



eat. drink. live.

Personally I don't buy into Valentine's Day (especially not the heart-shaped chocolates or over-priced red roses!), but as vanilla, next to chocolate, is undoubtedly the world's most seductive and irresistible ingredient, we've decided it deserves a re-visit as a flavour profile (first featured in Recipe Mailer 2). Truth be told, I am absolutely defenseless to the charms of Vanilla, especially in the form of cr me patisserie. Here are a few classic and a few unconventional NoMU favorites to back that up. So ditch the roses, cancel the dinner reservations and indulge in a romantic home-cooked feast this Valentines Day instead!

Tracy

flavour files



vanilla - a revisit

The best vanilla beans in the world come from Madagascar, Tahiti and Mexico. Unripe vanilla pods are green in colour with no flavour or scent. After months worshipping the sun they burst with wonderful aroma and flavour that we have all come to love and identify in items as common as our favourite home-made vanilla ice cream and vanilla scented candles!

Legend has it that the tropical orchid was born when Princess Xanat, forbidden by her father from marrying a mortal, fled to the forest with her lover. The lovers were captured and beheaded. Where their blood touched the ground, the vine of the tropical orchid grew!

It has been revealed that vanilla increases levels of adrenaline and as such can be considered mildly addictive and in addition, it also has aphrodisiac qualities! An unexpected and added bonus.

A huge benefit to this absolutely essential foodie's ingredient is it's versatility. Vanilla opens a whole world of possible flavour experimentation. Don't be afraid to marry vanilla with an assortment of ingredients, like our delicious starter - a velvety cannellini bean and vanilla soup with vanilla butter and deep fried sage leaves (see recipe mailer # 20). As a main course please try our pan fried blue nose with seedless green grapes, finished off with a melodious vanilla foam! For dessert we have endless opportunities from good old fashioned classics like cr me brul e or panna cotta (see recipe mailer # 2) to luscious semifreddo!

vanilla butter bursts

- 300 g cake flour
- 250 g unsalted butter, softened
- A pinch of **NoMU Just Salt**
- 80 g caster sugar
- 1 tbsp **NoMU Vanilla Paste**
- Icing sugar for tossing

Preheat the oven to 180°C and line a baking tray with baking paper.

In a mixing bowl add the sugar, vanilla and butter. Cream them together until completely white, creamy and smooth. Fold in the sifted flour and salt and mix thoroughly. Cover and re-ridgerate for half an hour.

Roll the dough into walnut sized balls using your hands (making sure they are not too warm) and place them on the baking tray, allowing enough room between the balls for the biscuits to expand in the oven.

Bake for 20 minutes or until almost firm to the touch and golden brown. Remove and cool on wire racks. While they are still slightly warm toss through a bowl full of icing sugar and eat straight away!

Makes 30 biscuits.



waffles with blueberries and vanilla syrup

for the vanilla syrup

- 150 ml caster sugar
- Enough cold water to cover
- 2 tbsp **NoMU Vanilla Extract**
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 8 ready-made waffles
- 2 tbsp **NoMU Sweet Rub**
- 200 g blueberries
- 150 ml whipped cream (optional)

Preheat the oven to 180°C

To make the vanilla syrup simply put the sugar and water in a heavy saucepan and stir over low heat until the sugar dissolves. It is important to make sure the sugar has dissolved completely before raising the temperature and boiling the liquid to prevent a grainy sugar syrup. Boil the syrup until it takes on a slight amber hue. Then remove from the heat and add the lemon juice and vanilla extract.

Place the waffles on a baking sheet, pour over some of the vanilla syrup and sprinkle with the Sweet Rub. Place in the oven to warm through for 5-8 minutes or until slightly crispy.

Arrange the waffles on top of each other on a plate. Pour over the rest of the warm syrup with all the blueberries and serve straight away with dollops of cream on the side! Serves 8.



eggs benedict with spinach and vanilla hollandaise

What better way to start your morning? Utterly indulgent and scrumptious!

4 large free range eggs
1 tbsp white wine vinegar
8 rashers of streaky bacon
2 muffins sliced in half and toasted
1 tbsp butter
200 g English spinach
A good grinding of **NoMU One for All**
NoMU Just Salt
NoMU Just Pepper
for hollandaise
See recipe mailer # 3 for method
2 tsp **NoMU Vanilla Paste**

Preheat the oven to 180°C
Place the bacon on a baking tray with baking paper on top and another baking tray on top of that to make sure the bacon stays flat while crisping up! Bake in the oven for 15 – 20 minutes or until golden.

Prepare the hollandaise adding the vanilla paste right at the end.

