



Spring

- 6 Trends to Inspire Your Spring Table
- The Spring Pantry
- Spring Shopping with Michael Smith

Party Ideas

- Mini Eats
- Berry Berry Nice
- Afternoon Tea

Tips

- Top 10 Host/Hostess Gifts
- No-Fuss Potluck Parties
- Knife Care

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Home » Entertaining » 3 Ways to Add Vanilla Flavour



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3 Ways to Add Vanilla Flavour

By Jessica McLaughlin

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Vanilla is a unique and unmistakable flavour that will fill your kitchen with a heavenly scent and hungry mouths looking for scrumptious baked goods. We've got some great tips to help you make the most of the vanilla pod like a pro.

Before you get baking, you'll need to know how to get into that flavour-packed bean. If you've ever tried to open one, you'll know it's one tough little pod! A really sharp paring knife is an absolute must. Here are some additional tips to help you with the task:

- If you're having trouble cutting the bean, try softening it up by steaming it for a minute or two
- Place a piece of parchment or wax paper on your cutting surface so you don't lose one of those precious seeds when you start cutting
- Lay the bean flat on the surface and use the tip of the blade to cut at the centre and work towards the ends
- Once the pod is split open, scrape the tiny seeds out with the blade of your knife—they're sticky and jammy, so they'll also be sticking to your blade



Once you've figured out how to dissect the vanilla bean, it's easy to add that delicious flavour to just about any baking you do. We've assembled three easy vanilla infusion ideas to get you started.

Vanilla Sugar

If you've already scraped the vanilla pod of all those delicious seeds, don't throw it away—make vanilla sugar. This is an easy way to infuse those heavenly aromas and flavours into your baking:

- All you need are three items: sugar, a vanilla pod and a jar. A well cleaned mason jar is a great choice to show off the pod and sugar amongst your baking tools and ingredients (just be sure to keep it out of direct sunlight)
- Fill the jar with sugar and stick the vanilla pod smack dab in the middle of the granules. Within a week you've got yummy vanilla sugar. And the longer you leave it, the stronger the vanilla scent and flavour gets

You'll not only want to bake with the sugar, but you won't be able to resist sprinkling it onto your cereal and into your morning cup of coffee.

Vanilla Milk/Cream

Once you've used the pod for your vanilla sugar, you can use the jammy seeds inside to make vanilla milk or cream. It's another great way to add the sweet taste of the scented bean into your baking:

- Pour two cups of milk or cream into a heavy-bottomed pan and set the stove to a low heat
- Bring the liquid to a hot steam—bubbles will start to appear at the edge of the pan. DON'T let it come to a boil
- Remove the cream or milk from the heat
- Add the vanilla seeds and let the milk or cream mixture steep for 30 minutes to an hour

You can use this cream or milk in any of your favourite dessert recipes.

Vanilla Extract

Another great way to inject vanilla flavour into your baking is by making vanilla extract:

- Cut the vanilla bean lengthwise into a couple of pieces
- Grab a clean glass jar and put in the vanilla pieces, 1/3 teaspoon of sugar and three ounces of vodka, brandy or dark rum
- Make sure the bean is completely covered by the sugar and liquor
- Shake the mixture and store in a cool, dark place
- Revisit the liquid once in a while and give it a shake

Your vanilla will get darker and more concentrated as it sits. It's ready to be used in a few weeks or you can leave it for a few months for a more intense vanilla taste.

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