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Vinitaly 2016: Celebrating 50 Years of Italy's Largest Wine Show

April 19: Veronafiere has just concluded its 50th edition of Vinitaly, Italy's largest wine trade fair, which took place in Verona over 4 days from 10 – 13 April 2016, hosting b2b meetings as well as 300 events including conferences, seminars, tutored tastings and training courses focusing on the world of wine, writes Michele Shah from Tuscany

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The official figures released by Veronafiere show that Vinitaly was attended by 130,000 professionals from 140 countries with 4100 exhibitors from over 30 countries, making Vinitaly world's largest wine trade fair. Its international presence reached some 50,000 people with 28,000 accredited buyers from international markets, a 23% increase on 2015.

"This edition provided interesting signals from abroad as well as from the domestic market," says Giovanni Mantovani, CEO and Director General of Veronafiere. "In particular, this year's Vinitaly showed a significant increase in the attendance of buyers from the United States (+25%), Germany (+11%), United Kingdom (+18%), France (+29%), Canada (+30%), China (+130%), Japan (+21%), Northern Europe (+8%),

Netherlands (+24%) and Russia (+18%). There were also positive returns on the home front, with operators from central and southern Italy up on average by 15%."

This edition was also an opportunity to celebrate the history of an event that for 50 years has promoted Italian wine and its culture throughout the world. For the first time, Vinitaly was officially inaugurated by a Head of State, President Mattarella. "The role of Vinitaly is to represent and promote quality Italian wine throughout the world as part of a project for internationalization supporting Italian exports to new consumer areas," said Prez Mattarella.

Prime Minister, Matteo Renzi, visited Vinitaly on Monday and discussed developments in digital sales of wine alongside Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba - the Chinese e-commerce giant. They were also joined by Italy's Minister for Agriculture, Maurizio Martina who took part in a forum which included a selection of European Ministries from countries with a wine-making vocation to discuss and debate common issues.

"The future of Alibaba and the future of Italy are closely linked together. Jack has understood that digital economy can transform our economy," Renzi said at the forum of World Wine Web, which focused on the role of the web in the winemarket. Renzi stressed that "Over the past 20 years Italy has lost too many opportunities in this sector," while expressing his confidence regarding future to make up for 'lost time'.

Ma said that his platform in the past weeks has sold as many as 25 million bottles of wine, but only six percent were Italian compared to 55 percent of French. He highlighted, "there is a great potential for Italy. Alibaba can be an important showcase for the Made-in-Italy, which is very much appreciated in China," said Ma.

Vinitaly certainly concentrated on inviting a number of wine buyers from China, in fact the increase in the presence of buyers from China, as shown by Vinitaly's statistics was +130%. According to Denis Pantini, head of Wine Monitor of Nomisma research institute for economy, Italy unfortunately is not keeping pace with China's surging wine imports. "China's market is among the largest and fastest growing in the world, and Italy cannot miss such an important opportunity," said Pantini.



Giancarlo Vettorello Director of Prosecco DOCG Consorzio together with Aldo Lorenzoni director of Soave Consorzio

important result for us," said Vettorello.

When it comes to styles, what is evidently a continuing trend in the world of wine is the 'bubbly trend'. It was reported that over 10,000 glasses of Prosecco DOC were poured in the Prosecco DOC area in Vinitaly. Prosecco has shown a 24.5% rise in value and a 23% rise in exports over the past year.

Producers and wine consortiums based in the surrounding hills close to Verona are happy to benefit from an increase in visits from international trade interested in acquainting themselves better with the nearby appellations and areas of production. "What pleases me is that each year I note the increased level in awareness from the trade regarding the different levels of Prosecco," said Giancarlo Vettorello, director of Prosecco DOCG consortium. "Vinitaly provides us with a great stage in which we can educate and inform the trade on our point of difference that Prosecco DOCG offers with its single vineyards and hilly areas of production, producing premium Prosecco. This greater interest and knowledge and the number of visitors visiting our wineries after the show, is an



Minister for Agriculture, Maurizio Martina, Prime Minister, Matteo Renzi, Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba and President of Veronafiere, Maurizio Danese

