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## 5StarWines and Wine Without Walls: the blind wine tasting that survived a global pandemic.

The blind wine tasting organized by Veronafiere—5StarWines & Wine Without Walls—has been carried out on “agile” terms. **Cantine Lunae Bosoni - Luni (SP)** was given the special **Gran Vinitaly 2020 Winery of the Year Award**. Meanwhile, the section dedicated to **certified organic and biodynamic wines—Wine Without Walls—selected Fattoria La Violla Di Gianni, Antonio and Bandino Lo Franco – Arezzo** for top honors.





**The recent pandemic** put the world on pause. This was the case for the wine market as well. 5StarWines & Wine Without Walls, **the annual Wine Tasting held in Verona by Veronafiere, did not stand still but** reshaped its format into an “agile” edition to follow through with the tasting **and turn it into a virtual experience.**

While the world was taking a break, so was the economy and everything that goes along with it. Veronafiere was supposed to host not only Vinitaly, the biggest fair in the world dedicated to wine and spirits, but also 5StarWines & Wine Without Walls, a blind wine tasting conducted by **a number of wine experts with a range of profiles**, such as Masters of Wine (MW), journalists and Vinitaly International Academy (VIA) Ambassadors. Among these were Pedro Ballesteros Torres MW, Robert Joseph, Bernard Burtschy, Joe Fattorini, Regine Lee MW, Sarah Abbott MW, Elizabeth Gabay MW, Michelle Cherutti-Kowal MW, Lin Liu MW, Andy Howard MW, Jonas Tofterup MW, Thomas Curtis MW. Leading the coordination were Monty Waldin, Daniele Cernilli, and Gabriele Gorelli. The ultimate goal was to **create a Top-Wines Guide to use as a marketing tool** for producers, capable of creating business connections around the world.



As a major aim of the **Wine Selection is to support and spur on producers**, by giving them the opportunity to create international connections, **rescheduling was not an option for Veronafiere.**



Doing so would have conflicted with the event's very own mission and vision. The decision was to **reshape the format of the blind wine tasting**, to make sure that producers would still have results to show for their labor, especially important in difficult times. This is where the term “agile” plays a key role. **The ability to move quickly and easily** was completely embodied by the team of 5StarWines & Wine Without Walls: if many of the international judges selected for the wine tasting were now unable to get to Verona due to new safety regulations, the team would organize the blind tasting to be conducted from the judges' own homes, **connected to Verona by videoconference and WebApp**.

**The rules and regulations of the tasting stayed the same**, but the logistics had been completely reshaped. Now the participating labels—besides being anonymized as usual—had to be classified, baled, **and shipped to individual judges all over Europe**. Beginning June 10<sup>th</sup>, each morning the judges prepared their “tasting station.” They'd turn on their computers, open a WebApp, and start the tasting **with the supervision of the team in Verona**.



The "agile" edition of 5StarWines & Wine Without Walls saw **52 international judges**, over **2,100 samples belonging to more than 700 companies**, and resulted in **847 wines selected** (find the full list on the [5starwines.it](https://www.5starwines.it) home page). Selected wines **will be published in the 5StarWines – the Book Guide**, will be given the recognition their efforts deserve, and will be able to attend business-to-business (B2B) events with the aim of creating **new business opportunities both in Italy and abroad**.

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In the words of **Daniele Cernilli, 5StarWines judge, Doctor Wine, and founder of Gambero Rosso**:  
“This is the first tasting after what happened. We are all trying to get back on our feet and in doing so **we show our desire, our pride and our courage in wanting to look at the future with eyes of hope.**” None of this would have been possible without the active participation of the judges, who attended several **preparation meetings and stored a large number of samples in their cellars.** Meanwhile, participating producers waited patiently for the Selection to confirm results, and category winners were finally surprised by the team with a **video call announcing the best performing wines.**

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**5StarWines – the Book** is the annual wine selection organized by Veronafiere, held in the lead-up to the biggest Italian wine fair in the world. The event is now in its fourth edition. 5StarWines & Wine Without Walls is a blind tasting aimed at shedding light on wineries investing in the improvement of their products. During the event, a highly qualified panel of wine professionals will taste and score—using a 100-point scale—participating wines. In this edition, over 2000 bottles took part in the competition and 847 were selected for inclusion in 5StarWines – the Book. The Guide is a useful tool both on the promotional and commercial side. It introduces international buyers and wine lovers to new wine products of great value. It guarantees wine quality and it maintains and certifies their value at an international level.