



Homemade Vanilla Extract

Makes: 6 8-ounce bottles

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Wait Time: 6 months minimum

- 30-36 vanilla beans
- 6 cup (48 ounces; 1.44L) 80 proof vodka (or bourbon, brandy, or even rum)
- 6 8-ounce bottles or jar with a tight seal, washed & dried

Using a sharp knife, slit the vanilla beans so the beans are exposed. No need to completely split the bean in half, just slit down the middle. If the length of the vanilla beans don't fit into your bottle or jar, cut the vanilla beans into smaller pieces. Place beans into bottles or jars.

Pour vodka on top. A funnel helps. Use a little extra vodka, if needed, so the beans are fully submerged. Shake a few times.

Store vanilla at room temperature out of direct sunlight. Shake about once per week or once every couple weeks. Vanilla can be ready to use in as little as 8 weeks, but I recommend at least 6 months for optimal flavor. 12+ months is great!

As you begin to use your vanilla, you can refill with a little vodka each time. Give it a shake after you refill and give it a shake before each use, too. If you're gifting the vanilla or if you don't have any more alcohol to refill, remove the beans completely after first use. The beans will become a little slimy if they aren't almost fully submerged.

Unused aged vanilla extract (with the beans fully submerged) will last several years. If it still smells good, it's still good to use! Aged extract without the beans will last indefinitely. Once you begin using the vanilla and adding more alcohol after each use, the beans will eventually need to be replaced. It's hard to give a specific amount of time as some may use (and refill) the vanilla more quickly than others.

After about 1 year of frequent use and refilling, you will find the vanilla flavor less intense. Simply remove old beans, add fresh beans, shake, and continue to use/refill.

Chef's Notes:

Seeds: Since the vanilla beans are exposed (slit open), there will be vanilla bean seeds in the bottle and therefore in your baked good. They add even more wonderful flavor!

Use the same amount of homemade vanilla extract as you would store-bought in recipes.

Gifts: I usually remove the beans if I'm gifting the bottle, that way the gift recipient isn't responsible for refilling with more alcohol and the beans don't go to waste. (You can reuse the beans for a new bottle.) However, if it's been less than 6 months, I recommend gifting with the beans in the bottle because there's still lots of flavor in there! Tell the gift recipient to remove the beans once he/she begins using the vanilla.

Alcohol: If baking gluten free, use certified gluten free alcohol. Avoid flavored vodkas as they often contain artificial flavors, which negates the purpose of making your own pure vanilla.

Recipe from Sally's Baking Addiction