

# Vanilla

Kingdom:  
Plantae

Order  
Asparagales

Family:  
vanilloideae

Subfamily:  
vanilleae

Subtribe:  
vanillinae



# Origin

- Originated In Central America
- Biggest current day producer is Madagascar which had 58% of the total vanilla production in the world followed by Indonesia with 23%

# Vanilla

- Is a vine that grows up an existing support
- Flowers are hermaphroditic with a membrane that separates the anther and the stigma to avoid self pollination
- Can form stems longer than 35 m
- Only naturally pollinated by bee's





# Cultivation

- Start with a progeny garden to grow stock
- from the original plant stem cuts of 60-120cm are used then to grow up the trees
- Ideal time for planting is September to November.
- Pollination is done manually by using a thin stick to transfer pollen from the anthers to the stigma by lifting the membrane which separates the organs. This must be done within 12 hours of the flower opening.
- 10 months to maturation
- Labor intensive harvest as each day new beans mature

# Curing

There are 4 steps to curing  
Vanilla beans

- **Killing:** vegetative tissue is killed to prevent curing
- **Sweating:** Temperatures are raised to 45-65 Celsius under high humidity for 1 hour a day to catalyze reactions for generating color, flavor and aroma
- **Drying:** Sun drying to prevent rotting and lock the aroma in the pods.
- **Conditioning:** Beans stored in a box for a few months to develop fragrance, by this time the average bean contains 2.5% vanillin

# Uses

- Extract used in foods such as ice cream
- Cosmetic companies use it in perfumes
- In old medicinal literatures, was used as an aphrodisiac and remedy for fevers
- Essential oils sometimes used in aromatherapy





# Cultivars

## Bourbon vanilla

Most common  
made in  
Madagascar  
from *V.*  
*planifolia*

## Mexican vanilla

Also made from *V.*  
*planifolia* usually  
only found in Mexico

## Tahitian vanilla

Introduced  
to French  
Polynesia  
by French  
Admiral  
Francois  
Hamelin

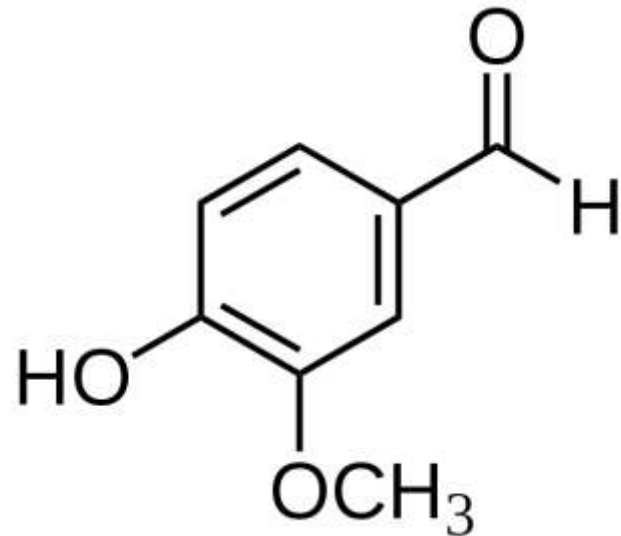
## West Indian vanilla

Made from *V.*  
*pompona* and  
grown in  
Caribbean,  
Central and  
South America



# History

- Totonac people were first to cultivate vanilla
- Aztecs from Mexico conquered the Totonacs and developed a taste for vanilla
- Until mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Mexico was the largest producer of vanilla
- Columbus introduced it to the old world
- Vanillin is the main chemical that gives vanilla its characteristic taste and odor





# Sources

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