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**Vinitaly International brings the business of Italian viticulture center stage at Verona, with two new initiatives to help producers sell one more bottle of Italian wine.**

Verona, 09 April, 2014 - For Vinitaly International, the business of Italian viticulture dominated this year’s program in Verona, as the international touring arm of Vinitaly launched Vinitaly International Buyer Connect, an experimental project aimed at connecting Italian wineries to foreign buyers, and announced its next initiative dedicated entirely to the business of wine, the Wine2Wine forum planned for December 3-4 in Verona.

Vinitaly International Buyer Connect (VIBC) was conceived as a collaboration with Winestars World, a UK-based platform designed to connect wineries with buyers in foreign markets, using a form of “360 degree” wine competition, in which wines are judged not only on taste, but also on packaging, pricing, marketing and commercial viability. The joint venture launched Monday and Tuesday at Vinitaly, involving 45 producers from Sicily and 35 from Puglia respectively. These two regions – relatively unknown in the UK - presented their wines before a panel of fourteen wine buyers, who represent a wide range of retail outlets in the UK market, including supermarkets, specialty shops, and restaurants. The participating wineries varied in size, but were all unrepresented in the UK market.

“The reason for the existence of Winestars World is the difficulty in getting your wines into the international market, even if you’re convinced your wine is good, the label is beautiful and the price is fair,” explained Robert Joseph, founder, with Catherine Monahan, of Winestars World. “What Winestars is about is the beginning of a relationship. It’s very rare to have this many buyers of this level speaking frankly in one place, so it’s a great opportunity for the producers to get feedback, and potentially start a commercial relationship.”

Each participating producer presented one wine, from which 10 winners in each region were selected and presented with a glass trophy – and more importantly, gained contacts with some of the top buyers in the UK market. In the coming weeks, all participating wineries will receive a full report with feedback from the judges, who at the conclusion of the contest shared with producers insights into what makes a wine more appealing to a UK buyer.



“I participated because I thought it was something that could help our winery, and in the end I was really satisfied,” says Giuseppe Marrano, proprietor of Podere 29, in the province of Foggia in Puglia. “I’ve participated in other competitions like this, but this exceeded our expectations. I listened very closely to all of the advice the buyers gave us, about the pricing in the English market, the types of products that are the most popular, lots of suggestions about the packaging – all really useful.”

“It was very gratifying that the judges recognized our work and the choices we’ve made in our production,” agrees Michele Palamà, export manager of Palamà, in the Salento area of Puglia. “But most interesting was the post-event, when the judges gave us more information about the interests of the English market, which for us is relatively unknown – it was a really positive experience that we would be very eager to repeat.”

“One of the goals of Vinitaly International is to help producers find representatives in foreign markets where they are not yet present – in this case by bringing the buyers directly to the producers here at Vinitaly,” explained Managing Director of Vinitaly International Stevie Kim. “This time they represent the UK market, but in the future we hope to expand to other markets as well. This is an experiment in collaboration with Winestars World; for us it’s an opportunity to work with another organization that has know-how and experience that could be an added value for our producers. After we analyze the results, if we feel it has been successful, we will reproduce it at Wine2Wine in December.”

Later Tuesday, Vinitaly International hosted the official presentation of Wine2Wine, which, in its first edition planned for December 3-4 in the Centro Congressi of Veronafiere, will be the only event in Italy completely dedicated to the business of viticulture. “When we go abroad, we meet sector opinion leaders and press, and we bring them to Verona,” explained Stevie Kim. “The result this year is our ‘Talk Business’ seminar series. We dedicate these to business issues facing producers – specifically regarding the Hong Kong, Chinese, Russian and US markets - but during Vinitaly those producers are busy making contacts, so many aren’t available to attend the seminars. So we decided to create a new showcase on December 3 and 4, called Wine2Wine, dedicated to producers and leaders in the business of wine, when the producers aren’t stuck behind their stands.”

“The two days will feature a rich program of workshops organized around the themes of marketing, web communication, new technology, foreign market landscape and best practices of other sectors,” continued CEO of Veronafiere Giovanni Mantovani. “It’s an occasion for wineries to exchange experiences and network with key players in the production and distribution system. It’s the newest element in the 360 degree service offered by Veronafiere, including Vinitaly International, Vinitaly Wine Club, Opera Wine, and Vinitaly itself.”

**About:**

**Winestars World** is a project founded by Catherine Monahan and her business partner Robert Joseph, the creator of International Wine Challenge (IWC). WineStars World represents an evolution of the traditional tasting, in which the judges taste wine without knowing the name and origins of the wine, evaluating only the organoleptic qualities. The format of Winestars World also evaluates the packaging, price/quality balance, and the marketing strategies used to promote the wine.

**Veronafiere** is the leading organizer of trade shows in Italy including Vinitaly (www.vinitaly.com), the largest wine event in the world. The 47th edition of Vinitaly counted some 148,000 visitors (+6%), of which 53.000 were international attendees (+10%) visiting from 120 countries. On 95.000 square meters, 4.200 exhibitors welcomed trade professionals, media and producers alike. The next installment of the fair will take place on 6th- 9th April 2014. The premier event to Vinitaly, OperaWine (www.vinitalyinternational.com) “Finest Italian Wines: 100 Great Producers”, will unite international wine professionals on April 5th 2014 in the heart of Verona. Veronafiere also created Vinitaly International in 1998 to develop a global platform for the promotion of companies in the Italian wine and food sectors.

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