

## Vanilla Varieties

Of the 110 varieties of vanilla only three types are used commercially - Planifolia, Pompona and Tahitian.

### Madagascar / Bourbon vanilla

Bourbon vanilla is the generic name for vanilla species planifolia. Originating in Mexico planifolia vanilla cuttings were taken in the 1800s and grown by the French in large plantations in Reunion then known as the Ile de Bourbon thus explaining the origins of it's name. Bourbon vanilla has the familiar vanilla flavor we have come to know and love, such as that in ice cream, flavored desserts and drinks. Madagascar Bourbon is the most sought after bourbon vanilla bean and is considered the best. Madagascar has aromas of wood, oil, and leather with wide flat pods.

### Mexican Vanilla

Vanilla is a gift of Mexico to the world. The Aztecs used vanilla: "tilxochitl" (black flower) to perfume a drink called "xocolatl" (chocolate), prepared with vanilla and cocoa for the first banquet offered to Hernan Cortes. When shown the cocoa grains and the black vanilla beans he was overwhelmed by the incredible perfume of the brown beans known as "xanath" (vanilla flower) by the Totonacs. Mexico is no longer the largest producer of vanilla beans due to a devastating freeze in the late 1950's that destroyed most of the vanilla plants. Mexican vanilla beans are chocolate brown to black in color, their aroma is clean and delicate.

### Tahitian vanilla

Tahitian vanilla is the generic name for the vanilla species tahitensis. This variety originates from plant stock taken to Tahiti, which probably mutated in the wild. Now regarded as a different species, it's appearance and flavor is considerably different to planifolia vanilla. Tahitian vanilla is earthy and fruity, with less natural vanillin than planifolia.

### Pompona Vanilla or Antilles Vanilla

Pompona vanilla is grown in the Antilles and Guadeloupe in the Caribbean. The vanilla pods are considered of lower quality than either planifolia or tahitian. The beans tend to be smaller, around 3", with less vanillin than the planifolia varieties.

Planifolia blossom



Pompona blossom



Tahitian blossom

