

Vanilla (*Vanilla planifolia*)

Use 1/2-1 vanilla pods for 4 servings

Description

Vanilla is a long, slender, black seed pod. It has a sweet, slightly smoky aroma and taste and is one of the world's most popular flavourings for sweet dishes.

Vanilla complements - cakes, puddings, cream, ice-cream, rice puddings, pancakes, custard.

Did you know?

The Aztec Indians in Mexico used Vanilla Pods to flavour their chocolate drink Xoco-latl. Vanilla Pods are picked green when they have no scent. The lengthy curing process, which develops Vanillas fragrant aroma, is one reason for its high cost. Good quality Vanilla Pods give an even better flavour than essence and can be re-used many times. Vanilla was believed to be a tonic for the brain.

Quality

Vanilla Pods should be a rich, deep brown colour, somewhat wrinkled in appearance but still supple and resilient. The complex, but subtle, fruity 'bouquet' develops with age and is long lasting. Vanillin is the primary flavour constituent of vanilla beans.

Usage

For cakes, puddings and sweets keep a Vanilla Pod in a jar of sugar to be used for baking. Top up with more sugar and the same pod will perfume the added sugar for up to a year.

For sauces, custards and ice-cream, infuse the milk with a Vanilla Pod.

Afterwards the pod can be rinsed, dried and returned to an airtight container. The same method can be used for syrups and poached fruit.

For a stronger flavour and authentic texture, the pod can be split open and the tiny black seeds used in the dish.

Flavour the milk for a sweet pancake mixture with Vanilla.

Add a pod to rice pudding mixture and remove after cooking.



French clafouti batter is flavoured with Vanilla. For crème chantilly beat Vanilla sugar into the cream or infuse a few

tablespoons of milk with a Vanilla Pod and beat into the cream and sugar.

The milk used to make the custard for a bavarois should be infused with a Vanilla Pod for extra fragrance.

Whilst not generally associated with savoury dishes, Vanilla can add a subtle but unusual new flavour to delicate sauces for fish and seafood.
