



KEN PAHLOW



A MIX OF 12 CLONES, ALL OF THE CHARDONNAY AT X NOVO GOES TO WALTER SCOTT.



OREGON | WILLAMETTE VALLEY

## Walter Scott

*Ken Pahlow and Erica Landon's single-vineyard pinot noirs and chardonnays sing in the stellar 2021 vintage.*

KEN PAHLOW LIKES TO SAY HE DOESN'T USE A RECIPE TO make his wines, preferring to let the vintage come to him. The 2021 vintage came *at* him, instead, with a heat dome in late June that did not bode well. But Pahlow guessed rightly that this would be the worst of it: The fruit was largely unaffected, and the rest of the summer went by without incident, ushering in excellent conditions for the pinot noir harvest, already a short crop due to his practice of pruning to one cluster per shoot early in the season. In the cellar, he and Erica Landon acceded to the warmth of the vintage, being extra gentle with the fruit in bins, cutting back on punchdowns and pumpovers, and including about 30 percent whole clusters in the fermentations (Pahlow says he likes to place the whole clusters in a middle layer in the bin, "lasagna style"). They kept the fermentations and macerations short—10 to 14 days—allowing the wines' natural exuberance to show through. The 2021 Sojeau bottling is so full of flavor, vibrant in acidity, with graceful manners and so effortlessly joyful that you might sit back in your chair and wonder why all wines can't be this way.

The 2021 chardonnays are just as stylish, owing in part to lessons learned in Burgundy with vigneron the couple has befriended, including Dominique Lafon, Jean-François

Coche, and Jean-Marc Roulot. Working in a reductive style, Pahlow and Landon deliberately seek to remove fruit elements to expose the terroir behind, leaving the wines on lees and with solids, settling them out before bottling. The effect is to give the wines a bit of turbidity, and extra complexity and depth of flavor. All of these 2021s are built to be cellared. —P.J.C.

**2021 Eola-Amity Hills Sojeau Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$80, 97 points)** Pahlow and Landon have an acreage contract with Dennis Peseau, Sojeau's owner, who farms their parcel for low yields, significantly reducing the crop load as early as June, often harvesting 35 percent less fruit per acre than in his other parcels. Perhaps that's the reason the wine feels so alive and complete from its first moments uncorked, with knockout aromas of black cherry and plum skin, tea and subtle brown spices. There's an elegant texture guiding dark, saturated fruit. The flavors are pure, sweet and savory at once, finishing with a lavender edge from the stems.

**2021 Mt. Pisgah Freedom Hill Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$80, 95 points)** This shows some initial reduction, with tension and a shimmer of light behind the gloom. After a day the wine comes into remarkable focus, full of dark berry and cherry flavors, focused and firm, gripping in its certitude; by day three the red fruits are singing, pure and lifted.

**2021 Eola-Amity Hills X Novo Chardonnay (\$80, 94 points)** Craig Williams farms a dozen clonal selections of chardonnay at X Novo, all of it going to Walter Scott. This is a supple wine, with white-flower scents, flavors of caramel and toasted nuts to start, all receding with air as a citrusy energy comes up, brisk and mineral, full of tension and very long.

**FOUNDED:**  
2008  
**WINEMAKER:**  
Ken Pahlow  
**OWNERS:**  
Erica Landon and  
Ken Pahlow  
**ANNUAL PRODUCTION:**  
5,500 cases