

Liquorice wheels

From the sweeties.net wiki

Liquorice wheels are a sweet you eat by unrolling. A long, flat strip of black liquorice is coiled tightly into a wheel around a little sweet in the middle, and the joy is in unwinding it.

What they are

A liquorice wheel, usually sold as a liquorice Catherine wheel, is a long strip of black liquorice wrapped around a jelly button, a small round jelly sweet coated in coloured hundreds and thousands. Barratt's version has been described by one retailer as a black liquorice strip wrapped around a jelly spog, another name for the jelly button.

Why Catherine wheels?

The sweet takes its name from the Catherine wheel firework, a spiral that spins round when it is lit. The firework in turn is named after Saint Catherine of Alexandria, who, according to Christian tradition, was condemned to death on a breaking wheel, which fell to pieces when she touched it. The coiled liquorice looks just like the firework's spiral.

What liquorice is made of

Black liquorice sweets are made from liquorice extract, sugar and a binder. The base is usually starch or flour, gum arabic, gelatine or a mix of these, and extra ingredients can include flavouring, beeswax for shine and molasses. The mixture is heated, shaped and then dried. Some liquorice sweets use anise oil instead of, or as well as, liquorice root extract, because the two taste so similar.

Because many liquorice sweets use wheat flour and some use gelatine, they are not always suitable for people avoiding gluten, or for vegetarians. Always check the ingredients and allergy information on the pack.

A word on eating a lot of liquorice

Real liquorice contains glycyrrhizin, a natural sweetener more than 50 times sweeter than sugar. Eating 50 grams or more of liquorice sweets a day for as little as two weeks may raise blood pressure a little, and very large amounts over time can be dangerous. See [liquorice and blood pressure](#).

For other liquorice sweets, see [Liquorice Allsorts](#) and [Pontefract cakes](#). We sell soft liquorice twists in our pick and mix.

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