



Vanilla

OUR COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE SOURCING
AND ETHICAL PRACTICES OF PROCURING VANILLA



Contents

Synergy Flavors Vanilla Story	1
Why Madagascar Vanilla	2
Taste of Vanilla	3
Sustainable Vanilla	4
Quality & Consistency	5
Growing Communities in Madagascar	6
Synergy Funded Schools	7

BUILDING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS STARTS WITH TELLING YOUR BRAND'S STORY.

Consumers reportedly prefer to buy from companies with a reputation for purpose and when they feel connected. To stay connected with our internal and external stakeholders, Synergy Flavors conducted a materiality assessment to understand sustainability issues and the priorities of our employees and customers.

Vanilla sourcing and care for our vanilla suppliers is a priority for our stakeholders and remains a key area of focus for Synergy's global sustainability program and values-driven supply chain practices. The feedback on vanilla is important for many reasons, including mitigating climate-related risks, biodiversity and deforestation in Madagascar, ensuring farmer well-being, and sourcing and supply chain transparency.

As demand increases for vanilla-flavored products, we continue to work harder to ensure our vanilla is sourced ethically and sustainably. When purchasing our Madagascan vanilla, our brand story becomes a part of yours. Here is an in-depth look at how we source responsibly, ensure quality, and continue to support our farmer partners in Madagascar.



MADAGASCAR VANILLA IS CONSIDERED THE GOLD STANDARD

Situated about 250 miles off the coast of East Africa in the Indian Ocean is the world's fourth largest island: Madagascar. Home to various plants and animals found nowhere else on Earth, the island's rainforests, deserts, beaches and unique flora and fauna make it a one-of-a-kind destination.

Adding to its intrigue, the humid, northeast corner of Madagascar, known as the Sava region, is home to as much as 80% of the world's vanilla beans. Although it is not native to the country, vanilla produced in Madagascar is considered the gold standard. Vanilla grown outside of its native Mexico must be pollinated completely by hand during a five- to six-hour window of blooming. Once pollinated, beans take about three to four months to mature.

Growing and harvesting vanilla is incredibly labor-intensive. Both the vine and beans are very delicate, so they require careful hand picking. Growing season is an eight-month process, running from November to June. Harvesting occurs during June and July, leading to the eight- to 12-week traditional curing process. From July through September, vanilla is aged and prepped; sorted and graded; and packaged for export.

The result of this precise and demanding work is the classic vanilla flavor most U.S. consumers know and love. Madagascan vanilla beans, also known as bourbon vanilla, have nothing to do with bourbon whiskey. Rather, these beans are grown on islands in the Indian Ocean formerly known as the Île Bourbon, which is made of islands we know as Madagascar, Comoros and Réunion today.



WHAT DOES VANILLA TASTE LIKE?

Sensory language often used to describe vanilla includes:

- Woody
- Smoky
- Rummy
- Floral
- Prune
- Cotton Candy
- Playdough
- Musty





RESPONSIBLE SOURCING: A LOOK INTO SYNERGY'S SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN

Synergy procures vanilla beans through sustainable sources that prioritize the well-being and livelihoods of vanilla farmers and their families. We work only with suppliers that use traditional curing methods, which promote environmental and economic benefits in the community.

By focusing on traditional curing methods, we are helping extend seasonal employment for farmers and preparers while improving the quality of the vanilla we source. As a member of the Sustainable Vanilla Initiative (SVI), we are able to expand our current platform to include farmer welfare, child labor rights and deforestation. This collaboration within our industry will create opportunities for differentiation in supply chain management and transparency. These actions, coupled with our continued commitment to providing educational opportunities for local children, increase the likelihood that vanilla will remain a key source of income for Malagasy farmers.

Generational relationships, built over decades of collaboration and widely varied market conditions, are at the heart of our trusted network of partners in the SAVA region of Madagascar. For decades, Synergy has worked with our suppliers to set high quality standards and expectations for the life cycle of the vanilla beans we purchase.

As demand increases for vanilla-flavored products, we continue to work harder to ensure our vanilla is sourced ethically and sustainably. When purchasing our Madagascan vanilla, our brand story becomes a part of yours. Here is an in-depth look at how we source responsibly, ensure quality, and continue to support our farmer partners in Madagascar.



QUALITY & CONSISTENCY

For decades, Synergy has worked with our suppliers to set high-quality standards and expectations for the lifecycle of the vanilla beans we purchase. Everything from the ability for the bean to mature on the vine, adherence to quality practices in the traditional curing process, and proper storage, packaging and shipping, impacts the quality of the cured vanilla bean.

Synergy's relationship with our local processor enables us to have more control over the quality and consistency of the curing process. Our partner purchases vanilla direct from the farmer cooperatives as fresh, green vanilla beans that are collected and then brought back to the facility for quality control and sorting before the traditional curing process begins. This enables us to manage every aspect of the curing process from "green to fully cured."

Every lot of vanilla beans Synergy purchases is subject to rigorous analytical and organoleptic testing by our team of vanilla evaluation experts. This ensures the quality of the beans and extracted vanilla is up to our exacting standards before a purchase is even made.





SYNERGY AND THE MADAGASCAR DEVELOPMENT FUND HELP GROW COMMUNITIES

"Madagascar's developmental needs in every sector – including education, health, clean water and sanitation are truly overwhelming, as is the level of poverty and very real suffering seen virtually everywhere," said Brian Donaldson, founder and patron of Madagascar Development Fund (MDF).

According to the United Nations, Madagascar has the third lowest school attendance in the world, a major factor in the long-term poverty rate of a region. To help address the issue, Synergy has been working with the MDF on building schools for the underserved community of vanilla growers and processors who have been at the heart of our vanilla success for decades.

"We choose to focus on education to build opportunities for Madagascans to lift themselves out of poverty, and to continue to reinvest in this important region," Synergy President and CEO Rod Sowders said. "We have decades-long relationships with our partners in Madagascar and will continue to support them and their many farmer partners in the region."



SYNERGY FUNDED SCHOOLS

Schools make education a reality for the children of the Malagasy region, and double as protective shelters during cyclones and tropical storms. In the first quarter 2024, Synergy has funded 12 schools since 2016 and provided educational opportunities to more than 2,800 students. We also expanded the scope of our partnership with MDF in 2020 to include clean water accessibility as an area of focus.

- 2016 2 near Sambava
- 2018 2 Antohimari and Farahalana
- 2019 2 Antsirable Nord and Menagisa
- 2020 3 Ambolomadinkia, Ambodimatsiko and Antanapizina
(Primary School & Water project co-financed by Synergy + the Vanilla Corporation)



- 2021 1 Ambariotelo
- 2022 1 Ambodipont Isahana
- 2024 1 Andrapengy

