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## **The Year of the Pig will bring Vitaly International Academy Ambassador course to China's leisure city Chengdu**

**The Italian Wine Ambassador certification course—Vitaly International Academy's flagship educational program about Italian wines—will be staged in Chengdu, China, next March, for the second consecutive year. Chengdu's five-star hotel Xanadu-CYNN will host a cohort of wine specialists eager to learn more about Italian wine culture from March 16 to 20, 2019.**

Applications are now being accepted for the Vitaly International Academy (VIA) Italian Wine Ambassador certification course in Chengdu scheduled to begin on March 16. This five-day intensive program which trains professionals on Italian wine culture to the highest level, will return to Chengdu after the 2018 edition in which 8 candidates were successfully certified as Italian Wine Ambassadors. Known as China's "leisure city," Chengdu is a major hub for the beverage industry since it is home to the International Wine and Spirits Show, an important expo which takes place from March 17 to 20 at the Shangri-La Hotel and attracts premium brands in the sector. Vitaly will also be present with a dedicated Vitaly China area to showcase Italian wine labels. It is therefore a timely opportunity for wine professionals in Asia to sign up for the Italian Wine Ambassador course and avail of additional business and networking opportunities offered by the trade event.



This year, the Italian Wine Ambassador course in Chengdu will offer an even more engaging learning and tasting experience, as the program has been recently reformatted from the point of view of both theory lectures and tastings. In Chengdu, VIA Faculty Sarah Heller MW and Henry Davar will deliver standardized lectures covering each Italian region's iconic wines, native grapes, history and food culture. In addition, the lecturers will teach warm-up sessions that will allow students to focus on important issues surrounding Italian wines and their production. Vitaly International Academy Founder Stevie Kim comments on the rationale behind the enhancement of the lecture series: *"We reformatted the course with the aim of also providing students with important storytelling tools about Italian wine culture. On top of getting to know the wines through our numerous tastings, with the Italian Wine Ambassador course our intention is to give students the added value of storytelling, which, ultimately, will enable them to talk about Italian wines in their own markets with deep knowledge and passion."* The tasting component of the course is another feature that has been improved to help students in foreign markets explore more fully the depth and

breadth of Italian wine styles. In addition to guided tastings led by VIA Faculty members, candidates will take part in self-guided tasting sessions named “tasting labs” where they will sample additional labels. To improve communication skills and get to know each other, candidates will also work in groups to prepare a video presentation on a topic related to Italian native grapes. Another revamp of the course involves the final assessment which features a written exam (both multiple choice and open-ended questions) as well as a practicum (blind tasting).



Photograph: Candidates during the 2018 Italian Wine Ambassador certification course in Chengdu.

In addition to a comprehensive learning experience, the Italian Wine Ambassador course fosters connections between international professionals who take the course and the Italian wine industry at large, thanks also to the Vinitaly International Academy reformatted infrastructure. During the summer of 2018, Italian vine genetics academic Prof. Attilio Scienza became the scientific director of VIA and was joined also by representatives of four major Italian trade associations (Federvini, Federdoc, Vignaioli Indipendenti FIVI, and Unione Italiana Vini) that formed VIA’s Institutional Advisory Board. Additional regional and private consortiums, trade networks, and regional bodies have also joined, becoming VIA Supporters and contributing to VIA’s educational activities such as courses and tasting seminars. This cohesive infrastructure contributes to fulfil VIA’s mission of acting as the conduit between the Italian wine sector and wine professionals operating in markets all over the world.

To date, the VIA community counts 450 specialists who went through the program since 2014. Among these, 170 have been certified as Italian Wine Ambassadors and Experts globally. In Asia, VIA has 39 are Ambassadors and Experts based in mainland China, 12 in Hong Kong, 2 in Singapore, 3 in Taiwan, 2 in Japan, and 4 in South Korea. Asia-based wine specialists interested in advancing their careers by entering the VIA community have time until March 1 2019 to enrol in the Chengdu course. Informal enquiries can be addressed by emailing [viachina@vinitalytour.com](mailto:viachina@vinitalytour.com).

About: The grand Vinitaly 2019 will be held from April 7th to the 10th. Every year, Vinitaly counts more than 4,000 exhibitors on a 100,000+ square meter area and 130,000 visitors from over 140 different countries with more than 30,000 top international buyers. The premier event to Vinitaly, OperaWine “Finest Italian Wines: 100 Great Producers,” which will be held on the 6th of April, one day prior to Vinitaly will unite international wine professionals in the heart of Verona, offering them the unique opportunity to discover and taste the wines of the 100 Best Italian Producers, as selected by Wine Spectator. Since 1998 Vinitaly International travels to several countries such as Russia, China, USA and Hong Kong thanks to its strategic arm abroad, Vinitaly International. In February 2014 Vinitaly International launched an educational project, the Vinitaly International Academy (VIA) with the aim of divulging and broadcasting the excellence and diversity of Italian wine around the globe. VIA this year launched the seventh edition of its Certification Course and today counts 157 Italian Wine Ambassadors and 13 Italian Wine Experts.