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Italy’s independent winemakers open a Bologna fair with 1,005 producers

The three-day event offers 8,000 wines for tasting, giving small producers a platform to press concerns over consumption, bureaucracy and climate change

Saturday, November 21, 2026



The 15th edition of the Mercato dei Vini dei Vignaioli Indipendenti, the wine market organized by FIVI, the Italian Federation of Independent Winemakers, opened on Saturday, November 21, at BolognaFiere in Bologna and will run through November 23, bringing together 1,005 winemakers from across Italy, three delegations of European producers and 29 independent olive growers.

Organizers said the fair features more than 8,000 wines available for tasting across 40,000 square meters and four exhibition halls. The foreign delegations come from the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Slovenia through CEVI, the European confederation of independent winemakers. The olive oil producers are members of FIOI, the Italian federation of independent olive growers.

The event is aimed at consumers and trade visitors interested in small and mid-sized producers who manage their own supply chain, from vineyard to bottle. In addition to wine tastings, the program includes master classes, olive oil tastings and presentations of regional DOP and IGP food products, the European quality labels for protected origin and geographic indication goods.

At the opening ceremony, organizers and public officials described the fair as both a commercial event and a political stage for a segment of agriculture that says it is under pressure from weak consumption, bureaucracy and climate change. Rita Babini, a winemaker and president of FIVI, said the market is an important commercial and public moment for members and argued that farm land risks becoming more of a cost than an asset because of administrative burdens, market declines and changing weather conditions.

BolognaFiere president Gianpiero Calzolari said the wine sector is going through a difficult period but still has a clear future, especially in rural areas where small producers help maintain land that is less suited to mass production. He said the fair gives consumers a direct way to speak with producers and understand the work behind a bottle.

Giorgio Salvitti, an adviser to Italy’s agriculture minister, said independent winemakers play a strategic role in protecting more fragile parts of the country. He said 85% of their vineyards are in hilly or mountain areas and 80% of their output carries DOP or IGP

status. He also said direct sales, cellar-door visits and wine tourism are becoming more important to business models, with enotourism contributing an average of 14% of company revenue. Salvitti said enotourism was worth 3 billion euros in 2025 and that 18 million Italians are expected to take part in wine-related experiences this year.

Local officials linked the fair to Bologna’s broader tourism and food economy. Daniele Ara, a city official with responsibility for agriculture and food policy, said Bologna is seeing more experience-based tourism and that events like the FIVI market fit the city’s effort to connect visitors not only with art and monuments but also with food, wine and local social life. Paolo Burani, a regional lawmaker from Emilia-Romagna, said producers who work directly in the vineyard and cellar also contribute to land stewardship and climate adaptation.

The opening also highlighted links between wine and other food sectors. Cristina Marchi, president of FIOI, said the olive growers’ federation was inspired by the FIVI model and now represents artisanal olive farms that manage production from grove to bottle. Riccardo Deserti, director general of the Parmigiano Reggiano Consortium, said the consortium is taking part in the fair for the first time and sees strong ties with the values promoted by independent wine and olive oil producers.

Restaurant operators used the opening to address changing consumer habits. Roberto Melloni, president of the Bologna branch of FIPE, the Italian federation of public businesses, said restaurant customers are approaching food and wine differently than they did a few years ago and that the challenge for the sector is to improve quality and coordination at a time when people are drinking less overall. He said participating restaurants in Bologna extended opening hours until midnight and arranged meetings with winemakers during the fair.

The program on Sunday, November 22, includes two master classes under the theme Think Pink. At 11:30 a.m., the first session focuses on Sicilian winemaker Nino Caravaglio and his work on the islands of Salina, Lipari and Vulcano, including a social project that employs people who arrived in Italy from abroad. At 2:30 p.m., a second session centers on Valpolicella producer Marinella Camerani and a project involving young people with disabilities in the production process.

Regional food tastings organized by Emilia-Romagna’s agriculture department are also scheduled for Sunday, November 22, at 1 p.m., 2:30 p.m. and 4 p.m. in Hall 29. Organizers said the guided tastings will feature a selection of the region’s DOP and IGP products, including Parmigiano Reggiano, Culatello di Zibello, Piadina Romagnola, Squacquerone di Romagna and traditional balsamic vinegar from Modena, paired with wines chosen by the regional wine agency.

In Hall 30, FIOI’s Oil Bar is offering guided tastings with professional tasters who explain how to identify quality extra virgin olive oil and distinguish it from lower-grade or defective oils. Additional sessions pairing bread from Il Forno di Calzolari with different olive oil flavor profiles are scheduled for 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Visitors can buy tickets through the event website, and the fair is being held with the support of the Emilia-Romagna region, the city of Bologna and Confcommercio Ascom Bologna.