

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

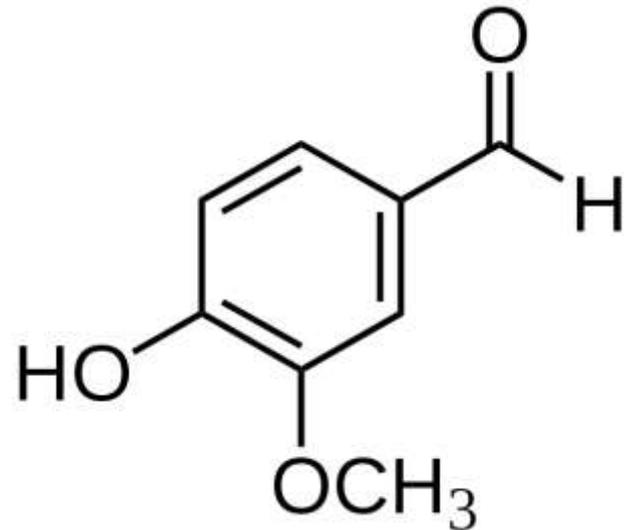
Introduced
to French
Polynesia
by French
Admiral
Francois
Hamelin

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 19th 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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