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Dreaming of Becoming an Italian Wine Ambassador? Vitaly International Academy lands in Chicago

Vitaly International Academy (VIA) announces the 29th edition of its prestigious Italian Wine Ambassador Certification Course, taking place for the first time ever in Chicago, USA, from 19-21 October 2024.



VIA Chicago will be held from 19-21 October 2024

For its 29th edition, Vitaly International Academy (VIA) makes its historical debut in Chicago, hosting its renowned three-day Italian wine-course in the country's third largest metropolis. This expansion provides Italian wine professionals across North America with unparalleled access to the expertise and opportunities offered by the prestigious VIA course. Candidates will gather in Chicago to participate in two days of tastings and a series of in-depth seminars, focusing on Italy's most important wine producing regions, as they prepare for the grueling exam on day three to become certified Italian Wine Ambassadors.

Why Chicago?



The United States is one of the most important Italian wine markets in the world. In the first 3 quarters of 2023, Italian wines sold through US on-trade made up 44% of total imported wines, far higher than the share for France (13.8%). As a key center in the continuous development of the USA market, Chicago is an obvious choice for the next VIA Course; as the centre of US agribusiness, it hosts over 100 Italian companies, including large food groups. Chicago also has one of the largest Italian-American populations in the country and is home to countless Italian restaurants. VIA candidates will be drawn from every sector of the wine business, including sommeliers, journalists, educators, importers, buyers and retailers. VIA offers its unique brand of in-depth, science based, native grape focused education to Italian wine to enhance and enrich students' understanding of Italian wine and culture.

What is Vinitaly International Academy

The Vinitaly International Academy certification course, organised by Veronafiere and Vinitaly, is recognised as the gold standard of Italian wine education. All elements of the course are carefully curated by VIA Faculty Sarah Heller MW 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, now encompassing 48 countries worldwide, proudly includes over 1,300 participants who have taken the course, with 393 successfully passing the exam to become certified Italian Wine Ambassadors. Among these distinguished ambassadors, 16 hold the esteemed title of certified Italian Wine Experts

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."*

Candidates also benefit from participation throughout the year at events such as Gita Scolastica (academic field trips across Italy), 5StarWines – the Book, OperaWine and wine2wine Business Forum, giving them the opportunity to continually increase their knowledge and expand their connections across the wine sector.

Vinitaly USA

In conjunction with the VIA certification course, the first edition of **Vinitaly USA** will take place in Chicago on October 20-21 at Navy Pier. With the 2024 edition, Vinitaly USA aims to host over **1000 American buyers**, including restaurant owners, importers and distributors, large-scale distributors, and other professional categories. This event offers a unique opportunity to discover the most dynamic Italian producers, connect with industry professionals, and attend premier panels and events. All information at: [Vinitaly USA 2024](#).

Applications for the Italian Wine Ambassador Certification in Chicago are now open at the following link: <https://www.vinitaly.com/en/academy/vinitaly-international-academy/courses/via-chicago-2024/>. For more information, please contact via@ext.veronafiere.it.

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 Partner of Vinitaly. 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 teaches the flagship Italian Wine Ambassador course. To date, there are 393 Certified Italian Wine Ambassadors of which 16 are also Italian Wine Experts.