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Washington state: the other great American wine region

Off The Vine by Russ Disotell

This week we have a lot of things to catch up on, so it's time for an "odds and sods" column. We'll be moving between a variety of topics at breakneck speed, so fasten your seatbelt, but don't worry there's a delicious new wine at the end of the rainbow!

For this week's wine selection we will stay in the United States, but change locales and look at an offering from Washington State, a very under appreciated wine region. **14 Hands Hot to Trot Red Blend 2008 (CSPC # 226522, \$14.95)** serves as a great example of what Washington wines have to offer, great structure, deep fruit flavours and an easy drinking likeable style, all at a very reasonable price.

But what gives with the name? Horse lovers will tell you that 14 Hands refers to the height of a horse. Knowing this is still seems a little strange for a winery name, until you learn that the winery is located in the Horse Heaven Hills region of southern Washington.

Hot to Trot is a blend of Merlot, Syrah, Petit Verdot and Mourvedre. It also undergoes malolactic fermentation, which is our clue to that fact that the winemaker wants a softer, rounder easy-drinking wine.

Medium to full bodied, but by no means heavy, 14 Hands has a generous blackberry, cassis and plum nose with undertones of vanilla and licorice. The palate is silky smooth with luscious fruit flavours, soft tannins and the perfect amount of balancing acidity. Juicy cherry, tart plum, and dark berry fruit dominate with just a touch of savoury spice and hint of oak. The lengthy finish showcases the fruit and spice with a bit of mocha flavour.

14 Hands is a perfect party wine, sure to please even the most discriminating guest, and ideal for conversation enhancement. It also has the structure to match with foods such as grilled or roasted red meats, poultry, seasonal casseroles or stews. Enjoy!