It is always better to poach eggs one at a time. Bring a medium saucepan of water to the boil. Add the vinegar to the water. Crack an egg into a small tumbler and with a wooden spoon create a whirlpool in the water and gently slide the egg into the centre of the swirl. Turn the heat down and gently poach for 3-4 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to carefully remove the poached egg from the water and set aside and cover to keep warm. Repeat as above with the rest of the eggs. Trim any excess untidy white around the poached egg with a knife.

In a saucepan melt the butter until foaming and add the spinach. Season with One for All and sauté until just wilted.

To assemble place a toasted buttered muffin half on a warm plate. Top with spinach and a poached egg. Drizzle over the vanilla hollandaise sauce and season with salt and black pepper. Top with 2 rashers of crispy bacon and serve with some good coffee! Serves 4.



WINE SUGGESTIONS: *Joubert Tradouw Chardonnay 2005*
A classic in the Burgundian style. Lightly wooded, soft and gentle with a beautiful golden colour. Fantastic with a broad range of foods.



pan fried blue nose with seedless green grapes, pomme puree and a vanilla foam

4 fillets of blue nose, 200 g each
A good grinding of **NoMU Hooked**
or 1 tbsp **NoMU Seafood Rub**
NoMU Just Salt
NoMU Just Pepper
Half a lemon for squeezing
500 g seedless green grapes
Olive oil for frying
1 tbsp butter
Chervil for garnishing

for the pomme puree
(see recipe mailer # 9)

for the vanilla foam
500 ml fish stock (see recipe mailer # 27)
150 ml white wine
300 ml cream
60 g unsalted butter, cut into cubes
and kept in the freezer
2 tbsp **NoMU Vanilla Paste**

Prepare the potatoes and set aside to keep warm.

To prepare the sauce place the fish stock in a saucepan with the white wine and bring to a gentle simmer and reduce by half. Add the cream and again reduce the liquid by half. Remove the cold butter from the freezer and slowly add a cube of cold butter into the sauce while whisking continuously. Remove the sauce from the heat and stir in the vanilla paste. Keep warm and set aside.

Season the fish with NoMU Hooked, salt and pepper. Heat a non-stick frying pan and add some olive oil and the butter, when the butter is foaming place the fish in the pan. Cook the fish on each side for 3-4 minutes on a high heat, reducing the heat if the fish browns too quickly. Add a squeeze of lemon juice at the end and remove the fish from the pan so that it does not overcook.

Just before serving the fish, warm up the sauce and with a hand held blender, froth up the vanilla sauce until it is completely foamy.

To assemble place some pomme puree on a warm plate and place the fish on top. Arrange the grapes around the plate and generously spoon over the delicious vanilla foam. Garnish with some chervil. Serves 4.

WINE SUGGESTIONS: *Bouchard Finlayson Blanc De Mer 2007 (Viognier, Sauv Blanc, Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Chardonnay)*

Viognier leads with dried peaches and apricots on a buttery backbone contributed by the Chardonnay. Riesling keeps the mouth feeling rich and rounded and the Sauv Blanc adds a touch of freshness. Born next to the ocean, cooled by the sea breeze, this wine is an excellent companion to laughing, singing, drinking.... and of course seafood.

chicory tarte tatin

500 g ready made puff pastry
6 halves of chicory
60 g unsalted butter
A dash of olive oil
A grinding of **NoMU One for All**
100 ml caster sugar
5 tsp **NoMU Vanilla Extract**
1 cup of mascarpone cheese
Sprigs of thyme for garnish

Preheat the oven to 200°C

Place the sugar, water and Vanilla Extract in a saucepan and allow to simmer until thick and syrupy.

Heat the butter and olive oil in a frying pan and gently sauté the chicory until they soften slightly. Season the chicory with a grinding of One for All.

Very lightly flour and roll out a sheet of puff pastry. Using a large cookie cutter or small saucer, cut circles from the puff pastry about 10cm in diameter. Lightly butter a large 6-muffin tray. Pour 2 tbsp of the vanilla syrup into the bottom of the muffin moulds. Place the chicory sides upside down into the syrup. Cover the chicory halves with the puff pastry circles, carefully tucking the pastry all the way down the sides of the chicory. Make sure the puff pastry is nice and snug around each side of chicory!

Bake in the oven for 20 minutes. When the pastry has risen and is golden brown, remove the muffin tray from the oven and allow to stand for 2 minutes. Using a spoon simply lift the tart tatin out of their moulds and onto individual plates. Serve with a dollop of mascarpone and garnish with a sprig of thyme. Serves 6.

