

Homemade Vanilla Extract

Why make your own vanilla extract? Why not just buy it from the store? With the price of vanilla constantly rising, it's very cost efficient to make your own.

Plus, you can control the **strength** and the **flavor**. This is GREAT because many pricey store-bought options fall short of the depth of flavor that makes good vanilla...*real good vanilla*. This is either because the vanilla extract is imitation and made with artificial or synthetic ingredients or because brands cut back on the amount of real vanilla in each bottle.



Here is what you need:

1. **Vanilla Beans:** I bought mine off of Amazon but you could possibly find them in your local store. This time I used Grade A Vanilla Beans. They are referred to as "Gourmet" or "Prime" Vanilla Beans b/c they have a much higher moisture content. I think I will use the Grade B next time. They are specifically labeled for "extraction" b/c the flavor is more diluted. Both will work great and will have amazing flavor.

There are a few options on how many beans to use for your vanilla.

****Single-Fold Vanilla**** - this is what most store-bought vanillas are graded. They are a weaker strength because the number of vanilla beans per vodka differs. Single-Fold is about 4 beans per 8 ounces of vodka.

****Double-Fold Vanilla**** - this is a much stronger flavor of vanilla. Double the amount of beans per 8 ounces of vodka.

Since Vanilla Beans are expensive but I like good flavor, I decided to go in the middle and use 5-6 beans per 8 ounces of vodka.



2. **80 Proof Vodka:** This is the most common for making Vanilla. I have heard of some using bourbon, brandy, or rum. I used vodka as you can see from the picture. One bottle can make quite a bit of vanilla! Don't worry about spending \$ on any expensive Vodka. Buy the cheap stuff! The Vanilla's flavor comes from the beans.

3. **Glass Bottles or Jars:** I am using some *amber colored 8 oz Jars* I purchased off of Amazon. I like these but I also love the swing top bottles. Both are perfect if you are gifting the vanilla. Even using canning jars works perfectly fine too. I like using the amber bottles but using the clear bottles is super neat too b/c you can see the color change throughout the infusion process.

4. **Funnel:** This is super helpful but totally not necessary. It definitely makes the pouring process easier when the bottles have such small tops. The box of bottles I purchased came with a funnel.



What to do (It is so easy):

- *Using a sharp knife and cutting board, slice the vanilla beans so the seeds are exposed. Just make a slit right down the middle. I also cut mine into 2 to 3 smaller pieces so they could fit easily into the jar.*
- *Pour vodka into the jar using your funnel. I add enough to make sure that all the beans are fully submerged. Then give your jar a few good shakes (after you place the lid on of course).*
- *Store the vanilla at room temperature and out of direct sunlight. I try to give it a good shake about once a week. You can use this vanilla as early as 2 months, but for best flavor some leave it unused for up to 6 months. Totally up to you.*
- *You can even keep refilling the bottle as you use it as long as the beans stay submerged and you keep vodka on hand. If you are gifting the vanilla, feel free to remove the beans first.*
- *This vanilla can last you several years with the beans still in the jar as long as the beans are always submerged (but we go through it so fast that would never be possible, ha!). If you remove the beans, the vanilla can last indefinitely.*

Slice the beans right down the middle so the seeds are exposed. They smell so good!





Then cut them in 2 or 3 pieces so they fit into the jar.



Using your funnel, fill your jar with about 1 cup of vodka. Add your seal or lid and sit it in a room temperature area out of direct sunlight and wait!

Don't forget to shake the jar at least once a week. Let it sit for at least 2 months or up to 6 to 12 months for strongest flavor.



Add a fun label! I like to add the date so I can remember how long the vanilla beans have been aging in the vodka.

These make such great gifts!

