

SALT

OF THE EARTH

gourmet salts are shaking up recipes



BY 425 STAFF | PHOTOS BY JEFF HOBSON

EVERY SALT HAS A STORY.

The interesting flavors, textures and color of the grains trace back to history, culture and world travel.

Like the Peruvian

Pink Salt harvested in terraced salt flats in the foothills of Peru, its strong flavor and light-pink hue can bring out the best in fish recipes in your kitchen. Or Alaea Hawaiian Sea Salt harvested on the islands and mixed with red clay. Mix the coarse grains with herbs to create a rub that will naturally seal in the juices of meat, like locals have done for hundreds of years during luaus.

These specialty salts and 24 other varieties are by the Artisan Salt Company, a retail division of SaltWorks Inc. in Redmond. SaltWorks was founded in 2002 and imports salts directly from 14 countries. Artisan Salt Company products, as well as other specialty salts from around the world, can be found at Whole Foods Markets and other high-end culinary stores throughout the Eastside.

"People like it, and it's so simple. They see all of these different colors and textures and they're drawn to it immediately. They don't have to think too hard about it," said Naomi Novotny of SaltWorks. "We need salt in our food to make it taste the way we like it to taste. And our bodies also need salt."

Not all salt comes from the sea.

Himalayan Pink Salt is harvested from ancient sea salt deposits found deep in veins in the Himalayan Mountains. It's recognized for its pink color and high mineral content and is growing in popularity among serious cooks and people looking for healthier alternatives to traditional table salt, Novotny said.

Other popular salts are all the French varieties, like Fleur de Sal, a fine gourmet finishing salt. Smoked salts are also in high demand, and are being embraced by the vegan chefs looking to add a bit of "protein" flavor to vegetarian meals, Novotny said. >>

make your own salt rub

FOR SALT RUB

- 2 tablespoons Alaea Hawaiian Sea Salt (Coarse)
- 2 teaspoons crushed allspice berries
- 3 tablespoons coarse ground black peppercorns
- 3 tablespoons coarse ground white peppercorns
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

SALT RUB - PREPARATION

Combine rub ingredients in a bowl and stir to form a paste. Pat beef dry and sprinkle with Alaea Hawaiian Sea Salt and pepper. Spread rub all over and roast beef as desired. Flavors about 8 pounds of beef. (Courtesy of the Artisan Salt Company)

EDAMAME A LA SEL

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound frozen soybeans
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 2 teaspoons Cyprus Flake Salt

DIRECTIONS: Add one teaspoon of Cyprus Flake Salt to water and bring to low boil. Place edamame in steam basket over boiling water. Steam until tender, about five to seven minutes. Transfer to large bowl and toss with sesame oil and remaining teaspoon of Cyprus Flake salt. Serve warm. Garnish with more salt if desired. (Courtesy of the Artisan Salt Company)





ALAEA. Sea salt mixed with purified Alae clay from Hawaii is used to season and preserve. The clay adds nutrients to the salt and a unique burst of bright red color to dishes.

HIWA KAI. Black lava sea salt from Hawaii is mixed with charcoal to create sparkly shine and color with any meal.

FRENCH NOIRMOUTIER. An ultra-fine sea salt that looks like fairy dust, melts quickly and is economically priced.

MURRAY RIVER. A pink flaky salt from Australia by the Artisan Salt Company. Prized for its apricot hue, it melts quickly and is a good finishing salt.

SALISH. A fine, organic sea salt blended with natural smoke flavor makes any meal taste like it's fresh off the grill.

CYPRUS BLACK. Mediterranean sea salt and activated charcoal make this a nice finishing salt that adds drama to any meal.

CYPRUS FLAKE. A favorite among professional chefs, the unique pyramid-shaped crystals from the Mediterranean have a fresh ocean flavor and light crunch.

MURRAY RIVER. So pretty it's featured twice.

TUSCAN SALT. By Coastal Goods, this is a medium grind sea salt blended with dried Italian herbs, tomato flecks, lemon peel and Rosemary oil.

GOURMET SALTS LIKE THESE ARE AVAILABLE AT WHOLE FOODS MARKET OR OTHER SPECIALTY FOOD RETAILERS