

Friday, Sept. 17, 2021

Vitaly International Academy USA announces three new Italian Wine Ambassadors in the USA

Hot on the heels of their Agile edition in New York and San Francisco in July, Vitaly International Academy (VIA), pushed ahead with the 20th edition of the course and announced three new Italian Wine Ambassadors. VIA returned to the USA, but this time holding sessions in Boston, Seattle and Houston. Once again utilising the agile format of online theory module and in-person tastings that proved successful previously. However, for this edition VIA reached out to their strong community of existing Ambassadors to support the course in order to make 3 tasting sessions feasible.



On September 15th VIA certified three (3) new Italian Wine Ambassadors. Those newly appointed to join this passionate community are Limor Fikel, Michael Wyant and Enoch Ling. To date, there are now 90 certified Italian Wine Ambassadors and 3 Italian Wine Experts based in USA.

Limor Finkel, a Northern California Sales Manager based in Mill Valley commented, “I’m honored to be a part of the VIA community alongside a group of people so deeply committed to Italian wine, history, and culture. The VIA course was incredibly rigorous and I can’t wait to keep learning from my fellow Italian Wine Ambassadors—hopefully in person soon and on the ground in Italy, too!”



Based in Arlington, Michael Wyant is a Sommelier & Wine Educator with almost 10 years of experience in the wine industry. He also shares his comment, “I’m very excited to be a part of the Vinitaly International Academy. The program itself was a deep dive into the world of Italian wine, history and culture with some impressive teachers. The fun part was getting to try hundreds of benchmark Italian wines made from native grape varieties, meeting the winemakers themselves and hearing their stories, and of course meeting fellow students and ambassadors from all over Europe, Asia and the Americas who share a passion for Italian wine.”

Enoch Ling is an Investment Analyst based in Hong Kong and a member of the Knights of Alba, which exposed him to the world of wine on the side of his main profession. He added, “The VIA program provides me with opportunities and resources to explore some hidden gems of Italian wines that can be rarely found in my market. I’m proud to be part of this professional and passionate community as IWA!”

Despite the increasing pandemic condition in the country, Vinitaly International Academy made it possible to hold its 20th edition on September 13th. The Certified Italian Wine Ambassador course was held in three different venues across the United States to join Faculty member Henry Davar IWE as he led the tasting sessions that would act as recap of the theory and preparation for the upcoming exam. Whilst Davar led these sessions live in Boston, he was connected with other participants in Houston and Seattle via Zoom, and of course with the VIA team in Verona. More than 40 wines were sourced by the tasting centres to give students a broad tasting experience, a solid basis for their exam and of course to showcase as many Italian varieties, denominations and producers as possible in two days.

Due to the spread of students, venues in Boston (hosted by Gianluca Quieroli IWA), Houston (Giorgio Caflish IWA) and Seattle (Hayley Black IWE) were selected, and the coordination of materials, wines and session timings began. One of the biggest challenges was building wine lists with as many of the same wines being shown in each venue. As Davar commented, “It’s always worth reminding people that there is a large supporting cast back in Verona that make the Vinitaly International Academy go! Our team is composed of Italian wine lovers, many of whom are VIA certified Italian Wine Ambassadors as well. They truly understand Italian wine and they know how to source truly representative samples for our course. The wines we tasted this past week were especially notable and I think the students and staff at the three tasting centers all remarked about this.”

Fortunately, working with Ambassadors and Experts who are not only familiar with Italian wines, but also the VIA Program, allowed for more than 40 wines to be shown, and suitable wines selected for the blind tasting portion of the examination.

As this 20th Edition has demonstrated, building a strong community not only supports those within it, but also pays dividends in challenging times when it pulls together to aid the cause of Italian wine education. It is an asset not only to those joining the programme, but everyone involved, and VIA will continue to build editions that grow and support this community globally.

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. To date there are 259 Certified Italian Wine Ambassadors and 15 Italian Wine Experts.