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Vinitaly International Academy returns to Hong Kong to stage its Ambassador certification course a year after launch of new format

The leading Italian wine education provider Vinitaly International Academy (VIA) is heading back to Hong Kong from November 3rd to 7th, 2019, to run its advanced Italian Wine Ambassador course dedicated to wine professionals looking to further their knowledge of Italian wines. Organized by Veronafiere, Vinitaly, and Vinitaly International, the 2019 Hong Kong Ambassador course will mark the second anniversary after the official launch of the reformatted, tasting-intensive program, which debuted in 2018 in Hong Kong and introduced on a global stage the new VIA infrastructure comprised of a new Chief Scientist, Faculty members, and the major Italian wine trade associations forming the Advisory Board. This year's edition of the Hong Kong Ambassador course will see the participation of 36 candidates working in four continents (Asia, Europe, United States, and Australia).



According to the latest [government statistics](#) (June 2019), Italy is ranked the fifth country importing wines into the Hong Kong market, both by value and quantity of wine. With a year-on-year growth in value of wine of 27.5%, Italian quality wine is gaining considerable ground, whereas, on the other hand, quantity of Italian wine imports on a year-on-year basis shows a decrease of -17.6%. To an extent, this shift in favor of quality wines for Italy demonstrates that Hong Kong wine consumers are well educated and potentially willing to invest in better quality wines. Italian wine education, therefore, becomes essential in disseminating knowledge about Italy's gems and viticultural heritage in Hong Kong, and [Vinitaly International Academy](#) (VIA)'s untiring work to provide professionals with authoritative competency on the subject will be key in contributing to the success of Italian quality wines.

VIA's mission to create qualified experts in Italian wine so that, in turn, they will be able to train colleagues and consumers in their respective markets will see its practical application, once again, in Hong Kong, with the staging of the [VIA Italian Wine Ambassador course](#) from November 3rd to 7th, 2019. Organized by Veronafiere, Vinitaly, and Vinitaly International, the course will take place at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, the same venue where on November 7th, 2019, the

International Wine & Spirits Fair will kick off, with the participation of the [Vinitaly Hong Kong](#) contingent of over 100 Italian wineries.

The VIA Ambassador course will gather together 36 wine professionals operating predominantly in markets such as Hong Kong, Singapore, China, Thailand, and India, but also United States, Russia, Australia, and Europe. Among the candidates who will take the course are wine journalists, sommeliers, importers, and WSET Diploma educators including also Stephen Mack, CEO of AWSEC, Asia's largest WSET School. The course will be taught by VIA Faculty members Sarah Heller MW and Henry Davar, who also taught the reformatted course during its debut in Hong Kong last year. Since 2018, the course has featured comprehensive theory lectures on Italian wine territories and grapes, guided tastings of benchmark wines from across regions and styles, and additional tasting labs offered by VIA Supporters, the latter Italian wine associations who joined VIA's renovated infrastructure and include: Italian Signature Wines Academy, Italia del Vino, Famiglie del Vino, the consortiums Vini del Trentino, Sicilia DOC, Franciacorta, Vini d'Abruzzo, Wi-Fi Wine from Irpinia, Primitivo di Manduria.

For the 2019 edition of the Hong Kong course, these tasting labs will be open not only to the candidates, but also to representatives of VIA's Supporters, the Asia-based community of VIA alumni, and Italian wine producers who will be present in Hong Kong to attend the International Wine & Spirits Fair. *"Since the roll out of the new VIA Ecosystem last year, we have always strived to increase exposure to Italian wines for our Ambassadors,"* says Stevie Kim, Managing Director of Vinitaly International and Founder of Vinitaly International Academy, *"We are pleased to return to Hong Kong to offer an in-depth educational experience and to act as the conduit between our community of highly-qualified professionals and Italian wine producers. With the Asian wine market being increasingly more competitive, we believe wine education is the Trojan horse that will make the difference for Italian wine; our commitment to the wine community in Hong Kong and the broader Asian market demonstrates how serious we are in spreading the gospel of Italian wine into this market"*.



VIA Faculty members Sarah Heller MW (right) and Henry Davar (left) will return to Hong Kong to teach the VIA Italian Wine Ambassador certification course.

Recently, VIA was involved in another educational initiative in Asia. In addition to the Ambassador courses held in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, and Chengdu, in September VIA organized two lectures on Italian wine in Shanghai and Shenzhen delivered by its Chief Scientist Prof. Attilio Scienza. Scienza's talks discussed the pedigree of iconic Italian grape Sangiovese and culminated with a tasting of Sangiovese wines as well as wines from varieties genetically linked to Sangiovese (Frappato, Nerello Mascalese and others). Moreover, the [Vinitaly International Academy Educator program](#) rolled out in Spring 2019 continues to certify Italian Wine Educators also in Asia; these qualified members of VIA Community will soon be able to teach the intermediate-level course Italian Wine Maestro, that will also serve to prepare professionals to the advanced Italian Wine Ambassador Course.



Additional information on the Vinitaly International Academy course offer and levels of certification can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.vinitalyinternational.com/via-ecosystem/>. Information on the upcoming courses can be requested at via@vinitalytour.com.

About: [Vinitaly International Academy](#) (VIA) aims to be the gold standard of Italian wine education. It offers a complete educational path with standardized courses that will teach professionals and educators to master the diversity of Italian wine in a rigorous, organized manner. VIA's main objective is to foster a global network of highly qualified professionals such as Italian Wine Ambassadors and Italian Wine Experts: in turn, they will support and promote Italian wine throughout the world. VIA was founded by Stevie Kim, Managing Director of Vinitaly International. The new VIA ecosystem avails of the guidance of Italian trade associations Federdoc, Federvini, Vignaioli Indipendenti FIVI, and Unione Italiana Vini as members of the Institutional Advisory Board. Italian vine genetics scholar, Prof. Attilio Scienza, oversees VIA's scientific and educational direction as the Chief Scientist. VIA Faculty Sarah Heller MW and Henry Davar teach the flagship Italian Wine Ambassador course. The following trade associations in the Italian wine industry have also joined as VIA Supporters: Italia del Vino; Italian Signature Wines Academy; Le Famiglie del Vino, Wi-Fi Wine from Irpinia, Consorzio di Tutela Vini del Trentino; Consorzio di Tutela Sicilia DOC; Franciacorta; Consorzio di Tutela Vini d'Abruzzo, Consorzio Primitivo di Manduria. To date the VIA community comprises 202 certified Italian Wine Ambassadors and 14 Italian Wine Experts. Since its foundation in 2014, over 560 candidates from all over the world have taken VIA's courses.