up to 100%, but 70% minimum. So that other 30% can be Cabernet, can be Merlot, as long as it's grown in the region. And so to me, personally, Merlot and Cabernet kills Sangiovese. So I'm like, oh, I don't like Chianti until I found ones that I liked. You could even have just a Chainti comparison tasting here if you want to kind of really even discover how different Sangioveses work together. Because even if we want to get, like, super specific, the Sangiovese used in Chainti is a biotype of the Sangiovese that's used in Brunello. So they're genetically different just by time and just the way things morph in the world. So you could even sit down and have, like, 100% Sangiovese Chianti and 100% Sangiovese Brunello and see how different they are.

Katy

Winemaking is it's definitely an art and a science because you have to know all of not just the graps, but also the terroir and the environment in which they're grown. It's a fascinating thing. We could go on for hours just about wine making, I'm sure, but apart from the different types of Chianti, what other ones would we be expecting to see in a Florence wine bar?

Robbin

I still think, like, the Super Tuscans from Bolgheri out on the coast are still quite popular, I would say. And then also Vernaccia from San Gimignano is also - if you don't like white, then you might still try San Gimignano, because I say there's a white wine for every red drinker and a red wine for every white drinker. You just got to find it. Those are the largest reasons. I

mean, there's even wine from the Siena area and then Montepulciano, Montalcino. So there's all of these things as you go further south, you get all of these different kinds.

Katy

So there's, like, a broad range. So it's one of those things that you want to maybe keep a little bit of an open mind, as Robbin was saying. I think it's hard, though, sometimes when you find something you really like, it's hard to move on and try something new. So that's why I kind of like to do a wine tasting experience, because you're not sort of forced into a situation where you're having a big glass of wine or a full bottle, and you have to decide whether you like it or not.

Robbin

Yeah, that's why there's, like, some of the better wine bars, especially the ones that know me now. But, yes, the places that have lots of buy the glass options are kind of even the best way to do that, even if you're not going for a booked tasting. Maybe it's because I'm pushy, but anybody that's got something open by the glass, you should be able to taste it before they pour you a full one. Otherwise, if they say, no, I would leave because I'm like, wait, it's open. Why can't I have a taste to see if I want a whole glass of it? Right, yeah, but also, I think another thing that's interesting that I would say about trying wines in general, anywhere you are, especially if it's a classic wine bar that has a list that's just there for people who don't want to think. So don't be afraid to engage somebody or even say, like, what's something like this? You don't have to just pick from the menu and go, I'll have that. It's just like, okay, I like this kind of thing maybe - even if you don't know what the wine is. I like light and fruity and tastes like cherries and smells like violets. Okay, so that's a Pinot Noir to us. You've just given me everything I need to hear to pick a wine for you. You got to go to a place that got somebody who knows what they're doing, not just a server.

Katy

Yeah. And I think that's what's really good about Italy. Well, we're fairly lucky here in Australia, you can get that experience, too, but in Italy, definitely. People are so proud of their wine heritage that knowing about the provenance of where it's come from and the owner of the winery and what methods they use is really a point of pride, I guess. And that's what makes it really interesting if you can engage in a conversation like that. So we know we can try some Chianti, some Montalcino, Brunello de Montecino, Montepulciano - we know we've got these different types of wine and also the San Gimignano Vernaccia. So where are we going, Robbin? Tell us the good places, give us the addresses and the names and tell us all about them and why they're great.

Robbin

All right, so the one I'm doing the photography project on is Casa del Vino, which is right next to the Mercato Centrale. One thing I didn't know was the Mercato Centrale was built when

Florence was the capital for, what, a year or two? So that whole little area became like a new revitalized place when it was the capital. So the location has been there at least since then. And Gianni Millarini is the third generation of the second family to run it. It's tiny. If you are walking down the center of the Leather Market, you won't know it's there, so you have to actually pay attention and seek it out. It's full of travelers all the time, but they're the ones that knew it was there before they arrived. Because if you're just like, I'm just going to wander around Florence and follow my heart and my nose and stagger into a place in the big cities, you're going to miss something that way. Definitely behind Leather Market and behind when you find the guy with the disco ball, it's behind him. Gianni is very much into small production, natural production, as much as possible, meaning not a lot of sulfur added, not a lot of fertilizers, a lot of what's really called a low intervention wine. Like, just squish, watch, cause it needs some help? There's also in the winery, but also in the vineyard of like - do they have good cover crop? Do they have good practices? So everything in there is this specific into things that he chooses because he doesn't have a lot of shelf space. And he's great to talk to. And there's like, the three people that work there. That's it Gianni, his wife Nicoletta, and Bogdan, who's been there about five or six years. And that's my favorite place. I'll be going there later. There's another one around the corner. Sorry - Gianni also has, it's mostly sandwiches and also a little Tuscan Stuzzichini like the traditional liver pate on a piece of toast, butter and anchovy. I mean, you all have to try an anchovy - I swear in Tuscany, or at least in Italy, because I don't eat them in the States, but when they're from Italy or from Portugal, I'll take them all. But also, like, Porchetta sandwiches - is that even to that extent on what he carries with his food, following the philosophy of his wine, is that the guy that makes the Porchetta to Gianni's recipe? So if you like Gianni's Porchetta, you're only getting it at Casa del Vino because he tells the guy that makes the prosciutto, which is a presidia product of slow food, how to make this Porchetta that they just order. It's so specific, but that's what makes it great and unique and one of the best places to go.

