

Thursday, February 20th, 2020

## **Vitaly International Academy's projections for 2020 aim for 300 certified Italian Wine Ambassadors worldwide**

The Vitaly International Academy (VIA) Institutional Advisory Board gathered in Verona, Italy, on February 5th, 2020, to discuss VIA's enhanced educational and incoming programs for the current year. In 2020, VIA aims to reach 300 Italian Wine Ambassadors certified and to grow its base of alumni to 800. At present, the VIA team is working to stage the advanced-level Italian Wine Ambassador certification in Verona from April 10th to 14th, 2020.

Verona, Italy. The year 2020 will be decisive to consolidate [Vitaly International Academy's](#) efforts in the promotion of Italian wine through multi-level wine courses and business activities which connect international professionals with the Italian wine world. A year and a half into its reformatted, [tasting intensive program](#) and a new ecosystem which sees a stronger participation of Italian wine trade associations, VIA forges ahead with a rich program of initiatives and a growing [international community of wine professionals](#) highly specialized in Italian wine.



Photograph: Left to right, standing: Gianni Bruno (Vitaly Wine & Food Area Manager), Attilio Scienza (VIA Chief Scientist), Stevie Kim (VIA Founder), Emanuela Di Biagio (Federdoc/VIA Advisory Board), Giulio Somma (UIV/ VIA Advisory Board); Left to right, sitting: Matilde Poggi (FIVI/VIA Advisory Board) and Ottavio Cagiano de Azevedo (Federvini/VIA Advisory Board).

On February 5th, 2020, VIA's 4 Institutional Advisory Board members (Federvini, FIVI Vignaioli Indipendenti, Unione Italiana Vini, Federdoc), Chief Scientist Attilio Scienza, and Vitaly Wine & Food Area Manager Gianni Bruno met with VIA Founder Stevie Kim and her team in Verona, Italy, for a discussion on the state-of-the-art of the project. With 5 advanced Italian Wine Ambassador courses in Italy plus 10 overseas held from 2015 to 2019, in 2020 VIA will run 5 Ambassador courses (1 in Italy and 4 overseas) and steadily increase the number of certified Ambassadors. With an average of 60 to 70



Italian Wine Ambassadors certified per year, in 2020 the Ambassador community is projected to reach around 300 members (starting from 230 of 2019). VIA Founder Stevie Kim commented on VIA's projections for 2020: *"This steady growth in the number of certified Ambassadors goes hand in hand with the expansion of the VIA alumni community, that is, all the wine professionals who attended VIA courses without necessarily gaining the certification; so, the 615 candidates of 2019 will potentially reach 800 by the end of 2020. We are talking about a solid base of specialists based in over 36 countries who can become dedicated collaborators."*

Advisory Board members commented on their collaboration with VIA to date. Ottavio Cagiano de Azevedo, President of Federvini, highlighted the importance of educational and cultural initiatives to spread knowledge about wine internationally: *"Federvini is proud to cooperate with VIA: our associated Members have always sustained wine culture as the main tool to help introduce consumers worldwide to drinking wine. To this end, VIA structured important educational formats: Federvini will continue to support and develop initiatives to echo these efforts."*

Federdoc President Riccardo Ricci Curbastro also stressed the value of education in the promotion of Italian quality wine denominations: *"The mission of Federdoc, which I represent, is to inform and educate about Italian denomination wines, as well as to elevate their status. For this reason we cannot but support and share the educational program that Vinitaly International Academy is developing in these years. VIA's activities resulted in the training and education of an important number of Italian Ambassadors who increasingly play a crucial role in promoting Italian quality products worldwide amongst targeted audiences, and also influence consumers' choices towards our quality wines."*

Matilde Poggi, President of FIVI, underlined the value of the VIA program and the need to continue to support it: *"The work undertaken by VIA to educate and enhance knowledge about Italian wine is unique in Italy. I hope this work will be supported in the future, otherwise we will all lose a great ally for the promotion of our rich Italian wine heritage."*

Paolo Castelletti, General Secretary of Unione Italiana Vini, emphasized the role that wineries and producers must have in these international training programs: *"As we've always maintained during our meetings with ICE-Italian Trade Agency, Vinitaly, and Vinitaly International Academy, training foreign professionals and opinion leaders on the distinctiveness of our viticultural heritage allows to spread into foreign markets a strong message about the Italian wine system and to promote our brands amongst local consumers. For this reason, these educational programs must be delivered in close contact with wineries and producers—the real protagonists of the marketplace and hence able to adequately influence the contents and priorities of this training. Our feedback on the establishment of VIA's Advisory Board is positive; may this work continue to prosper in the future."*

Another area of significant development for VIA in 2020 is its course offer. In addition to the flagship Italian Wine Ambassador certification, VIA will also deliver the intermediate-level Italian Wine Maestro course globally. Following the [launch of the online Italian Wine Educator program](#) in 2019, where 38 Ambassadors from the community were certified to teach VIA's Maestro course, in 2020 between 20 and 40 Maestro courses will operate worldwide. VIA's objective for 2020 is to certify additional 100 Educators who, in turn, will teach Maestro courses in their destination markets. In addition, VIA's team is set to finalize the pilot version of the lower-level Italian Wine Fellow course that will be rolled out globally in 2021. Finally, for 2020 VIA plans to boost its Incoming Program, that is, field trips organized in collaboration with local bodies such as Consortiums and aimed at bringing VIA Ambassadors to Italy to meet producers and attend dedicated seminars. In 2019 Ambassadors travelled to the Bolgheri region in Tuscany and to Sicily; in 2020 field trips will be planned in Apulia, Sicily, Sardinia, and Campania.

To kick off VIA's dense program of initiative for 2020 is the Italian Wine Ambassador course in Verona, Italy, to be staged shortly before the Vinitaly expo, from April 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020, and organized by Veronafiere, Vinitaly, and Vinitaly International with the support of ICE-Italian Trade Agency. [Applications for VIA Verona](#) are currently being received. After Verona, additional locations and



[provisional dates for the Ambassador courses](#) in the United States include: Atlanta in June, Seattle in July, Houston in August.

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. To date the VIA community comprises 215 certified Italian Wine Ambassadors and 15 Italian Wine Experts. Since its foundation in 2014, over 615 candidates from all over the world have taken VIA's courses.