

FENNEL

Botanical Name:

Foeniculum vulgare

Common Names:

Florence fennel, large fennel, sweet fennel, wild fennel, finocchio, carosella

Parts used:

Root, seed

Active Components:

The essential oil of fennel contains terpenoid anethole, which is said to inhibit spasms in smooth muscles, as for example, in the gastrointestinal tract.

Looks like:

Fennel is a highly aromatic, biennial or perennial plant that grows 2 m in height. It has a long, carrot shaped root with long leaves that are dissected into numerous filiform segments. It flowers in yellow from July to October and its fruit consists of two joined carpels with dry seed.

**Where it's grown:**

Fennel is native to southern Europe, especially to the Mediterranean region and also southwestern Asia. Nowadays however, it grows openly all over Europe, North America and much of Australia and Asia.

History:

Fennel appears in Greek Mythology, in the legend of Prometheus, who apparently used the plant stalk to steal fire from the gods. In 3rd century B.C. Hippocrates mentions fennel in reference to treating infant colic and some four centuries later Dioscorides refers to it as an appetite suppressant and recommends the fennel seeds to nursing mothers to stimulate milk production. In the Middle Ages, fennel was thought to repel evil forces and also to treat everything from stomach upset to jaundice and blindness.

Use:

Fennel is commonly used as a spice in many culinary traditions around the world. Some recipes require dried fennel seeds, often ground, which are extremely aromatic but other dishes employ fresh or dried fennel leaves.

Fennel tea has been used as a soothing eye wash and a remedy for flatulence, stomach acid, cramps and colic, and is also believed to be beneficial for snake and insect bites. Fennel has also been used to relieve indigestion and treat respiratory congestion.

Some studies suggest that it may promote menstruation in women and also increase milk production in lactating women. Another application is to chew the fennel seeds as a breath freshener.