Katy

Wow. And are they open at lunchtime? Just asking for a friend.

Robbin

They are only open at lunchtime except Friday and Saturday.

Katy

Good to know. Sounds like a great lunch spot maybe after you've done a little bit of sightseeing, you can just nip in the side street there and go and grab yourself a glass of wine and a Porchetta panini. Unbelievable. I think I'll do that in a few weeks, actually. All right, so Casa del Vino is definitely on the list. What else should we try?

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Robbin

Also historic, literally right around the corner is one called Fratelli Zanobini, and they're a little bigger, though, but with a similar history of sons and sons and then cousins, and then two brothers, and then the brothers had sons, and now there's cousins and - one of those. But they're a little different in scope. They're a larger place. They don't have as much food either. They are open longer. So if you're just looking for glass, that's a place you just step into or if you're just looking for a bottle from all price ranges, all productions and most regions of Italy really is as well. But they have everything from big producers to little producers.

Robbin

There's also Novoli, which is also a great place, to Nuvoli, sorry for with a U. That's also a good place. But they have proper hot food, and it has similar history with carrying small production lines that are local.

Katy

Nuvoli. Very nice. What sort of hot food would they - you kind of get like just typical Florentine there?

Robbin

Yes. You can still get your ragu and your lasagnas there, too, even though it's a little more Bologna.

Robbin

I always get the lasagna. I'm trying to think what else is there?

Katy

Never a bad time for lasagna. You have to get lasagna. I need to tell you about this while we're recording because everyone to listen. I had this lasagna in Campania when we were there in June, and it had smoked mozzarella zucchini, and there's like a white sauce, but then they grated lemon over the top. Oh, my God. Mind blown. Never had anything like it before. It was so good. I totally get the dedication to lasagna.

Robbin

I would probably go with a Falanghina from the area.

Robbin

Absolutely.

Robbin

But no, I've had that, too. People, though, they see lemon and cheese, and they don't understand that the smoked cheese on the lemon is perfect because that's actually something else they do as we move south for a moment is the scamorza, they will put on a lemon leaf, which still has kind of some lemon essence - put that under the broiler, and then you're supposed to scrape the cheese off the leaf coz the leaf isn't edible - it's a little waxy, and you just scrape it off and eat it.

Katy

So good.

Robbin

So you got this smoke with this lemon essence, and your brain explodes.

Katy

We did this back to the Florentine lasagna.

Robbin

Right.

Katy

What do we drink with that?

Robbin

I would still even go with a lighter Chianti, because you still want the acid to cut through all that richness. I mean, there's not a lot of sparkling wines here. I would still even go with the Lambrusco.

Katy

I just confessed to Robbin that I've got a new found love of Lambrusco, and she was a little bit shocked. But, yeah, if you've not had it in Italy, you just need to try it. Especially if you're having something really rich, like cured meats that are really fatty or, like, really dense cheeses or a beautiful lasagna. Because it really does just match perfectly because it gives that little frissante there, gives it a little bit of I don't know what, but it just cuts through the richness of the food, and it's delicious.

Robbin

There's a trick to Lambrusco, though that's really kind of difficult to follow. But this is totally nerd level here. So when I was in Bologna last weekend, and they only had one Lambrusco, I'm in Bologna, they only had one Lambrusco and I'm like, what? So I made sure I asked. I was like, "how sweet is this?" And they were like "oh that one's really sweet" and I was like, "okay, no". But if you're, like, in a shop, like, say if you're going to explore Lambrusco, actually flip it over and look at the alcohol content. The lower the alcohol, the higher the sugar. So if you have a Lambrusco, that's like 11%, 12% alcohol that's dry. So 10, 9 - that's going to get sweeter.

