

Vinitaly International Academy celebrates appointment of 16 Italian Wine Ambassadors and a new Italian Wine Expert

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At Vinitaly International Academy's Chicago event, 16 new Italian Wine Ambassadors and one Italian Wine Expert received certification, affirming Italian wine's increasing global reach. The program gathered 21 international candidates for an intensive curriculum including wine tastings and exams, highlighting the crucial role of Italian wine in today's markets.

Following the 28th New York edition held in March 2024 at

Banville Wine Merchants, on 19-21 October, 21 candidates from all over the world attended the Italian Wine Ambassador certification course at Navy Pier in Chicago. Expertly curated by VIA Faculty Sarah Heller MW, the course involves two intense days of lectures and the tasting of 45 Italian wines in preparation for a challenging two and half hour exam scheduled on the last day of the course. Matteo Zoppas, President of the Italian Trade Agency, Federico Bricolo, President of Veronafiere, and Adolfo Rebughini, CEO of Veronafiere, welcomed the students during the first day and officiated the pinning ceremony as well.

Seventeen students successfully completed the exam: 16 of them were officially appointed Italian Wine Ambassadors, and one achieving the advanced title of Italian Wine Expert, becoming the 17th Expert of the Vinitaly International Academy.

This edition of the Vinitaly International Academy was part of the inaugural Vinitaly USA, the groundbreaking wine expo organized by Veronafiere, which took place on October 20-21 at Navy Pier.

The VIA Community

The Vinitaly International Academy (VIA) certification course is recognised as the gold standard of Italian wine education. The VIA community comprises over 1400 candidates, of whom 409 have now achieved the title of Italian Wine Ambassador and 17 of those are qualified as Italian Wine Experts. The VIA Community, composed of all students who have 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 field trips across Italy, gathering in Verona to judge at 5StarWines – the Book,

attending OperaWine and wine2wine Business Forum, and continually increasing their knowledge and expanding their network across the wine sector.

The Italian Wine Ambassadors

The certified Italian Wine Ambassadors are:

- Patti Robinson
- Luca Tarantino
- Jeannie Boutelle
- Michelle Keene
- Carmine Caravaggio
- Jamie Gump
- Filippo Marsala
- Donatella Polizzi
- Rebecca Severs
- Bo young Northcutt
- Yoshihiro Nagase
- Naoko Suzuki
- Susan Wilson
- Jean Marc Lazo Rodriguez
- Anthony
Rostock

In addition, Torrence O'Haire was officially certified an Italian Wine Expert. Massimo Serradimigni, already an Italian Wine Ambassador, confirmed his title.

VIA Faculty **Sarah Heller MW** says: "Our Chicago edition of VIA was a resounding success, producing a bumper crop of new Ambassadors from all across North America and as far afield as Japan as well as a new Italian Wine Expert. To me this seems a testament to the raised awareness of and deepened knowledge about Italian wine and culture across these critical markets, showing the great potential of Italian wine – including its many unique regional specialties – in this part of the world."

Upcoming VIA Italian Wine Ambassador Courses

The 30th edition of Vinitaly International Academy is happening on November 16-18 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, landing for the first time ever in the heart of Central Asia.

The annual flagship course of Vinitaly International Academy will be held in Verona from 27-31 March 2025 in the days leading up to Vinitaly International Wine and Spirits Exhibition and will involve the participation of 65 candidates. Satellite courses in other locations around the world will be announced later in the year through VIA social media and the VIA website.

Punti chiave:

1. VIA certifies 16 new Italian Wine Ambassadors in Chicago.
2. Course includes tasting of 45 Italian wines and a final exam.
3. Held as part of the first-ever Vinitaly USA wine expo.
4. VIA community now includes 409 Ambassadors and 17 Experts.
5. Next VIA Ambassador course set for November in Almaty.