



Types of Salt: Himalayan vs Kosher vs Regular vs Sea Salt

Salt is arguably one of the world's most important cooking ingredients. Without it, many meals would taste bland and unappealing. However, not all salt is created equal. There are many varieties to choose from. These include table salt, Himalayan pink salt, kosher salt, sea salt and Celtic salt, just to name a few. Not only do they differ in taste and texture, but also in mineral and sodium content.



What Is Salt?

Salt is a crystalline mineral made of two elements, sodium (Na) and chlorine (Cl). Sodium and chlorine are essential for your body, as they help your brain and nerves send electrical impulses. Most of the world's salt is harvested from salt mines or by evaporating seawater and other mineral-rich waters. Salt has various purposes, the most common being to flavor foods. Salt is also used as a food preservative, as bacteria have trouble growing in a salt-rich environment. The reason that salt is often deemed unhealthy in large amounts is that it can raise blood pressure.

Studies suggest that lowering salt intake can reduce blood pressure by up to 5.4 mmHg. However, several meta-analyses have shown that both low-sodium (<3 g/day) and high-sodium (>5 g/day) diets are linked with increased cardiovascular events and death. The vast majority of sodium in the Western diet comes from processed foods. If you eat mostly whole, unprocessed foods then you don't need to worry about adding some salt to your meals.



Refined Salt (Regular Table Salt)

The most common salt is regular table salt. This salt is usually highly refined — meaning that it's heavily ground, with most of its impurities and trace minerals removed. The problem with heavily ground salt is that it can clump together. For this reason, various substances — called anti-caking agents — are added so that it flows freely. Food-grade table salt is almost pure sodium chloride — 97% or higher — but in many countries, it also contains added iodine.

The addition of iodine to table salt is the result of a successful public health preventative measure against iodine deficiency, which is common in many parts of the world. Iodine deficiency is a leading cause of hypothyroidism, intellectual disability and various other health problems. Therefore, if you choose not to eat regular iodine-enriched table salt, make sure you're eating other foods that are high in iodine, such as fish, dairy, eggs and seaweed.



Sea Salt

Sea salt is made by evaporating seawater. Like table salt, it is mostly just sodium chloride. However, depending on its source and how it was processed, it usually contains various trace minerals like potassium, iron and zinc. The darker the sea salt, the higher its concentration of impurities and trace nutrients. However, due to ocean pollution, sea salt can also harbor trace amounts of heavy metals like lead.

Sea salt also contains microplastics — the microscopic remains of plastic waste. The health implications of

microplastics in food are still unclear, but some researchers believe that health risks are low at current levels. Unlike regular refined salt, sea salt is often coarse, as it's less ground. If you sprinkle it on your food after cooking, it may have a different mouthfeel and cause a more potent flavor burst than refined salt. The trace minerals and impurities found in sea salt can also affect its taste — but this varies greatly between brands.

Himalayan Pink Salt

Himalayan salt is mined in Pakistan. It comes from the Khewra Salt Mine, the second largest salt mine in the world. Himalayan salt often contains trace amounts of iron oxide (rust), which gives it a pink color. It also has small amounts of calcium, iron, potassium and magnesium, making it slightly lower in sodium than regular table salt. Many people prefer the flavor of Himalayan salt over other types. However, the main difference is simply the color, which can make any dish visually appealing.

Kosher Salt

Kosher salt has a large grain size that makes it suitable for the koshering process. Traditional Jewish law requires blood to be extracted from meat before it is eaten. Because kosher salt has a flaky, coarse structure, it is particularly efficient at extracting blood. The main difference between regular salt and kosher salt is the structure of the



flakes. Chefs find that kosher salt — due to its large flake size — is easier to pick up with your fingers and spread over food. Kosher salt will have a different texture and flavor burst, but if you allow the salt to dissolve in the food, there really isn't any difference compared to regular table salt. However, kosher salt is less likely to contain additives like anti-caking agents and iodine. Yet, keep in mind that a teaspoon of kosher salt weighs far less than a teaspoon of regular salt. Don't substitute one for the other at a 1:1 ratio or your food may end up too salty or too bland.

Differences in Taste

Foodies and chefs primarily choose their salt based on taste, texture, color and convenience. Impurities — including trace minerals — can affect both the color and taste of the salt. The size of the grain also affects how the salty flavor hits your tongue. Salt with a larger grain size can have a stronger flavor and last longer on your tongue. However, if you allow the salt to dissolve in your dish, there shouldn't be any major taste difference between plain refined salt and the other gourmet salts. If you like to use your fingers to sprinkle salt on food, dry salts with a larger grain size are much easier to handle.

Vocabulary:

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Unappealing: poco atractivo

Harvested: extraído

Deemed: considerado

Ground: moler

Caking: aglutinamiento

Brands: marcas/firmas comerciales

Flaky: escamoso