

AT A GLANCE:

Makes

About 1 cup

Prep time

10 minutes

Steep time

6-12 months

Best flavor

12 months+

Base

Vodka or rum

Storage

Cool, dark place

INGREDIENTS:

- 8-10 whole vanilla beans
- about 1 oz (28 g) total
- 1 cup (8 fl oz / 240 mL) 80-proof vodka or rum
- Clean glass bottle or jar with tight-fitting lid

Vodka or Rum?

Vodka gives a clean, neutral vanilla flavor. Rum may add a warmer, slightly sweeter flavor profile.



DIRECTIONS:

1. Prepare the vanilla.

Split each vanilla bean lengthwise to expose the seeds. Cut or fold the beans as needed so they fit the bottle and stay fully submerged.

2. Add the alcohol.

Place the beans in a clean glass bottle or jar. Pour in the vodka or rum, making sure the vanilla is completely covered.

3. Steep slowly.

Seal tightly and store in a cool, dark place. Shake occasionally. Allow at least 6 months; 12 months or longer develops a deeper, rounder vanilla flavor.

4. Check the flavor.

After about 6 months, taste the extract. Continue steeping for fuller flavor if desired.

5. Use the extract.

When the aroma and flavor are rich and well developed, use as you would commercial vanilla extract in baking and cooking.

6. Make vanilla sugar.

When you remove spent beans, let excess liquid drain and the surfaces dry briefly. Place the pods in granulated sugar so they can continue imparting vanilla fragrance and flavor.

NOTE: Vanilla beans vary in size and moisture. Use both measures as a guide: about 8-10 beans, totaling roughly 1 oz (28 g), per 1 cup of alcohol.

What Comes Out When We're Crushed?

SCRIPTURE

*"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."
2 Corinthians 4:7 (NKJV)*

"Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ..."

2 Corinthians 2:14–15 (NKJV)

Years ago, my father was working on some plumbing with my brother-in-law when a sledgehammer came down hard on my brother-in-law's thumb.

My dad could turn the air blue under ordinary circumstances. Had that hammer landed on his thumb, there was absolutely no question what would have come out of his mouth.

But my brother-in-law grabbed his injured hand and groaned, "Sugar, sugar, sugar."

My father and I just looked at him. No profanity. No angry outburst. Just, "Sugar, sugar, sugar." I have never forgotten it.

What comes out of us when life hits us hard enough that we don't have time to think about our response?

Scripture tells us that we are earthen vessels carrying a treasure that is not our own. The excellence of the power is God's, not ours. Paul also tells us that through His people, God diffuses the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ.

This does not mean that a Christian never loses her temper, says something she regrets, or reacts badly when she is hurt. We are still earthen vessels. But it does invite an honest question: What am I allowing God to form within me?

There is a reason this devotional belongs beside a recipe for vanilla extract.

A vanilla bean gives little indication from its dark, leathery exterior of the extraordinary fragrance it carries within. Split it open, place it into something strong, and give it time. Slowly, what was hidden within the bean begins to permeate what surrounds it. The liquid takes on its fragrance, richness, and flavor.

And it takes time.

As we abide in Christ, spend time in His Word, yield to His Spirit, pray, obey, repent, and begin again, He works within us. Often the change is so gradual that we hardly recognize it ourselves.

That is what struck me so deeply about my brother-in-law's response that day. He didn't have time to prepare a Christian response. What came out in that unguarded moment reflected something that had already been forming within him.

That is what I want in my own life—not an outward performance of sweetness, but an inward life so filled with Christ that His character increasingly finds its way into my unguarded moments.

And when what comes out of me is not sweet, I do not have to hide from God in embarrassment. I can bring that to Him too. I can repent, receive His grace, and allow Him to keep working in this very ordinary earthen vessel.

Even after vanilla beans have spent months giving their fragrance and flavor to an extract, they need not be discarded. Dried and tucked into a container of sugar, they can continue imparting their fragrance.

A life permeated by Christ can do something similar. We carry His fragrance into our homes, our conversations, our work, and the lives of people around us—sometimes in moments so ordinary that we may never know anyone noticed.

We were never meant to manufacture the fragrance ourselves.

The treasure is His. The vessel is ours. And the glory belongs to God.

PRAYER

Lord, You are holy, gracious, and patient, and Your transforming work is good. You have placed Your treasure in an ordinary earthen vessel, and I cannot manufacture the character of Christ by my own strength. Abide in me and fill me with Your Word and Your Spirit. When pressure exposes what is within me, show me what still needs Your transforming work. Teach me to recognize it, and I will repent. I will receive Your grace and continue growing in obedience to You. May the fragrance of Christ be evident in my words, my reactions, and the atmosphere I create around me—not for my praise, but for Your glory. I trust You to continue the good work You have begun in me. Thank You, Father, for Your patience, Your grace, and Your faithfulness as You conform me to the image of Your Son. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

A MOMENT TO REFLECT

1. What tends to come out of me when I am caught off guard, hurt, frustrated, or under pressure?

2. What am I regularly allowing to fill and shape me? What practical change could help me spend more time abiding in Christ and filling my heart with His Word?

3. Who encounters the "fragrance" of my life most often? What would I like them to experience more consistently because Christ is at work in me?
