Tasting Touriga in Oporto

13 Dec 2010 by Jancis Robinson

Scores of wine luminaries converged on the recently rejuvenated and extremely beautiful city that we call Oporto and the Portuguese call Porto at the end of last week for the first Wines of Portugal International Conference, #wopic in much-used Twitter parlance.

The first task for more than a dozen of us wine writers was to taste 30 examples of varietal Touriga Nacional, the variety the Portuguese feel is their calling card, that had been selected from 80 pre-tasted in Lisbon a few weeks before. Our job was to whittle the selection down yet further so that 10, we were told, could be identified as 'equal best'.

This tasting was remarkable in many ways - not least for the view from the 'art room' in Adrian Bridges of the Taylor Fladgate Partnership's recently opened luxurious Yeatman Hotel across the Douro from Porto, which you will see at the end of the short film below.

It was also notable for being triple - or was it quadruple? - blind. The wines were served in a completely different random order for each taster, with every glass identified by a unique number, so we were unable to discuss wines between us (except in the case of the lone wine affected by TCA in every bottle apparently - unfortunate in the land of cork).

We were free to choose our own places, so it really was all very random. The tasters, right to left in the film below, were me, Neal Martin of the UK, Simon Tam of Hong Kong, Purple pager Ned Goodwin MW of Japan, Kristine Bäder of Germany, the Yeatman's young wine director Beatriz Machado, Portuguese wine writer Luis Lopes, Tom Marthinsen of Norway, Jose Salvador from Portugal, Stephan Reinhardt (pictured above) of Germany, Doug Frost MS MW and Mary Ewing Mulligan MW from the US and Tommy Lam from Singapore. Tomoko Ebisawa had been held up by the snow that closed Paris airports the day before.

If you have extremely good hearing, you might hear my whispered commentary. Two more short films from Porto, including the results of, and some comment on, this tasting, will follow.