Bologna. A New Food & Wine MBA Program

Francesca Giuliani (June 10, 2011)



The business school of the University of Bologna is offering 10 full scholarships toward the inaugural year of an MBA in Food and Wine. The scholarships, funded entirely by leading Italian bottled water brand Ferrarelle, cover the entire cost of the 12-month program that begins September 2011. Alma's international MBA in Food and Wine, conducted entirely in English, is the only such degree focused on the exclusive knowledge of Italy's most successful wine and food companies

On June the 6, on a sunny afternoon in Manhattan, Eataly's Birreria [2] served freshly brewed artisan beer, Mortadella from Bologna and Ferrarelle [3]'s oh-so-sparkling mineral water, and we swear it was all for educational purposes.

Alma Graduate School [4], the business school of the University of Bologna [5], chose Farinetti's

rooftop bar to present the first edition of the school's new MBA on Food and Wine.

On the same occasion, the Ferrarelle Scholarship Program was presented, an initiative sponsored by the Italian mineral water brand that will cover the full amount of the tuition fees of €27'000 for ten successful applicants to the MBA.

The MBA is an innovative postgraduate program in Business Education that Alma Graduate School will host beginning with the 2011-2012 academic year. It will consist of a 12-month full-time English-taught study course that will take place in Bologna, one of the most important Italian cities in terms of food and wine culture and production.

"If you are a foodie, there's no better place than Bologna," stated Lauren Liberto, a recent graduate from the MBA in Design, Fashion and Luxury Goods at Alma Graduate School.
Massimo Bergami [6], Dean of the school, told i-Italy that the MBA aims at training international managers for the sectors of agri-business, restaurant industry and distribution.

Bergami particularly stressed the international appeal of Alma Graduate School programs: "Our current MBA has 80% international students studying in Bologna for 12 months, 4 of which are devoted to internships and on-field training. 95% of our students find a job within 3 months from graduation."

Katelyn Di Rocco, from New York City, is an MBA student of Design, Fashion and Luxury Goods at Alma Graduate School and she told i-Italy that her experience in Italy has been wonderful so far. "I love Bologna, it's great! It's a very student oriented town and there's a very comforting vibe. I enjoy it very much."

"I was introduced to a lot of new types of foods since I've moved to Italy – Northern-Italian specialties in particular. Our school has a lot of really wonderful connections and we've been able to experience and taste a lot of really awesome foods," says Katelyn.

The Alma Graduate School's initiative is enthusiastically supported by the most important personalities in the international food and wine industry such as Lidia Bastianich and Oscar Farinetti, masterminds of Eataly and, in the words of Bergami, "role models for the MBA's prospective students."
Bastianich believes the MBA's strength is the chance it gives to students to "embrace Italian culture on a business territory and on the Italian soil." A concept that Fabio Parasecoli, Associate Professor of Food Culture at the New School, further articulated: "Understanding food isn't possible if you don't understand the culture behind it. Italy is the right place to do so, as local identities are so numerous there." What's important for the students to grasp during their Italian study experience is ultimately that culture and traditions "are stories that translate into added value to a product."

On the same note, Bergami believes that the distinguishing feature of Italians working in the food and wine industry is "the passion for the quality of the products," a passion that results from traditions, cultural identity and local excellence in need of a new business approach to distribution and product valorization. The next big challenge for tomorrow's food and wine managers is served.

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