

The need for salt

Salt has been argued about and demonized for the last 40 years, but salt deficiency can lead to loss of taste, cramps, fatigue, weakness, severe cardio-respiratory distress on exertion and in some cases raised blood pressure.

Salt has forever influenced human existence. Neolithic settlements grew up around salt beds and salt springs; caravans trekked the deserts trading salt, ounce-for-ounce for gold; salt's economic and military significance produced trading partnerships, or armed combat; economies and cultures ranging from the Sahara in West Africa to the Himalayan peaks of Nepal give a glimpse of the salt trading culture of past centuries; Roman soldiers were paid partly in salt, their *salarium*, today's "salary."

The value of salt is evident in such historic events as the building of the Erie Canal, the French Revolution and the drive for India's independence from British colonial rule. Amazingly as recently as 1930, the British imposed Salt Tax made it illegal for Indians to freely collect their own salt from their coastlines, necessitating they buy it back from the British! Ghandi put an end to this with the famous Salt March in that year.

Virtually all traditional cultures used and valued salt, and cultures that lived far from the sea, burned sodium rich marsh grasses adding the ash to their foods.

Salt activates enzymes in the body and provides essential minerals in an easily assimilable form. The most important digestive aid in our food is salt. Salt activates the enzyme, amylase, in saliva which begins the digestion of carbohydrates in the mouth; it activates many digestive enzymes in the gut; salt provides the chloride needed to make hydrochloric acid for the digestion of protein. The glucosides (sugars) in grains are not properly digested without the presence of salt and when denied these natural sugars an insatiable desire for sweets can occur.

Salt is the single element required for the breakdown of plant carbohydrates into usable human food. This is true for grazing animals (salt blocks) as well as humans. It should be used freely, but which salt? Ocean water and our blood have an almost identical mineral mix. When harvested with care, the oceans give us a natural salt with the most exquisite taste and physiologically vital mineral mix. This is the salt of history.

Today, most salt is highly refined, artificial and pales in comparison to real sea salt. Out of the 92 minerals found in the ocean, the industrially refined, commercially available variety retains only two! Salt - like our sugar, flour and vegetable oils - is highly refined; it is the product of a chemical and high-temperature industrial process that removes all the valuable magnesium salts as well as the many trace minerals. In order to keep salt dry (sea salt is quite moist) several harmful additives are added including aluminium compounds; potassium iodide is added in amounts that can be toxic, to replace the naturally occurring iodine salts. This iodide needs stabilizing so dextrose is added which turns the iodized salt purple, requiring a bleaching agent to make it white again!

Sun dried sea salt retains traces of marine life which provide natural or organic forms of iodine which some researchers claim remain in the bodily fluids for many weeks while the inorganic iodides are excreted very quickly.

Unfortunately, many so-called sea salts are industrially processed, so it is important to look for hand harvested sea salt. The best most health promoting salt is extracted by the action of the sun on seawater in clay lined beds. Its light grey colour indicates a high mineral and moisture content thus ensuring minute traces of marine plant life and valuable iodine. It contains about 82% sodium, 14% macro minerals, in particular magnesium and about 80 trace minerals. Unrefined salt mined from ancient sea beds does contain many trace minerals, but it will lack organic iodine from the minute bits of plant life that are preserved in moist Celtic sea salt.

Minerals are absolutely essential in human development from foetal stage right through to maturity, so don't forget babies and children, they too need sea salt.

Unrefined hand harvested sea salt can be obtained from the whole foods organic store in Bowral st

Cheers Victoria