

Which Salt?

- *Table salt* is a fine-grained salt that often contains an anti-caking ingredient to keep it free-flowing. It is available iodized or non-iodized. This type of salt is mainly used in cooking and at the table.
- *Kosher salt* contains no additives and has a coarse grain. Gourmet cooks often prefer the texture and flavor of kosher salt in cooking. It is frequently used in the preparation of kosher meats.
- *Sea salt* comes in either fine or coarse grain and has a slightly different taste caused by other minerals it contains. It is produced by evaporation of sea water and is often named after the originating sea—Black Sea, French, or Hawaiian sea salt. Salt connoisseurs prefer sea salt for table use because they claim it has a more subtle flavor.
- *Pickling salt* is a fine-grained salt used for brines to make pickles and sauerkraut. It contains no iodine or anti-caking ingredients, which would make the brine cloudy.
- *Specialty salts*, such as popcorn salt, pretzel salt, or margarita salt, are salts of various grain sizes and textures used for special purposes. Often, other types of salt, such as table salt or kosher salt can be substituted for these specialty salts with similar results.
- *Seasoned salt* is a salt blend that includes herbs and other seasoning ingredients. Because of the added flavor ingredients, this may allow for use of less seasoned salt as compared to other types of salt. This may be referred to as “light” salt for that reason.
- *Salt substitutes*, also referred to as light salts, typically replace all or some of the sodium with another mineral, such as potassium or magnesium.
- *Rock salt* is a non-food salt of a larger crystal size. Because salt lowers the freezing point of ice, it causes ice to melt. For this reason, rock salt is frequently used as a de-icing agent for sidewalks and driveways. It also is used in combination with ice to make ice cream in certain types of home ice cream freezers. As the ice melts, it absorbs heat from the ice cream, helping it to freeze more quickly. *Foodinsight.org*

Sea salt has boomed in popularity across the country. Many chefs say they prefer it over table salt for its coarse, crunchy texture and stronger flavor. Manufacturers are using it in potato chips and other snacks because it’s “all natural,” and not processed like table salt. And some health-conscious consumers choose it because it contains minerals like magnesium. Each of these characteristics may set sea salt apart from table salt, but in one other very important respect there’s absolutely no difference between the two: sodium content.

Sea salt and sodium content

Both sea salt and table salt contain about 40 percent sodium. Unfortunately, many consumers haven’t gotten that message. In an April 2011 survey by the American Heart Association, 61 percent of respondents said they believed sea salt is a low-sodium alternative to table salt.

What’s the difference?

Sea salt is obtained directly through the evaporation of seawater. It is usually not processed, or undergoes minimal processing, and therefore retains trace levels of minerals like magnesium, potassium, calcium and other nutrients.

Table salt, is mined from salt deposits and then processed to give it a fine texture so it’s easier to mix and use in recipes. Processing strips table salt of any minerals it may have contained, and additives are also usually incorporated to prevent clumping or caking.

While these attributes may make sea salt more attractive from a marketing standpoint, there are no real health advantages of sea salt. The minute amounts of trace minerals found in sea salt are easily obtained from other healthy foods. Sea salt also generally contains less iodine than table salt. Iodine has been added to table salt since the 1920s to prevent the iodine-deficiency disease goiter. The American Heart Association recommends limiting sodium intake to no more than 1,500 milligrams a day, regardless of its source. *American Heart Association*