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Merano WineFestival Will Return for Its 35th Edition From Nov. 6 to Nov. 10, 2026

Organizers said the event at the Kurhaus will highlight elegance, beauty and top-tier WineHunter Platinum selections.

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The Merano WineFestival will return to the Alpine town of Merano, in Italy's South Tyrol, from Nov. 6 to Nov. 10, 2026, for its 35th edition, as organizers move well ahead of the next harvest and the end of summer to set the direction for one of the country's longest-running wine events.

The festival, created by Helmuth Köcher, is scheduled once again at the Kurhaus, the Liberty-style landmark that has long served as the event’s main stage. In a statement, organizers said the 2026 edition will be built around the idea of elegance and beauty, with five days dedicated to selections from The WineHunter guide, the tasting and evaluation platform linked to the festival.

The program is expected to combine returning features with new elements, though full details have not yet been released. Organizers said special attention will go to the WineHunter Awards, particularly the Platinum labels, which represent the top tier in the selections overseen by Köcher and tasting commissions.

The announcement comes at a moment when much of the wine trade is focused on the start of the harvest, but it also reflects the long planning cycle behind major wine fairs, especially those that try to reach both industry professionals and consumers. Merano WineFestival has built its identity around that dual audience over more than three decades, attracting producers, buyers, critics and wine enthusiasts in a format that also gives space to food and hospitality.

Köcher, who has been the public face of the festival since its creation, said the 35th edition is meant to celebrate elegance as a timeless value. He described that idea as a form of harmony based on balance, care and patience, qualities he said can be found in high-quality wine and food products. He added that work on the program is already underway and that the Kurhaus will again host what he called an immersive account of producers’ knowledge and craft.

The event has long used Merano’s setting as part of its appeal. The town, known for its spa history and mountain backdrop, has become a regular meeting point for Italian and international wine producers each November. The Kurhaus, with its turn-of-the-century architecture, remains central to the festival’s image and helps distinguish it from larger trade fairs that are more strictly business-driven.

Organizers also said the festival expects to maintain a broad media presence through partnerships with local and national outlets. While the event is aimed at a selected public of professionals and enthusiasts, its promoters see media coverage as a way to extend its reach beyond those attending in person.

The WineHunter Awards remain one of the most visible parts of the festival’s structure. The recognition is tied to tastings carried out in advance and is used to spotlight wines and other products judged to stand out for quality. The emphasis on Platinum labels for 2026 suggests that the top end of the selection process will be used as a key draw for visitors and exhibitors.

The festival’s timing places it late in the European wine calendar, after the grape harvest and during a period when many wineries begin presenting new vintages, commercial strategies and brand positioning for the next year. That has helped Merano hold a specific place in Italy’s crowded schedule of wine events. Rather than competing directly with the largest trade exhibitions, it has tended to present itself as a curated showcase with a strong focus on style, tasting and high-end positioning.

For producers, the 2026 edition will also arrive during a period when Italian wine continues to rely heavily on events that can connect premium labels with both professional buyers and image-conscious consumers. For Merano, the challenge is to keep that role fresh while preserving the exclusivity and identity that made the festival stand out in the first place.

The 35th edition, according to organizers, will try to do that by returning to the values that have defined the event since the beginning while adding new features still being developed. For now, the clearest points are the dates, the venue and the message: five days in November centered on The WineHunter selections, the top award-winning labels and a presentation of wine and gastronomy through the lens of elegance.