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The writer, Michele Shah gave a live talk show on Trentodoc together with Sabrina Schench, the Trentodoc representative. Trentino is the second-largest producer of Metodo Classico sparkling wine in Italy, representing about 35% of national production. Trentodoc wine comes from vineyards in Trentino, surrounded by the picturesque Dolomite Mountains, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. No other Metodo Classico wine in the world is consistently crafted in the mountains. Data for the three-year period 2012-2014, collected from sparkling wine producers, confirm that sector growth (+6% on average) has reached seven million bottles sold for a total value of about \$79 million. Exports account for about 20% of Trentodoc sales, with Europe representing approximately 10% and the U.S., Canada, Asia and Oceania representing the remaining 10%.



The writer, Michele Shah with Sabrina Schench

Michele Shah also gave a tutored seminar tasting and round table for Decanter magazine on Pinots of Northern Europe, reflecting the different styles and terroirs of Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir in Northern Italy (Alto Adige), Austria and Germany. The seminar and tasting was an interactive one with some notable Italian producers from Alto Adige: Count Michal Enzenberg owner of Manincor estate; Klaus Gasser of Kellerei Terlano; Harald Schraffl from Kellerei NalsMargreid; Hannibal Villadsen of Hannibal Fine Wine Imports in Austria.



Like with any large trade event which is fortunate enough to grow in popularity year after year, Vinitaly has some challenging organizational constraints to deal with, in particular that of a dynamic trade fair which is increasing in size but contained in a city which has difficulty with coping with the logistics of increased hospitality and congested transport.

"There were a few changes that helped to make things run a little more smoothly for the exhibitors," said Historic US importer, Ian Downey, Senior Vice President and General Manager, Leonardo LoCascio Selections (LLS), a member of The Winebow Group. "I anticipate a continued effort to improve the organization of Vinitaly, as other fairs such as ProWein, grow and attract participants. As an example, transportation and fair access continues to be a

challenge for Vinitaly, as participants experienced longer lines and heavier congestion getting in and out of the event."

One of the most notable organizational changes to the event was the new ticketing system which increased from €50 to €80 a ticket, with an aim to curtail the mass of non-trade which was one of the sore points which congested the flow of business and movement in and around the fair.

"We worked very hard this year to expand our off-site consumer event, 'Vinitaly and the City', to move wine lovers out of the expo halls and into the center of Verona. We created a full calendar of events including food and wine tasting, live concerts, DJ's, and historic walking tours," said Stevie Kim, MD of Vinitaly.

The beautiful setting of Verona, one of Italy's most historic and artistic cities, is also the setting which attracted some 29,000 wine lovers and trade to the city.

"The idea was to have something for everyone, at a very low ticket price, €12, while the price of entrance to the fair itself rose from €55 to €80. Vinitaly International has also begun offering pre-registered members of foreign trade free entrance, because international sales are crucial to the future of Italian wine, but the applications were rigorously checked. We also have to work with the producers to discourage them from giving away their tickets to consumers, and use their tickets for members of the trade," said Kim.

"It was a great Vinitaly, we were pleased with the notable increase of foreign trade and visitors from Northern Europe, Russia, USA and China," commented Lamberto Frescobaldi President of Marchesi de' Frescobaldi winery. This year Frescobaldi launched their Tuscan estate Pomino sparkling wines which was a total success, so much so that they had to urgently call the estate for reinforcements as they ran out immediately pouring glasses to trade and non-trade alike.

"I think it is also important to have some consumers attend Vinitaly, it adds to the festive sense of the event and it's important to touch base with consumers," said Frescobaldi.

Michele Shah

Michèle Shah is an expert on Italian wine, she has lived in Italy for over 30 years and her activities, include, writing, seminars, wine judging, wine tastings & international wine events. Michèle Shah is the originator of the innovative B2B formula registered under Speedtasting®. Her writing experience includes: Meininger's Wine Business International, Wine Spectator, Decanter, and a number of other International publications. Michele Shah has recently set up specialised travel to Italy check out her Facebook page 'Exceptional Tailored Travel to Italy'.

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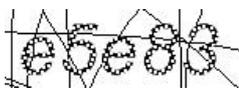
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