WINE SUGGESTIONS: *Solms Lekker Wijn Rose 2005*
Rhône style with an oak matured dry nose. A blend of Mourvèdre, Viognier and Grenache Noir. Pink gold colour with spiced peach and apricot flavours, this is a sensational wine, regarded by many as our finest rose.



vanilla cupcakes



180 g unsalted butter
225 g caster sugar
4 free range eggs
1 tsp **NoMU Vanilla Extract**
225 g self raising flour
1 tsp baking powder
A pinch of **NoMU Just Salt**

for the icing

150 g icing sugar
1-2 tbsp warm water
1 tsp **NoMU Vanilla Extract**

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line muffin trays with 16 cupcake holders.

Place the butter and sugar in a mixing bowl and beat until creamy and smooth. With the vanilla add the eggs one at a time into the mixture. If the eggs start to curdle then add some flour to the mixture in between the addition of eggs. Add the flour and baking powder with a pinch of salt and mix thoroughly.

Spoon the mixture into the cupcake holders, only filling until halfway and not all the way to the top of the cases.

Bake for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown.

Remove the cupcakes from the oven and allow to cool on a wire rack before icing.

For the icing simply sift the icing sugar into a bowl and add a little water and vanilla while whisking vigorously. Whisk the icing until completely smooth. Use the icing immediately after making it as with standing it will become very hard. Simply spread the icing onto the top of the cupcakes and garnish with a strawberry or berry of your choice!

TIP: Add lemon or orange zest to your icing for an alternative kick!

vanilla risotto with maple roasted apple

for the apples

3 pink lady apples, cored and cut in half
100 g unsalted butter
100 g brown sugar for sprinkling
60 ml maple syrup
2 tsp **NoMU Sweet Rub**
120 ml brandy
100 g roughly chopped pecan nuts

for the risotto

100 g butter
250 g Arborio rice
600 ml milk
250 ml pouring cream
1 tbsp **NoMU Vanilla Paste**
Zest of 1 orange
80 g brown sugar
½ cup mascarpone cheese
(see recipe mailer # 8 for the general risotto method)

Preheat the oven to 180°C

Place the apples in a greased baking dish, cut side up. Sprinkle the Sweet Rub and brown sugar over the apples and dot each apple with a blob of butter. Drizzle over the brandy and maple syrup. Roast in the oven till the tops of the apples are nicely caramelised but still hold their shape, for about 1 hour.

For the risotto, mix together the milk, cream, orange zest, sugar and vanilla paste in a saucepan and bring to a gentle simmer. In another heavy based saucepan add the butter and then the rice. Cook the rice in the butter until the rice becomes translucent at the tips. Slowly, one ladle at a time, add the vanilla milk mixture. Following the general risotto method, this should take about 20 minutes.

When the apples are ready, toss the pecan nuts through the juice at the bottom of the dish. Once the pecan nuts are completely coated, using a fork, remove them from the baking dish and set aside to cool and then roughly chop.

Just as the rice is tender and creamy, serve in warmed bowls with an apple half, some pecan nuts and a dollop of mascarpone. Finally drizzle over the sugared sauce left in the apple baking dish. Yum! Serves 6.



Supplied courtesy of NoMU to March 2007 issue of Food & Home Magazine.

mini custard tarts



1 portion of sweet short crust pastry
(see recipe mailer # 1)
4 cups cream
1 tbsp **NoMU Vanilla Extract**
8 egg yolks
½ cup caster sugar
Icing sugar for dusting

Preheat the oven to 180°C

Roll out the pastry on a lightly floured cold surface until 3mm in thickness. Line the pastry into 6cm greased mini cake tins. Line the pastry with baking paper and fill with dried beans or rice. Blind bake in the oven for 10 minutes, remove the baking paper and bake for a further 5-10 minutes until the pastry is golden brown. Remove the pastry from the oven and allow to cool.

Reduce the oven temperature to 140°C

Heat the cream in a saucepan but do not bring to a boil. Remove the cream from the heat and set aside.

Whisk the egg yolks until pale and creamy, add the vanilla and sugar and whisk until combined. **DON'T OVER WHISK AS YOU DO NOT WANT ANY BUBBLES IN YOUR MIXTURE!**

Slowly pour the warm cream into the egg mixture, whisking slowly but continuously. Pour the mixture back into the saucepan and stir with a wooden spoon over a very gentle heat until the mixture is thick enough to coat the back of the spoon.

Place the tart tins in a deep baking tray and fill up with hot water till half way up the tart tins. Pour the custard into the tarts and bake in the oven for 30 minutes. They must be firm in the middle but with a slight bounce. Remove the tarts from the oven and allow to cool before placing them in the fridge until completely cold. Just before serving dust with icing sugar. Makes 8 tarts.

mille-feuille

Beautifully elegant, easy to prepare and always sure to impress.

