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23 sommeliers advance in Almaty contest

Vinitaly Kazakhstan Roadshow 2025 begins with sommelier contest

Tuesday, June 24, 2025



The Italian Sommelier Challenge began in Almaty, Kazakhstan, marking the start of a professional competition aimed at identifying leading experts in Italian wine. Organized as part of the Vinitaly Kazakhstan Roadshow 2025, the event began with an online qualification round on June 12 at 10:00 a.m. local time. Out of 100 initial registrants, 78 sommeliers and wine enthusiasts from five countries completed a multiple-choice quiz testing their knowledge of Italian wine. Only 23 participants advanced to the next stage, moving closer to the final prize.

The Challenge is structured in several stages, with Stage 2 requiring contestants to film a short, selfie-style video on a specific Italian wine topic. The prompt for this round was announced on June 14, and submissions are due by June 24. Based on these videos, the top ten participants will be selected for the live rounds in Almaty. Stages 3 and 4 will take place at the Rixos Hotel Almaty on July 7, 2025, during the main Vinitaly

Kazakhstan Roadshow event.

The semifinal, Stage 3, will begin at 10:00 a.m. and involve three practical components: wine service, tasting, and food and wine pairing. The three highest-scoring semifinalists will move on to the final round, held the same day at 4:30 p.m. During the finals, the top sommeliers will advise guests in a simulated Italian trattoria, demonstrating their ability to pair food and wine. The last two contenders will face a quick-response quiz to determine the ultimate winner.

A jury of five wine and food professionals, including two certified VIA Italian Wine Ambassadors, will score the contestants' performances. The award ceremony will take place during the Roadshow, naming the first-ever champion of the Italian Sommelier Challenge. The winner will be granted a scholarship to the VIA Verona 2026 Flagship Edition, which will occur from April 15 to 19, 2026, after the 58th Edition of Vinitaly. The scholarship offers advanced training on Italy's native grape varieties and terroirs, guided by the VIA Faculty, providing valuable experience for any wine professional.

The Vinitaly Kazakhstan Roadshow returns to Almaty for a second consecutive year. The event first took place on November 18, 2024, highlighting strong regional interest in Italian wine. Central Asia's demand for Italian wine continues to grow, with Prosecco, Primitivo, and Pinot Grigio leading the market. However, the local audience is eager to discover and promote a broader range of Italian wine styles.

This year's Roadshow features a walk-around tasting with more than 280 wines from 64 producers, including consortia and collectives from 14 Italian regions. Nearly 50 stands will represent a diverse range of wines from across Italy. Three masterclasses are also scheduled to provide further education and insight into Italian wine, reinforcing the region's growing connection to Italian culture and wine appreciation.