

# Kitchen Essentials Part 1 - Vanilla



The **Vanilla** bean is the source of all natural vanilla products and is harvested from the *Vanilla Planifolia* plant native to Mexico. The plant is now grown in other areas around the globe with the majority of vanilla beans today coming from Madagascar or Indonesia.

The vanilla plant is actually a vine growing orchid. It is in fact the only fruit bearing orchid of the species which is naturally pollinated by the *Melipona* bee, a species of bee found only in Mexico. In other areas, the flowers are pollinated by hummingbirds, however the main source of pollination outside of Mexico is by hand, using small wooden sticks that scoop up the pollen and press the flower open to allow the pollen to be placed correctly.

**A skilled pollinator can pollinate up to 1000 flowers in a single morning during flowering season.**

There are several varieties of vanilla grown today however perhaps the two most notable are Bourbon vanilla; with its light fruity flavor, and Indian vanilla: a richer more potent vanilla that compliments spices in Indian cuisine such as clove and cinnamon.

## **Essence or Powder?**

Pure ground vanilla powder is made simply from the dried vanilla bean which is ground into a powder, whereas vanilla essence (or extract) is made by macerating the beans in a mixture of alcohol and water. The powder dissolves well in liquids so is a fantastic addition to your coffee or tea as well as smoothies and protein shakes or sprinkled on your breakfast cereal. The essence is very versatile and can be used in baking but is best used without heat such as in sauces, dressings and cold drinks.

Vanilla still remains one of the world's most popular flavours, and the second most expensive flavouring, after saffron. It has long been valued as an aphrodisiac in some cultures and can be enjoyed in a variety ways, from ice cream and cakes to Mexican dishes and Italian sauces. The beans can also be used as a natural air refresher, simply place a bean under your car seat or next to your bed for a subtle yet delicious aroma!

Enjoy your week in the kitchen,

Jesabe Warner

Naturopath **Affordable Wholefoods**

**Vanilla Products Sold at Affordable Wholefoods**

Organic Vanilla Essence

Vanilla Beans (by 2) - Temporarily Out of Stock due to supply issues