

How are aniseed balls made?

From the sweeties.net wiki

Aniseed balls are hard, round sweets, shiny and dark reddish brown, about 13 mm across and flavoured with aniseed oil. They are sold in the UK, Ireland, Malta, South Africa, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, and they last a long time in the mouth: see [aniseed balls](#)

A sweet with a seed inside

Aniseed balls are a kind of comfit, a sweet made by coating a small centre in sugar. In the centre of the ball there is normally a whole rapeseed, which the layers of sugar are built up around, although sugar crystals and other centres are sometimes used instead.

How they are made

Like other comfits, aniseed balls are made by panning, the same family of methods that coats sugared almonds: see [what is sugar panning?](#) This is how hard panning works:

1. **Load the pan.** The seeds go into a rotating pan, a drum that keeps them tumbling over one another.
2. **Add syrup.** Sugar syrup is added a little at a time. In hard panning the syrup is made saturated, so that it crystallises on the centres as it dries. One trade guide adds syrup at 10 to 15 per cent of the weight of the centres each time.
3. **Dry and repeat.** Each coat dries and hardens before the next goes on. Each layer is extremely thin, as little as 10 to 14 micrometres, so it takes a great many to build a ball.
4. **Colour and flavour.** The colour is built up in the final few coats. Aniseed balls are flavoured with aniseed oil, which gives them their strong taste.
5. **Polish.** Panned sweets are finished to a shine: see [glazing agents explained](#)

Why they last so long

Because an aniseed ball is built from many thin, hard layers, it dissolves slowly and steadily from the outside in. That steadiness once had a wartime use. In 1939, British limpet mines for underwater sabotage used an aniseed ball as a timer, placed between the striker and the detonator. Each ball had the same shape and dissolved in water in about 35 minutes, giving the saboteur time to get away.

The French cousin

In Burgundy, the Anis de Flavigny is made in a similar way, but starts with a single anise seed. Over 15 days, the seed is coated with layer after layer of invert sugar syrup. The sweets were first made by

Benedictine monks at the abbey of Flavigny, and the one maker left there, Maison Troubat, says it follows a recipe in use since 1591. Hundreds and thousands are built up around a single sugar crystal in much the same way: see [how are hundreds and thousands made?](#)

Aniseed, not liquorice

Aniseed and liquorice taste alike, but they come from different plants: see [is aniseed the same as liquorice?](#)

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