Katy

Okay. I like it. That's a good tip. Thank you, Robbin. Okay, now everyone wants to go to a wine bar in Florence that has got a wine door. I think everyone wants to do that and just put their wine and get their wine out of the wine. Where's the best place to do that?

Robbin

Since there's only two, we can flip a coin and pick one on the north side of the river. On the south side, that Osteria Bella Donna restored theirs after covid, and they've now got banners on both sides, and you can still go up to it. As long as they've got their seats outside, you know, they're open and you can knock, and they'll come. One time they just stuck their head out the front door and then served it out the door. But that's a good place and they've got a pretty good selection. And then the one that's got most pictures taken and the one that Stanley Tucci also visited is Babae or Babae, depending on who you ask. They are the first restaurant, even before Covid, that their wine door had always been open. Even when I was doing the photography project and the space was abandoned, the door was open. Like I pushed my camera through it to see what's going on inside. And they're the ones that got this cute little leaf because the bar is actually pretty far in the back. So you just stick your hand in, ring the bell and they will come to you and stick a wine glass right out. They give a little menu hanging on the side. It's really great.

Katy

That's so cute. I love it. I'm surprised not many more have done that, actually reinvigorated their wine doors, because I think people be really into it. Well, I certainly am anyway.

Robbin

Well, I think part of the problem is, since a lot of them got just simply filled in and walled up, that it's going to take jackhammers and a citation from the city or a permit from the city to get it reopened.

Robbin

You'll have to get this cement out. I think there was one another restaurant that had served cocktails out of theirs at the end of Covid, but then they completely went out of business.

Katy

That's a shame. So we know where to go with the wine doors. We know the traditional ones. Now, what about a wine bar that's really good with a view? Because, I don't know, there's something about a rooftop bar or like a one by the river, it just captures everyone's imagination. But sometimes when you go to these ones, the list isn't good, it's not so fun or they don't have that sommelier that wants to help you. Where can we go for a view and a lovely glass of wine?

Robbin

Yeah, the best one, if you just want now, as me and my friends call it, you will be renting your chair concerning the price of the cocktails and the glasses, but I would say the one with the best list and the best cocktails is Sesto, which is the rooftop bar of the NH Hotel. And it is right on the river. Sesto on Arno. And it's worth it, even just for the view. I went up there and had a 15 Euro spritz just to chill out. I mean, there is a bar on the roof of Rinascente department store, but to me it's still not much of a view. I mean, I know you can see the cupola and stuff like that, but I have a weird budget option, though, even though the wine sounds so great.

Katy

Yes, great. Tell us.

Robbin

The weird budget option is the cafe in the public library.

Katy

You've told me that one before now. And what's the name of the public library?

Robbin

The Oblate library. O-B-L-A-T-E. Yeah. The first time I went up there to study, it was like doo, doo doo, doo doo - oh, my God, the cupola was right there.

Katy

Okay, so I'm just going to sit here.

Robbin

And then we had snacks and wine and cocktails.

Katy

Whatever project you were working on there must have been fabulous. My student days were terrible beer and even worse cheese, I think. So it sounds much more sophisticated. Okay, well, thank you for that one. And that was definitely on my list to go check out when I'm in Florence this time as well, because I'm a sucker for a view and a lovely glass of wine. I really like that. And so maybe have you got one more, a special one that you like? I know there's one that I like that you like that's quite close to the Ponte Vecchio.

Robbin

Indeed. So le Volpi e l'Uva. The locals just call it Volpi, but yeah, that's *Ciro* - I think I mentioned before, I've been there enough now that I just sit down and he knows to pour me something. So he's one of the owners. And then there's also *Elaria* that's there serving every now and then. She speaks five languages, six?

Katy

Amazing.

Robbin

She's a translator professionally, but loves working at this wine bar because again, it's another one that's in all the guidebooks. But if you're just walking across the Ponte Vecchio to Palazzo Pitti, you're not going to find it. So, yeah, she speaks a little Japanese, she speaks Portuguese and obviously Italian and English, French I'm like (and I didn't know this till one day I just turned around and she was speaking Japanese) I was like, what the?? So no qualms - if you speak any language, you just find it *Elaria*. Yes, at *Volpi* they're traditional list, but then you just say especially if a friend of his has been by or him or *Emilio* or *Ricco* just you know "anything special open?" Whether they might have had a tasting earlier that's not on the list.

Robbin

And that's how you kind of get around. If you want to engage *Ciro*, that's the best way to do it. Again, tell him what you like and he'll pick the right thing for you. And he'll even literally just go, splash. Taste it. And then you go yes or naah - I don't like it for XYZ reason. And he'll give you something else?