200 g ready-made puff pastry, thawed
 1 portion crème patisserie (see recipe mailer # 20)
 200 g punnet of raspberries or berries of your choice
 60 g caster sugar
 Water
 2 tsp **NoMU Vanilla Paste**
 Icing sugar for dusting

Preheat the oven to 180°C

Roll out the puff pastry on a lightly floured cold surface to a 2mm thickness. Using a very sharp knife cut the pastry into 12 rectangular shapes about 5cm in length and 3cm wide. With a fork prick the centre of the pastry to prevent it from rising. Place the pastry on baking paper on an oven tray and place more baking paper on top of the pastry with another baking tray on top. (Again this helps prevent the pastry from rising). Bake the pastry in the oven for 20-25 minutes. You will have beautiful thin golden sheets of pastry. Carefully remove the sheets from the baking tray and allow to cool on a wire rack.

For the vanilla syrup simply place the sugar in a saucepan with enough water to cover and simmer until thick and slightly golden. Remove from the heat and stir in the vanilla paste.

To assemble the dessert lay a sheet of pastry on an elegant plate. Place quenelles or spoons of crème patisserie at each end of the pastry, with a quenelle in the centre. Fill the gaps on the pastry with a row of 2 raspberries each. Carefully top the raspberries and crème patisserie with another layer of pastry. On the top layer place a row of 2 raspberries on each end of the pastry with a row in the middle. Filling the gaps with quenelles of crème patisserie.

Just before serving dust the mille-feuille with icing sugar and drizzle over the vanilla syrup. Serves 6.

WINE SUGGESTIONS:

Bouchard Finlayson Galpin Peak 2006 - A delicious harmony of sweet raspberry, fruit and soft balanced perfumed tannins, with a lingering finish. A great wine from a great estate.



back to basics



semifreddo

Meaning 'half frozen' in Italian, this light and creamy dessert is unlike ice cream in that it requires no churning and is really easy to make at home. You can be adventurous with flavours as the base of the recipe always stays the same.

semifreddo base

3 free range large eggs
 2 free range large egg yolks
 2 tbsps **NoMU Vanilla Paste**
 1 cup caster sugar
 1³/₄ cups cream

In a glass or metallic bowl place the eggs, egg yolks, vanilla paste and sugar. Place the bowl over a gentle simmer of water and whisk the mixture until well combined. This cooks the eggs, so whisk for a few minutes or until the eggs go pale in colour. Once this has been achieved place the mixture in an electric mixer and whip until completely white, thick and doubled in size. It's at this stage that you can add additional flavours. Gently fold them through the aerated egg mixture and set aside. (You do not want to squash all the air that you have just created)

Whip the cream until soft peak stage and gently fold the egg mixture into the cream until combined. Again be careful not to squash out all of the aeration! Pour the mixture into a container or mould of your choice. If you are using a mould remember to line it with plastic wrap to make it easier to remove.

Place in the freezer covered with tin foil for at least 6 hours before serving. Semifreddo is great scooped into cones or sliced and served with fruit. Serves 8.

our favourite flavours:

NoMU Choc Chunks & Crushed Amaretti Biscuits

Choose your most elegant glasses for this irresistible combination. Simply crush 100g of Amaretti biscuits in a blender until you have a bread crumb like mixture. Combine with 100g of Choc Chunks. Serve with a spoon of chocolate ganache on the side!

Crushed Fruit - Raspberries, Blackberries or Strawberries

Most fruit will go really well with semifreddo. For added excitement serve with some berry coulis! A really nice idea is to serve individual glasses. Line glasses with baking paper and leave an overlap and stick down with sticky-tape. Pour the semifreddo almost to the top and place in the freezer. Just before serving remove the paper!

Toasted Hazelnuts & Choc Ganache

Warm up a frying pan and toast the hazelnuts until they gain some colour, being careful not to burn the nuts. Place them on a dry dish cloth and use another dish cloth on top to roll the nuts with your hands and remove the skins. (For the ganache please see recipe mailer # 12). Fold the nuts through the egg mixture. Place the semifreddo mixture into the terrine or mould of your choice and simply drizzle through the ganache before placing in the freezer.



contributor of the month

Chef Nicky Gibbs of Soulsa Restaurant in Johannesburg has provided the wine pairing suggestions for this month's mailer. She has worked in some of the top restaurants around the world, cooking for the rich and famous - including rock stars like The Rolling Stones and Paul McCartney! Next month we'll be giving away baking hampers to 3 of our subscribers, containing NoMU Vanilla Extract and Paste, NoMU Cocoa, NoMU Chocolate Chunks, NoMU Sweet Rub and Donna Hay's "Modern Classics Book 2"! Visit www.nomu.co.za for more details.