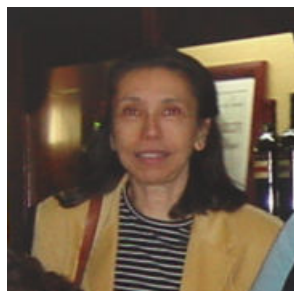


OBITUARY

## Professor Isabel Spencer-Martins 1951–2008

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Isabel Spencer-Martins was Professor of Microbiology at the Department of Life Sciences, Faculty of Sciences and Technology (FCT), Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Caparica, Portugal. Her scientific career started in 1974 when she joined the Microbiology Laboratory at the

Gulbenkian Institute of Science (IGC; Oeiras, Portugal). Her work on yeast enzymology and physiology resulted in a PhD degree in Biological Engineering in 1983. From 1986 till 1997 she was part of the research staff at IGC. In 1983, she joined the teaching staff of the Biotechnology Unit at FCT where she was appointed full professor 1992. In 1998, she founded the Centre for Microbiological Resources (CREM) at FCT, which she co-coordinated until her death. Starting in 1993 Isabel set-up and co-organized with fellow van Uden PhD students the annual yeast biology meetings (Jornadas de Biologia de Leveduras 'Professor Nicolau van Uden'), hosted by yeast groups in different parts of the country to bring together Portuguese zymologists. Isabel Spencer-Martins was also the director for the Portuguese Yeast Culture Collection (PYCC).

Isabel Spencer-Martins had a unique approach to yeast research. She used the knowledge and the scientific tools from ecology and evolution and translated them to modern biotechnology, including the molecular tools developed in the last couple of decades. Thus, her group was among the first to clone and functionally express a heterologous sugar transporter in baker's yeast; a groundbreaking achievement of fundamental importance for future research on the bioconversion of renewable resources.

In recognition of her contributions to yeast biology and microbiology, two microbial species have been named after Isabel Spencer-Martins: the ascomycetous yeast *Lipomyces spencermartinsiae* (van der Walt & M.Th. Smith) van der Walt & M.Th. Smith (van der Walt *et al.*, 1997) and the gram-positive bacterium *Bacillus isabeliae* Albuquerque *et al.* (2008).

In May 2008, Lund University, Sweden, conferred to Isabel Spencer-Martins the title honorary doctor in recognition of her outstanding scientific contributions and her longstanding collaboration with Lund University.

With her widely recognized integrity Isabel Spencer-Martins possessed great respect in the international scientific community. She carried commissions of trust in national, European and international societies and she was a much sought after reviewer in European scientific programs. Isabel was serving her second term as President of the Portuguese Society of Microbiology (SPM) when she died. For the past five years she was the SPM delegate to the Federation of European Microbiological Societies (FEMS), where she contributed to several initiatives undertaken by FEMS. Isabel Spencer-Martins was often engaged as a member of scientific advisory boards to international conferences. She was also a much admired host of international conferences and interdisciplinary advanced courses on taxonomy, physiology and transport. At such events, international experts lectured and taught and the events were organized with ample time for everyone to meet each other; Isabel Spencer-Martins was the catalyst. No doubt these events generated new research directions, new research programs and new collaborations.

Over the years Isabel Spencer-Martins developed a large network of colleagues all over the world. This resulted in international intra- and interdisciplinary collaborations, in joint academic degrees, in joint publications and in joint projects.

Isabel was her friends' friend. We knew her to be there for any discussion about anything, far beyond science. Her thoughts would always be welcome; more often than not, she would bring a completely different perspective to an issue. It was a privilege to be her friend and in our minds she will continue to be here.

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