Katy

So I like this question. So what is it? "Have you got anything interesting or new open?" I like this question. I think we need to all write that one down and I think that's a good tip for anywhere you are in the world, actually, if you're trying wine, definitely. Because I think

sometimes you get restricted to the wine list and you might be going -hmm, and then they might come up with something fairly unbelievable. My latest move is since I discovered Pecorino wine is like I really like Pecorino have you got any of that? People, especially here in Australia, it's not very well known, so they definitely do prick their ears up and they go, oh, okay. Well, as it happens, we actually have something that you might like.

Robbin

You might like to surprise me with the Lambrusco revelation earlier. I have a revelation for you when I was doing my first delivery grocery here, because my favorite supermarket is like a long walk. And then they started doing delivery, I'm like, oh, perfect. They have from this organic producer a three liter box of Pecorino. It's good. I'm like, this is dangerous. I'm just like, in the fridge. Here we go. Just give me some more of this. I mean, I think I might have already killed a box in a week because it's just down the hatch. Pecorino can go everywhere from just straight down the gullet to refined and crisp and all this stuff. I love Pecorino.

Katy

Yeah, it's a really great wine if you really like white wines or sometimes for me, getting it's getting harder - my body is not tolerating red wine so much at the moment. It's definitely one to try when you're in Italy. Well, Robbin, you've certainly given us wine lovers, some ideas to mull over as we plan our trips to Florence. And so I know that our listeners will want to check out your photography and definitely do go check out those wine doors. They're so cute. And what I love about what Robbin does with her photography is she captures movement. So you've got people walking past and you can get a sense of the history and the longevity of the windows because they have been there for centuries, but they're still part of modern life. Anyway, Robbin, how can people tap into your world?

Robbin

Well, I've got my long, complicated name of robbingheesling.com and you can find all the photography there and a link to the shop and I can special order prints and send you a book and do all that good stuff for you. .

Katy

Yeah, and of course, we'll put the link into our show notes and Robbin's got an Instagram as well. And there's some beautiful portraits on your Instagram of some of the people that you've been talking to at Casa del Vino right? I do love your portraits, are really evocative. I feel like I want to meet the people when I look at your photos actually.

Robbin

Great. That's the entire point. Excellent.

Katy

Excellent. I actually have the wine doors booked myself and if anyone's like a wine lover and history lover, I can tell you that they would be absolutely delighted to receive that as a gift.

Katy

I mean, I bought it for myself because I wasn't going to wait for anyone to buy it for me but if you're looking for a birthday or Christmas present, honestly, it's absolutely gorgeous. And we'll link to that one too. Now, Robbin, I am very much looking forward to hopefully checking out the Palazzo Capponi Wine Lounge with you. And I've been Florence in a few weeks. And for everyone that's listening, this is a former private residence with a gorgeous room covered in frescoes. And it's on the Oltrarno district, and it's where there's a winery called Castiglion del Bosco, and they make Brunello del Montecino and other varieties. But hopefully we can go there and catch up properly. And I can't wait because it sounds absolutely divine.

Robbin

It's brand new. I'm looking forward to it myself.

Katy

Exciting. So glad to be Robbin. Thank you so much for chatting with me about some of my favorite topics - wine, wine, bars, cheese, and all the things lasagna on Untold Italy today.

Robbin

Thanks for having me.

Katy

So whether you're really into learning about wine or simply appreciate a glass of vino della casa with your dinner there's no doubt that Florence is a great place to start or continue your journey learning about Tuscan and Italian wine. I just love all these tips from Robbin and can't wait to revisit some of my favorite bars and also experience some new ones.

Hopefully, I'll make a new wine discovery too after my adventures with pecorino and lambrusco. I find it so satisfying to be able to read a wine menu with some understanding of what to expect and have a decent conversation with the sommelier without feeling awkward.

So why not visit one of the bars Robbin mentioned, start talking to the owner or sommelier, order a plate of snacks and begin your Tuscan wine education? To be honest I think there should be a masters course arranged exactly around that!

Of course, we've put all the details of the wine bars into the post show notes at untolditaly.com/144 for episode 144 as well as Robbin's website with details of how to buy her beautiful book on the wine doors of Florence.

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Grazie Mille! Thanks for your ongoing support of Untold Italy. I hope you enjoyed today's show. If you did we would love it if you shared it with your Italy-loving friends and family. Grazie to those of you who have already done this. Untold Italy is now in the top 10 travel podcasts in the United States, Canada, and Australia which is so exciting. And it's all thanks to you. Grazie Mille! Thank you.

That's all for today, I'm off to explore some wine bars in Florence with Robbin. "ciao for now".