

Obrigado, Portugal

28 Oct 2012 by Jancis Robinson

Last week I was honoured, quite literally, by Portugal. At an early evening reception in his beautiful house in Belgrave Square, the Portuguese ambassador to London João de Vallera made me a Comendador da Ordem do Mérito Empresarial (Classe do Mérito Agrícola), bestowing on me a Portuguese Order of Merit.

As my children pointed out, this is a much more handsome honour than my British OBE, no fewer than four glittering green and white formulations of it being presented to me in a large, gold-embossed dark green leather case.

But best of all was the party that was given for the handover, to which I was allowed to invite all my family, some close friends and the JancisRobinson.com team. We all had a lovely time, not least because some fine Portuguese wine was served. There was some Quinta do Vallado Douro red from the ambassador's own cellar. As he explained, it was a *torna viagem* wine that had crossed the Atlantic twice, having previously lain in his cellar in Washington during his last posting. We also had some Aliança white fizz, Luis Pato's pink fizz, some port (Johnny Symington was there) and some delicious pale, dry Barbeito Madeira brought by Danny Cameron of importers Raymond Reynolds.

I felt extremely unworthy of the honour – not least in view of Julia's recent total immersion in Portuguese wine – but at least it has spurred me on to get publishing the hundreds of tasting notes she took while selecting her [top 50 Portuguese wines](#). See her reviews of [the wines of the Algarve](#). It would seem that for every such honour there is an instigator and I believe the chief instigator in this case was the Portuguese wine fanatic resident in Düsseldorf, Carlos Quintas pictured [here](#).

Obrigado, Carlos. We all had a lovely time.