

VIA's Italian Wine Ambassador Course celebrates two new Experts and seven new Ambassadors in Hong Kong

On November 8th, 2018, two new Italian Wine Experts and seven new Italian Wine Ambassadors officially joined the Vinality International Academy (VIA) community of dedicated wine professionals worldwide



The overall count for VIA-certified Italian Wine Experts and Ambassadors after the Hong Kong course has now reached 171 professionals, of which 13 are Experts and 158 are Ambassadors. The VIA Expert title is the highest certification of proficiency in Italian wine awarded by VIA. In Hong Kong, two new professionals received this prestigious title: - Francesco Marchio, Managing Director at Vinoveritas Asia in Hong Kong;- Gill Gordon-Smith, Wine Educator and Owner of Fall From Grace Winery in Aldinga, South Australia. VIA Italian Wine Ambassadors certified in Hong Kong include:- Alice Wong, Co-founder and Wine Coach at Vinetude Asia in Hong Kong;- Anson Wan, Sales Manager at ASC Fine Wines HK Trading Corporation Limited in Hong Kong;- Phyllis Chan Wai



Yin, Senior Executive Officer at the Constitutional & Mainland Affairs Bureau in Hong Kong;- Vincent Yuen MS, Freelance Wine Columnist at Winenow in Hong Kong;- Sebastian Wöll, Main Educator at Wine Family Education & Consulting based in Hangzhou, China;- Giulia Mengoni, Sommelier at The Crafters Hotel in Crafters, South Australia;- Luca DAndrea, Export Manager at the Corvezzo Winery in Italy. VIA Founder Stevie Kim proclaimed the new Ambassadors and Experts during the traditional pinning ceremony held in the Vinitaly Hong Kong pavillion at the International Wine and Spirits Fair in the presence of Veronafieres President Maurizio Danese and CEO Giovanni Mantovani, and VIA Faculty Sarah Heller MW and Henry Davar. Kim comments on the innovative aspects and educational objectives of the revisited Ambassador course: This was our 10th edition and it was a bit tricky as we were implementing a newly-formatted Ambassador course, which was characterized by key elements of innovation aimed at strengthening the candidates knowledge of Italys distinctiveness in viticulture and winemaking and enhancing the candidates tasting skills. I am pleased with how it went and confident that VIA is on the right track to educate wine professionals abroad to the complexity and quality of Italian wine in an effective and thorough way. The 29 candidates, who sat the four-day educational program in Hong Kong, immersed themselves in the Italian wine culture through lectures on grape varieties and the wines territories as well as close examinations on themes which are central to appreciating the Italian wine-making tradition at an international level (e.g. the Nebbiolo and Sangiovese iconic grapes, Italys tradition of sparkling wines). VIA Faculty member Henry Davar, who co-devised and co-taught the course in Hong Kong with Sarah Heller MW, commented on how the Ambassador course fulfils VIAs core objective: Over the course of four days, it became clear that the VIA class of Hong Kong 2018, first individually, and eventually collectively as a group, had begun to fully understand and embrace the mission statement of VIA and the true nature of the ambassadorship. Having gained a stronger grasp of the Italian cultural heritage and viticultural landscape, they started to recognize in themselves the potential of championing the diversity and uniqueness of Italian wine. The enhanced tasting component of the course included tastings led by the VIA Faculty and additional self-guided Tasting Labs. In total, VIA Ambassador candidates tasted 85 labels of Italian wine coming from the 20 regions of Italy. The addition of the new Tasting Labs was particularly welcomed by these professionals; in Hong Kong, these Labs featured wines coming from Abruzzo and Alto-Adige. Another key element of innovation was the group video project where candidates presented a video exploring the evolution of the Valpolicella blend. This new component to the course has been designed to strengthen the candidates communication skills and



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facilitate community-building. VIA Faculty member Sarah Heller MW comments on the reaction of the VIA class in Hong Kong to the new format: Ive been immensely impressed by the enthusiasm of our students, some of whom have traveled from as far away as the US and Mexico as well as all over Asia to take part in this first new edition. Theyre highly engaged and really seem to be embracing the new, more structured format based on the insightful, informed questions weve been fielding all week. Also, the group video project seems to have accelerated the community-building that is another key pillar of this project. New VIA Italian Wine Ambassador certification courses will run in 2019 in Verona, Italy, in the lead-up to Vinitaly from March 29th to April 2nd (registrations are open) as well as in a number of locations in the United States and Asia soon to be announced.