## **Sunday Opinion**

The New York Times

**PAID ADVERTISEMENT** 

## Nothing's plain about a blank canvas.



In the world of ice cream, vanilla often gets the short end of the stick. Dismissed as "boring" or "plain", it's frequently overshadowed by bold, colorful flavors like chocolate, strawberry, and cookies and cream. But in reality, vanilla is far from a lackluster choice. In fact, it's a flavor that deserves more appreciation for its complexity, versatility, and timeless appeal.

First off, real vanilla isn't plain. It's derived from the seed pods of the Vanilla *planifolia* orchid, a plant that takes months—sometimes years—to cultivate. Real vanilla extract contains hundreds of flavor compounds that bring depth, warmth, and floral notes to a scoop of good-quality ice cream. It's not just a flavor; it's a craft.

Vanilla ice cream is also the culinary equivalent of a white T-shirt: simple, but essential. It complements literally everything. Apple pie? Vanilla. Chocolate cake? Vanilla. Brownies, peaches, affogato, root beer float—you get the idea. It's the backbone of dessert culture, enhancing other flavors without overwhelming them. Try doing that with rocky road.

Beyond that, vanilla is the ultimate test of quality. Unlike louder, mix-in-heavy flavors that can mask imperfections, vanilla leaves nowhere to hide. If a scoop of vanilla is smooth, rich, and speckled with real vanilla bean, it tells you everything you need to know about the care and quality behind it.

Vanilla is also nostalgic. It's the flavor of summers spent chasing down ice cream trucks, of birthday parties, of a scoop handed over the counter in a waffle cone bigger than your face. It's comfort food in its purest frozen form.

**CHOOSE VANILLA.** 



