

What is salt?

Salt (sodium chloride) is a chemical made up of two components. When positively charged electrons of a soft metal called sodium combine with negatively charged electrons of a gas known as chlorine, they form an ionic bond. This bond is one of the strongest chemical structures there is. Even dissolving the salt in water doesn't affect the magnetic force of the electrons.

Sea Salt

Sea salt is responsible for most of the world's salt products. Scientists believe that dry salt deposits were formed when oceans and inland seas evaporated, leaving their sea salt behind. Today's sea salt products are distilled from existing salt water and can contain high levels of beneficial minerals.

Salt has been an important seasoning for many centuries and fulfills three major functions in cooking: it seasons and preserves food in addition to providing nutrients necessary for the body's fluid balance. Salt has been taxed by governments, trading in commerce, offered to the gods and given as part of a salary.

Pink Sea Salt

It's the iron oxide, the famous Hawaiian "Red Clay" that makes this salt pink. Actually more of a burnt sienna color, this large crystal salt adds depth and complexity to savory dishes with its earthiness.

Black Sea Salt

Black Sea Salt ("Black Sea" Sea Salt) is a deeply fragrant salt that comes from The Black Sea and is produced in Turkey. It is also known as Sanchal and is used in many dishes from South Asia. Black Sea Salt is really a blend of minerals characterized by a strong sulfur odor. It is commonly used in snack foods in North India. This Sea Salt has a stronger flavor than lighter Sea Salt and is used as a flavoring agent along with its role as flavor enhancer.

Smoked Sea Salt

Our naturally Smoked Sea Salt is an exciting new addition to our line of unique and hard-to-find products. It is smoked over wood and nut shells for 1 week, then sun-dried. Available in fine and coarse grades, our Smoked Sea Salt will help you create variations of recipes you already prepare, or it can inspire you to develop new kitchen ideas. Use it on sliced, fresh tomatoes or cucumbers, smoked salmon, rubs, or just put a small amount in a spot on the plate for the diner to use at his/her liking

Types of salt

Some types of salt have risen to gourmet status, along with a corresponding price tag. Processing methods and location of origin figure into pricing. Certain types of salt are better for some cooking or preserving methods.

Most common salt is mined from salt deposits left by salt lakes around the world which have dried up over the past millennia as the earth's surface has changed. Sea salt is distilled from the ocean, a more expensive process, resulting in a heftier price. Here are the most common types of salt:

Table salt: This is the common salt normally found on every table. It is a fine-ground, refined rock salt with some additives to keep it free-flowing. Smaller particles mean more particles per measure and more surface area than coarser grinds; thus, use about half the amount if you're substituting for coarse salt.

Coarse salt: Coarse refers to the grind. The jagged edges and large crystals make this a good choice for sprinkling on pretzels or corn on the cob because the edges tend to cling and the salt does not readily melt.

Iodized salt: Salt which has iodine (sodium iodide) added. Iodine is a mineral necessary to the body to prevent hypothyroidism and some countries actually require iodine added by law. For those who live in areas away from oceans, iodized salt is an easy way to get this necessary nutrient into the diet. Surprisingly, iodized salt contains a small amount of sugar (usually indicated as dextrose in the ingredients listing), without which the salt would turn yellow due to oxidation of the iodine.

Kosher salt: This is a coarser grind of salt with large, irregular crystals. It contains no additives. Kosher dietary laws strictly require as much blood as possible be removed from meat before cooking. This coarse grind performs the job admirably. It is a favorite with not only Jewish cooks, but also professional and gourmet cooks who prefer its brighter flavor and texture. When substituting for table salt, you may need more to taste since it seems less salty. The size and shape of the crystals cannot permeate the food as easily as fine grades. Coarse pickling salt can be substituted.

Celtic salt: This is the expensive type. It is harvested via a 2,000 year-old method of solar evaporation from the waters of the Celtic Sea marshes in Brittany, France. Its flavor is described as mellow with a salty, yet slightly sweet taste. Even more expensive and rare is *fleur de sel*, from the salt marshes in Guérande, which is said to form only when the wind blows from the east.

Dairy salt: See pickling salt. It's used to pull moisture from cheeses to cure them.

Rock salt: Less refined and grayish in color, this is the chunky crystal salt used in ice cream machines. This type is generally not used as an edible flavoring mixed into foods, but in cooking methods such as to bake potatoes or to encrust or embed meat, seafood or poultry for baking. Rock salt makes an impressive bed for oysters on the half shell. When using rock salt for cooking, be sure it is food-grade. Some rock salt sold for ice cream machines is not suitable for cooking.

Pickling salt: This fine-grained salt has no additives and is generally used in brines to pickle foods. Unlike table salt, the lack of additives will help keep the pickling liquid from clouding.

Sea salt: Distilled from sea waters, this form can be fine or coarsely ground. This is a less expensive version of Celtic salt. Some consider sea salt nutritionally better than rock salt because it naturally contains trace minerals, but the difference is too minute to note. It does, however, have a stronger and more interesting flavor.

Seasoned salt: Single or multiple herbs and spices are added to salt to make garlic salt, onion salt, and other mixes. If you are watching your salt intake, you're better off using the unsalted powdered or dried herbs and spices and controlling the salt as a separate ingredient. The main ingredient in seasoned salt is, after all, salt.

Popcorn salt: This super-fine grind (think of the texture of confectioners' sugar) of salt is generally colored yellowish-orange and is used on popcorn for both color and flavoring.

In the kitchen

Salt is a natural preservative which inhibits the growth of molds and bacteria. It literally pulls the life-sustaining moisture from those harmful bodies, making them unable to grow or reproduce. When used as a condiment or ingredient, it brightens food flavors and facilitates a balance between sweetness and acidity by decreasing the sourness of acid and increasing the sweetness of sugar.

You'll find some recipes call for a specific type or grind of salt beyond ordinary table salt. In some cases, it won't matter if you use table salt, but in others, it can make or break the dish. Your best bet is to follow the recommendation of the recipe author to achieve the desired result.

It may seem strange to think of salt being used as a fat-free method of cooking, but it works. Encase **meat** in a crust of salt and the salt draws out and absorbs the fat, while sealing in moisture and flavor, very much like old classic dishes using **clay**. The salt casing also reduces cooking time anywhere from one-third to one-half.

How much salt do you need? Here are some general guidelines:

- 1 teaspoon per quart for soups and sauces
- 2 teaspoons per pound for boneless raw meat.
- 1 teaspoon per 4 cups flour for dough.
- 1 teaspoon per two cups liquid for cooked cereal.
- 1 teaspoon per 3 cups water for boiled vegetables