

Michael Koller

A) What was your V&E background before attending VENIT?

Before studying at UCSC in the VENIT Program, I had completed a bachelor's degree in a related study but without the rigor and focus on viticulture and enology. I had also worked at two wineries with estate vineyards but lacked the strong base knowledge for decision making. Throughout my time, I was able to become an assistant winemaker and lead most of the vineyard operations; however, without the vast knowledge and experience I lacked the complete decision-making process.

B) What was your occupation before attending VENIT?

I was working at a small winery in North Carolina (USA) where I had spent almost two years working in all parts of the business from the cellar to the tasting room. Working in all parts of the vineyard and winery helped create connections between our curriculum and its on-the-job application.

C) What is your current occupation?

I have decided to stay with the company who hosted my VENIT internship, Alois Lageder. I work mostly in the cellar doing a variety of jobs but also spend time in the vineyard. This family-owned winery cultivates 50 hectares and processes another 100 hectares; thus, I am able to see a large diversity and quality range to experience.

D) How much did VENIT contribute to such a change?

The VENIT Program contributed an outstanding amount to my professional career and personal life. I now have a greater understanding of the complexities that exist in grape growing and wine chemistry. The exposure during winery visits, professional conferences, and wine markets has allowed me to meet and experience the Italian wine community. Additionally, I better understand how the Italian and European wine markets operate on a global scale. Living in a foreign country also allowed me to experience different cultural aspects that I had not been previously exposed to. I am confident that this program has improved and will continue to improve my career outlook.

