

Tuesday, 29 November 2022

## **Vitaly International Academy Celebrates 7 New Italian Wine Ambassadors and 1 new Italian Wine Expert certified in Hong Kong**

**Vitaly International Academy hosted the Pinning Ceremony in Hong Kong on 29 November 2022 for its rigorous Italian Wine Ambassador Certification Course, certifying 7 new Ambassadors and 1 new Expert.**



From Left to Right: Alice Wong IWA, Joey Au IWA, Graham Kwok IWA, Vito Yeung IWA, Sarah Wong IWA, Eva Fu IWA, Sarah Heller MW, Alan Kwok IWE, Charlotte Ho IWA, Yulia Ezhikova IWA, Consul General Carmelo Ficarra.

The VIA Italian Wine Ambassador course is one of the most rigorous wine education programs available. Students participated for 3 days, tasting 38 Italian wines and taking a difficult 2.5 hour exam. The course took place in two parts; first, with students following a syllabus of required reading and a series of 30 online lectures created by the VIA Faculty for a total of 60 hours listening time. Second, the in-person tasting sessions were then led by Sarah Heller MW on remote link, with Alice Wong IWA present to assist the students and ensure a smooth learning experience. The result? Seven students became newly certified Italian Wine Ambassadors, and one previous Ambassador was promoted to Italian Wine Expert, based on an exceptional exam score of over 90 points, followed by a blind tasting of 6 wines, and a specially designed marking protocol and oral defense of the tasting notes. New Italian Wine Expert, Alan Kwok, received his new pin with resounding congratulations from the VIA Community all around the world.



The Vinitaly International Academy certification course is recognised as the gold standard of Italian wine education. The VIA community comprises over 1000 candidates, of whom 307 have now achieved the title Italian Wine Ambassador and 16 of those are qualified as Italian Wine Experts. All elements of the course are carefully curated by the VIA Faculty team, made up of Sarah Heller MW and Henry Davar IWE, assisted and advised by scientific advisor Professor Attilio Scienza. The ethos behind the course is a sound scientific focus on the native grapes of Italy and on the characteristics of the 20 regions' biodiversity, history, culture, and business.

The VIA Community, composed of all students who have ever studied the program since its inception in 2017, welcomes wine professionals and wine enthusiasts from all over the world, forming a supportive and professional network that extends far beyond the limits of the classroom and includes lasting friendships, an open forum for sharing wine information, and career opportunities. Members continue to participate throughout the year in events such as Academic Field Trips all across Italy, gathering in Verona to judge at 5StarWines and Wine Without Walls, attending OperaWine and wine2wine Business Forum, and continually increasing their knowledge and growing their connections across the wine sector.

Students who take the VIA course come from every aspect of the wine sector, including educators, journalists, importers, hospitality, retailers, and beyond. Faculty member Sarah Heller MW reflected on the impact of VIA, "We invite students to join a profound and up to the minute conversation about Italian wines and what makes them so unique in the world, giving them new tools to communicate these wines and the solid foundation to become true Ambassadors, promoting Italian wines around the world."

Upcoming VIA Italian Wine Ambassador Courses: VIA holds satellite courses at various times during the year. The Flagship Course is held annually in Verona in the days leading up to Vinitaly International Wine and Spirits Exhibition. The next Flagship course will be held 24-27 March 2023. Applications are now open. Satellite courses in other locations around the world will be announced later in the year, through VIA social media and on the VIA website.

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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 307 Certified Italian Wine Ambassadors of which 16 are also Italian Wine Experts.