Simple to make at home, easy extracts are a welcome gift during the holidays. The extracts take time to steep and deepen with flavor. Even though easy extracts take minutes to pull together, start them at least eight weeks before you need them for gifting or cooking. This will give you the best result and flavor in your flavorings!

### Vanilla Bean Extract

**How to Make**

Most culinary extracts are simple to make. Gather the needed ingredients and jars. The jars should be clean, not dusty, but I don’t sterilize them. I figure the 80 proof vodka can do that job for me.
You will need –

Vanilla beans – about 10 to 12 fresh vanilla beans

80 proof or higher vodka (ask for the least expensive bottle, the extract be the same result)

You can use rum or bourbon if that is your preference.

Pint mason jar or a decorative bottle and lids

Small extract bottles for gifting or storage

For a pint jar of vanilla extract, use at least 2 ounces of fresh vanilla beans. These should be slightly sticky and moist. Before putting the beans in the jar, either slice lengthwise down each bean, or cut the bean into smaller, one
inch pieces. This will let the goodness from inside the bean to seep out into the vodka.

Pour vodka over the beans leaving two inches of space at the top of the jar. This gives room for shaking the extract as it is steeping. Cap the jar tightly, give it a shake, and set it in a dark corner or cupboard. Remember to take it out and shake it gently everyday. After a few weeks, you will have vanilla bean extract ready to filter and bottle.

I use a coffee filter and small funnel to strain the vanilla bean extract. Using a small funnel for bottling the extract, makes that task so much easier! I use Boston brown bottles for the vanilla extract. You can get them here. You can use these fancy clear bottles in the picture, too. If using the clear glass bottles, store the vanilla extract away from light sources when not being used.

Vanilla is one of the easy extracts to make for gift giving. Add a cute label to the bottle and you have a homemade gift!

What to do with it – Gift giving, cooking, baking, adding to coffee, milkshakes, and hot chocolate.

**Almond Extract**

**You will need –**

raw almonds with out skin about (15 almonds chopped up)

Buying tip – Buy from the bulk foods section of a natural foods grocery store. This way you can buy only the amount you need.

Vodka – 80 proof or higher

glass jar or bottle and cap
Chop the almonds and put into the jar or bottle. Pour the vodka over the almonds leaving some room for shaking.

Cap tightly and place in a dark corner or cupboard for steeping. Shake daily.

Filter the extract after two months or more of time. Bottle in brown bottles for gifting or storage. If using clear glass, store in a dark spot to preserve quality.

Use in recipes calling for almond extract.

**Lemon Extract**

Another easy extract that is often used in baked goods is lemon extract. It makes up in no time. The most difficult part is zesting the lemon. (not hard at all!) I used a vegetable peeler to get the skin off the lemon while leaving the pith or white layer, behind. There is actually a kitchen
tool for zesting lemons. Either way, take the zest off the clean lemon and place it in the jar or the bottle.

Add vodka as described above. This post from Common Sense Homestead, mentions using a teaspoon of sugar in the lemon extract. Add a teaspoon of sugar. Shake to mix and place in a dark area to steep. Shake daily. Steep for at least 6 to 8 weeks. Strain and bottle as described above.

Make Other Easy Extracts from Common Plants and Spices

Chocolate Mint Extract

Many other easy extracts can be made from common ingredients. Look at your herb garden. Do you have a plant that is doing particularly well this year? Extracts and tinctures are a great way to preserve some of that goodness.
One year I had an extremely large hardy chocolate mint harvest. I collected the mint leaves and made a few bottles of this easy extract. Chocolate mint extract was used in coffee for extra flavor, ice cream, and baking. Think mint chocolate chip cookies! The instructions for chocolate mint extract can be found here.

How to Make My Favorite Easy Extract!

I saved the best for last. Those of you who know me, recognize that coffee is a food group for me. I love the flavor and aroma of coffee. I love coffee ice cream and that subtle hint of mocha in brownies and other chocolate baked goods. So
having a Coffee Extract is the perfect way for me to have coffee flavor even when I am not drinking coffee.

Making Coffee Extract

You will need, coffee beans or ground coffee, 2 cups of vodka, and a glass jar for steeping.

Use either coffee beans that are coarsely ground or already ground coffee.

Add the vodka as in the other easy extract recipes. Cap the jar and shake. Give it a daily shake. Coffee extract takes the least amount of time to steep. It is ready for use in as little as ten days. I recently came across this recipe for Mocha Chocolate Chip Cookies !

Try These Other Ideas for Easy Extracts

Orange, Lime, and other citrus can be made the same way the Lemon Extract is made. Cinnamon extract using dried cinnamon sticks might be an interesting extract. Other nuts such as walnut could be the makings of an extract too. What ideas do you have for easy extracts to flavor baked goods and drinks?
Parting Words

Remember that these easy extracts are made with alcohol. Keep them stored out of the reach of children. Always take personal allergies into consideration because extracts are potent versions of the original flavoring. Most extracts should be used sparingly for flavoring. Glycerin is commonly used to make non-alcohol extracts.

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