

Mineral Miracle: The salt of the earth was a natural niche for one curious couple.

By Kim Orr | [Entrepreneur Magazine - September 2007](#)

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What: Gourmet sea and bath salt supplier

Who: Naomi Novotny and Mark Zoske of SaltWorks

Where: Woodinville, Washington

When: 2002

Startup costs: \$1,500

It's a good thing Naomi Novotny took up an interest in salts, if not for her own sanity, then for the \$8 million to \$10 million in sales she and fiancé and business partner Mark Zoske expect to earn by year-end.

In 2002, when the pair started SaltWorks, a gourmet sea and bath salt company specializing in all types of natural salts, they quickly proved themselves to be a rarity in the salt supplier industry. Not only did they absorb every detail about the salts they were selling, but they also cared enough to hunt for unique finds.

"We took one product and became the experts in it," says Novotny. "When we bought from a supplier, we worked to know everything from where the water came from to how the salt ended up in a bag and [was] sent to us."

But the real curiosity was how Novotny, 37, and Zoske, 42, managed to take \$1,500 in credit cards and cash and turn it into a million-dollar business. Selling salts started as a hobby, says Novotny, but it didn't take long for the business to explode.

"When we jumped into this, it was perfect timing," she says. And since the two had spent most of their lives in corporate sales and marketing, they knew how to manage costs.

Today, SaltWorks has 12 employees and 24 countries on its list of foreign suppliers. But even with sales doubling each year and continual expansion of its unique line, SaltWorks is still very much about the salt for Novotny and Zoske. "It's funny," says Novotny. "We actually bring our own salt to restaurants."