

CALLING ALL FOODIES!

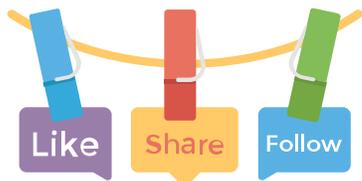
The “Spice of the Month” club is a monthly take-and-make kit featuring a variety of unique spices, herbs, or blends. Each kit will include information about the featured spice, its history with fun facts, and a small packet of the spice with two recipe suggestions!

Once you’ve created your culinary masterpiece, we’d love to see! Share your pictures and tips with us on our Facebook (SEARLibrary) and Instagram (@searlibrary) pages.

Spice of the Month kits are free, but supplies are limited. Only one kit per household.



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SPICE OF THE MONTH CLUB



Vanilla beans have a sweet and pleasant aroma with floral and woody notes. The flavor of Vanilla bean is robust and complex, with sweet and warm notes and floral highlights. Vanilla bean pods are the fruit of a variety of tropical orchids native to Mexico. Of the 20,000 orchid species, Vanilla orchids are the only variety that develops fruit. There are over 150 varieties of vanilla orchids available today, but most of the pods used commercially come from three types known as *Vanilla planifolia*, *Vanilla pompona*, and *Vanilla tahitiensis*. The farming, harvesting, and processing of Vanilla bean pods are quite complex and labor-intensive. The flowers of the orchid need to be hand-pollinated in most growing regions, and the flowers only bloom for one day.

The pods of the Vanilla bean can also be used to make pure vanilla extract, perfumes, soaps, and other cosmetics. Vanilla beans are often used in small quantities, resulting in little to no nutritional value. However, trace amounts of calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, and potassium can be found in vanilla extracts made from the seed pods. The beans have been shown to have antioxidant properties, which can help to fight free radicals within the body. The fragrant spice has also been used for centuries to help calm the nerves, aid in sleep, and as an alternative numbing agent for tooth pain.

FUN FACTS

- Outside of its native range, cultivated vanilla plants must be hand-pollinated. The hand-pollination technique that is still used to this day was perfected in 1841 by a 12-year-old boy.
- Vanilla was prized as an incense, flavoring, and perfume in ancient Mesoamerica by the Maya, Aztec, and Totonac cultures.
- The island of Madagascar is the heart of the vanilla bean industry—producing roughly 80% of the world’s vanilla.

Pollo Papantla

Chicken With Orange Juice and Vanilla



Ingredients

- 6 chicken thighs (about 2 pounds)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon plus ⅛ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ⅓ teaspoon cayenne pepper, or to taste
- 2 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar, Japanese rice vinegar or other mild-flavored vinegar
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1½ cups fresh orange juice
- 1 vanilla bean, split
- A few sprigs of cilantro, for garnish
- Cooked rice or tortillas for serving (optional)

Directions

1. Season chicken with the salt and ¼ teaspoon black pepper.
2. Heat vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken pieces skin side down, and brown until golden on both sides, turning once, 3 to 5 minutes on each side.
3. When chicken is browned, pour off any excess fat from the skillet and return to medium heat. Sprinkle cayenne and ⅛ teaspoon black pepper over chicken, turning pieces to coat evenly. Add more cayenne if additional heat is desired. Add garlic and sauté for 1 minute. Add vinegar, butter, and orange juice. Scrape in pulp of vanilla bean and add bean.
4. Stir the liquid to blend.
5. Cook chicken skin side up, uncovered, basting occasionally with sauce, until sauce is reduced to a syrupy glaze, 20 to 25 minutes. If the interior of the chicken needs further cooking (it should be 170 degrees when tested in the center with an instant-read thermometer), cover and cook over medium-low heat for an additional 5 to 10 minutes, or as needed.
6. Garnish with cilantro. Serve hot, with rice or tortillas, if desired.

Recipe Sources:

<https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1018350-chicken-with-orange-juice-and-vanilla-pollo-papantla>

Vanilla Cupcakes



Ingredients

- 1 and 3/4 cups cake flour (spooned & leveled)
- 3/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup (8 Tbsp) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 3 large egg whites, at room temperature
- 1/2 cup full-fat sour cream at room temperature
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- seeds scraped from 1/2 of a vanilla bean
- 1/2 cup whole milk at room temperature
- cake frosting (vanilla, chocolate...)
- sprinkles, for garnish (optional)

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with cupcake liners. Line a second pan with 2 liners—this recipe makes about 14 cupcakes. Set aside.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk the cake flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together. Set aside.
3. In a large bowl using a handheld or stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat the butter and sugar on high speed until light and creamy, about 3 minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed. Add the egg whites, vanilla extract, and vanilla bean seeds and beat on high speed until smooth and well combined, about 2 minutes. Add the sour cream and beat on medium-high speed until combined, about 1 minute. With the mixer running on low speed, add the dry ingredients, and then slowly pour in the milk and beat just until combined. Do not over-mix. You may need to whisk it by hand a few times to make sure there are no lumps at the bottom of the bowl. The batter will be slightly thick. Pour/spoon the batter into the liners—fill only 2/3 full to avoid spilling over the sides.
4. Bake for 19–22 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool the cupcakes in the pan set on a cooling rack for 20 minutes, then remove them from the pan and return to the rack to cool completely before frosting.
5. Frost cooled cupcakes with your choice of frosting.

Recipe Sources:

<https://sallysbakingaddiction.com/simply-perfect-vanilla-cupcakes/>