

ANISE / (שומך ר) / Anís

"Soft on the tongue but wise for the belly, it soothes the winds and adds clarity to the breath. A common herb with uncommon use."

Scent Profile: Sweet, warm, licorice-like

Medieval Context: Native to the eastern Mediterranean and widely grown in al-Andalus, anise was a staple in both culinary and medicinal traditions. Jewish physicians used it in decoctions and syrups to ease digestion, calm flatulence, and reduce phlegm. It appeared in both the kitchens of urban Jewish households and in the pharmacological texts of the time. Anise seeds were often ground and added to breads, cakes, and pastries (like *biscochos de anís*) typical of Sephardic cuisine. It also played a role in flavoring beverages and in the preparation of liqueurs used during festive meals. Cross-cultural influence meant that anise was also featured in Muslim and Christian recipes,

Symbolic Association: Medicinal knowledge

Maimonides (1138-1204) writes that anise stimulates the appetite and aids those with cold stomachs or weak digestion. It was commonly prescribed for ailments involving phlegm or bloating. In his *Medical Aphorisms*, Maimonides notes: "Anise helps dissolve thick substances and aids the stomach; it clears the voice and settles the air in the belly."