



Italian Wine Academy

www.italianwineacademy.org

info@italianwineacademy.org



Press Release
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Italian Wine Academy online course has 100% pass rate

Italian Wine Academy (IWA), an Approved Program Provider (APP) in Verona for Wine and Spirit Education Trust (WSET) courses is celebrating another successful Level 2 Award in Wines course with a 100% pass rate. What makes the achievement all the more substantial is that it was reached during a time of upheaval of classroom courses due to Covid-19, with students opting to take their sessions online rather than cancel.

In light of the Covid-19, Italian Wine Academy (IWA) in Verona took the decision to close its physical classrooms, however, determined not to leave their students without wine education, the decision was made to move courses online. IWA offered the inaugural Online Level 2 Award in Wines students three days of interactive theory classes, conducted online using the Zoom platform. The tasting component was not left behind, with students additionally having access to weekly Virtual Tastings, as well as a future date for in-class tastings ahead of the exam to ensure students still received time with the recommended tasting samples.



In consultation with faculty member Rebecca Lawrence, IWA decided to structure the Level 2 Online Course in the same mode as a classroom, allowing the students a logical format that also followed the structure of the materials provided by WSET, as well as an experience that would map as closely as

possible to what they would have encountered in the classroom. Students attended three sessions a day, with breaks to allow them time away from their screens, interspersed with Q&A sessions. Questions and conversation were encouraged in real time to allow maximum contact time with the instructor. Student responses to the course were resoundingly positive, with FISAR Sommelier Francesco Bonamici saying, “the organization was almost impeccable” and Viticulture Student Michele Avesani commenting “obviously the online course has its pros and cons, but I must say they were very effective.” In addition to this direct feedback a sense of camaraderie was felt amongst both the students and the staff of Italian Wine Academy, joined by the difficult circumstances of Covid-19 and the desire to continue, nonetheless.

IWA felt that moving the course online, although creating potential logistical and technical hurdles, was important, not only to continue operating as a school during the lockdown, but also for their students. As instructor Rebecca Lawrence made clear “it was vital for us not only maintain a connection with our students, but also to support their desire to further their wine education no matter what. For many students a WSET course can be a turning point in a career and therefore can be even more important during a period of uncertainty. It not only gave continuity for students, but also a new qualification that might be vital to their post-lockdown lives.”



As the 100% pass rate of the students on this course demonstrates, moving the course online was not detrimental to students experience of the WSET Level 2 Award in Wine, indeed the focused time to study, combined with both virtual and in-class wine tasting, allowed more time for recap and contact with the teacher, giving students an extra level of engagement. As Lawrence comments “many students in class, especially in a second language, may be too nervous to ask a question or raise a point. By moving this into a private chat online, or by recapping information during tastings you give a student that extra level of confidence.”

Certainly, this sentiment seems to have been shared by the participants, who would not only recommend the course, but particularly highlighted the level of preparedness that IWA had “I would recommend this course to my faculty colleagues” said Avesani, with Bonamici adding that it was “brilliantly prepared.” Although classes have now resumed in-person at IWA, they are not ruling out

continuing to offer courses online, “it expands the amount of potential students we can reach, and offers a more flexible way of studying” remarked Lawrence, “if it’s an experience students demand then of course we would look to work online again, not least given the 100% pass rates shows how successful this mode can be!”

About: the Italian Wine Academy is a wine school based in Verona, and it is an Approved Programme Provider qualified to teach WSET wine courses. WSET - Wine & Spirit Education Trust is the world’s largest provider of education on wine and spirits. WSET qualifications are globally recognized as the international standard in wine and spirit knowledge for wine professionals and enthusiasts. Vinalty International Academy hosts WSET at wine2digital, next to the headquarters of Veronafiere.