

Wednesday, June 23th, 2021

Vinitaly International Academy Flagship Edition returns to Verona with expanded programme and new Faculty

Vinitaly International Academy (VIA) welcomed participants back to Verona for the first in-person flagship edition since 2019. 67 students from 15 different countries experienced a revitalized VIA course with additional Masterclasses, Advanced Seminars and the guidance of new Faculty member Francesco Marchio IWE. The result of which was the inauguration of 19 new Italian Wine Ambassadors.



June 20th of 2021 saw the return of the Vinitaly International Academy Flagship edition held in Verona. Traditionally held during the “marathon” of events surrounding Vinitaly in April, this year the event was moved to June to coincide with the 5Star Wine Selection and OperaWine events and allow for the safe travel for as many participants as possible. As a result, 67 students were able to join the team, with 65 new attendees and 2 returning to attempt certification as an Italian Wine Expert.

‘It’s been very different but very nice for all of us to actually have done this,’ explains Stevie Kim, Managing Director of VIA, *‘thank you very much for participating. And we’ve said this on numerous occasions, you’re already part of our family, and you’ll always be part of our family. For all of the activities that we do, like Vinitaly, as well as the other activities, especially the incoming program, we look forward to inviting you back, because it’s very important for us to have you back in Italy.’*

This 18th edition of VIA saw Francesco Marchio IWE join the VIA Faculty, the first Italian member to teach the course. Marchio joined existing Faculty member Henry Davar IWE to jointly lead the Guided Tasting sessions, as well as aid with the translation of two special Advanced Seminar sessions lead by VIA Chief Scientist, and renowned vine geneticist Prof. Attilio Scienza. These Advanced Seminar sessions were part of a series of masterclasses available for students to enhance both their theoretical knowledge of Italian wines and grapes, and their tasting skills. *‘The most important thing for me about being an Italian Wine Ambassador,’* said Francesco Marchio, *‘is not only to know about Italian wines, and be a professional, but also to be able to communicate in the right way about the wines and regions of Italy.’*

Students for this year’s Flagship edition benefitted from the new Hybrid format, whereby they had access to theoretical lectures on a new online platform ahead of the in-person Guided Tasting sessions. This allows learners to extra time with the material and also means that time with the faculty can be spent recapping key information, experiencing the Masterclasses and spending more time focusing in detail on the tastings, connecting the theory with what is experienced in the glass.



19 new Ambassadors were welcomed into the VIA community during the pinning ceremony this year.

- Alberto Martinez-Interiano – Wine Writer, USA
- Andrejs Batkilins – Wine Club Owner, Latvia
- Annie Replogle – Wine Importer, USA
- Chieko Hirano – Tour Operator, Japan
- Cynthia Chaplin – Educator & Sommelier, USA/UK
- Daria Pukhova – Fine Wines Brand Ambassador, Russia
- Erin DeMara – District Manager & Educator, USA
- Fanny Breuil – Importer & Exporter, France
- Federico Casassa – Educator & Winemaker, Argentina
- Jennifer Burgess – Change Manager, Sommelier & Writer - USA
- John Irwin – Marketing Professional & Educator, USA


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Juliana Colangelo – Wine PR, USA
Luca Casolari – Area Manager, Spain
Paul Bologna – Sommelier, USA
Russ Lorber – Wine Importer, USA
Tanya Morning Star Darling – Cellar Owner & Educator, USA
Slawomir Kominski – Importer, Poland
Virginia Blakeman – U.S. Diplomat, Italy
Xiaowen DU – Marketing & Sales Professional, Italy



The next course will take place in the USA and continues with an Agile format this time, with the online theory classes continuing but students coming together in secure tasting centers to taste “together” social distanced whilst connected to the Faculty. For more information you can follow the social media channels, or email: via@justdothework.it

About: [Vitaly 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 Vitaly 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 239 certified Italian Wine Ambassadors and 15 Italian Wine Experts. Since its foundation in 2014, over 600 candidates from all over the world have taken VIA's courses.