

Long Term Salt Storage Methods, Shelf Life and Best Types of Salt to Store

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In one of my favorite survival movies, the hero is stranded on an island. He eventually learns to trap animals to eat but is desperate for flavor. He has an epiphany when some sweat gets into his mouth: *"I taste so good!"* he exclaims. After that, he starts carrying around a little bottle to gather his sweat for flavoring his food.

Hopefully none of us end up having to use sweat as a salt alternative in an emergency scenario. Luckily, long-term salt storage is very easy.

How, Why and When to Store Salt: The Short Answer

- Store approximately 10lbs of salt per person for a year's supply.
- This should meet salt needs for food/nutrition as well as the other uses.
- Choose pure salt without iodine or additives because it has the best shelf life and can be used in many ways.
- Put salt in sealed bags to protect it from moisture and put those into buckets to protect against physical damage.

Why Store Salt

Before globalization, salt was a valuable commodity. Roman soldiers got paid in salt (hence the phrase "worth their salt"). There were wars fought over salt throughout history and revolutions started because of salt.

So why is salt so important? Here are some of the key reasons why you should have a stockpile of salt on hand.(1, 2, 3)

Nutrition

Most commercial food has so much added salt that we forget how essential it is. Salt contains sodium, which our body needs for transmitting nerve impulses, contracting and relaxing muscle fibers, and maintaining fluid balance in the body. If we didn't get enough sodium, our hearts would literally stop beating.

Meat does have a lot of natural sodium in it. However, plant foods don't have as much sodium. You'd have to eat about 47 stalks of celery (a high-sodium vegetable) per day to get enough sodium.

Food Preservation

Salt is also incredibly valuable because it can be used for preserving food. You can read more about that in this post about DIY lactose fermentation instructions and salt curing meat.

Medicine

Because salt draws moisture out of cells, it can kill many bacteria and fungi cells. Thus, salt is a good natural remedy for oral thrush and throat infections. It's also used to make saline solution for cleaning wounds, sinuses, and eyes.

Cheap Bartering Item

If a large-scale disaster were to hit, you could use salt to trade for other items you need. Because salt is so cheap and easy to afford, it is one of the best bartering items to stockpile

How Much Salt to Store?



This might be a bit too much salt for your stockpile!

The Institute of Medicine recommends that healthy adults consume at least 1,500mg (1.5g) of sodium but no more than 2,300mg (2.3g) per day. (4) An ounce of pure salt contains approximately 10,990mg of sodium.

Based on these numbers, **for nutrition, a healthy adult needs 50-76oz (3.125-4.75lbs) of salt per year.**

However, salt has many other uses than just seasoning food. If you want to use salt for food preservation, natural remedies or bartering, you should stockpile much more salt than this.

When you factor in the other uses for salt, you likely need around 10lbs of salt per person, per year.

Does Salt Go Bad?

Salt does not go bad and can literally last forever. However, many types of salt we buy contain additives like iodine or anti-clumping agents. Over time, these can degrade. The salt will still be good to eat but may lose its iodine or develop an off-color.

Salt can also get wet, turn into a rock-hard clump, or pick-up odors from the surrounding environment. Even then, the salt is not “bad” and is still safe to consume.

Drying Out Wet Salt

If your salt stockpile gets wet from high humidity, you can dry it out. Simply spread it on a baking tray and put it in the oven at a low temperature. Stir occasionally to break up any clumps. Make sure the temperature stays below 200F because the salt might discolor at temperatures higher than this.

Breaking Up Salt Clumps

If you don't store salt in a completely air-tight container, it can absorb moisture from the air and start to form hard clumps. Small clumps can be broken up in a high-speed blender.

Larger, harder clumps will have to be broken up by hand. Get out a (clean) hammer and start banging it into pieces. Once you get the salt into smaller pieces, you can put the salt in a metal colander with something underneath. Push on the clumps with a bowl or spoon. As the salt breaks apart, the crystals will fall through the colander.

Best Type of Salt for Long Term Storage

Pickling salt, canning salt, or kosher salt without iodine or additives are the best types of salt for long term storage because they won't go bad. Their purity also means they can be used in multiple ways. Sea salt is also a good choice but tends to be more expensive.

Below is an overview of the various types of salt and why you might want to stockpile them.

Table Salt & Iodized Salt

The most common type of salt are table salt and iodized salt. These usually contain 97-99% sodium chloride with some anti-caking agents. Iodized salt has iodine in addition to the anti-caking agents.

Iodine is an important nutrient which might be difficult to get on an emergency food diet. However, it's better to use non-iodized salt for things like DIY pickling and salt-water sinus rinses.

Over time, the iodine can turn the salt yellowish in color. It's still safe to eat but it might make the salt less valuable as a bartering item. If you are worried about getting enough iodine, consider stockpiling seaweed or a supplement.

- **Contains:** Iodine, anti-clumping agents
- **Use for:** Cooking
- **Shelf Life:** Around 5 years

Kosher Salt

Kosher salt is made up of large crystals of salt. Traditionally, kosher salt does not contain any iodine or additives. However, some brands of kosher salt do have additives so you have to read the label.

Because it is pure, kosher salt is good for everything from cooking to preserving food.

The only real drawback is that the large crystals don't dissolve as easily, so it isn't ideal for baking. Larger crystals also mean that there's less salt per teaspoon. When following recipes based on table salt, you will need to adjust the amount of kosher salt (1tsp of table salt usually equals 1 ¼ tsp of coarse kosher salt).

- **Contains:** Usually just pure salt
- **Use for:** Cooking, food preservation, medicinally
- **Shelf Life:** Indefinite

Sea Salt

Sea salt is made by evaporating sea water. Or, in the case of Real Salt from Utah, from an underground salt deposit left by an ancient sea. Depending on the source of the sea water, the resulting salt will contain various natural minerals.

Because of these minerals, sea salt is considered to be healthier than other types of salt. However, it's worth noting that these minerals are only present in very tiny amounts. You shouldn't rely on sea salt as a source of nutrition.

Many sea salts brands do add iodine to their products. These salts are not recommended for food preservation or medicinal uses. Like with

table salt, iodized sea salt will eventually start to yellow. Non-iodized sea salt will last indefinitely and can be used in many ways.

- **Other names:** Celtic salt, Fleur De Sel, sel gris, flake salt
 - **Contains:** Trace minerals
 - **Use for:** Cooking, food preservation, medicinally
 - **Shelf Life:** Indefinite
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Himalayan Pink Salt

Like with sea salt, Himalayan pink salt is generally considered to be “healthier” because it contains natural minerals. But these minerals are only in trace amounts, so aren’t going to make a difference to overall health.

Because Himalayan sea salt is so expensive, I wouldn’t recommend it for long-term storage. It makes more sense to simply stockpile some multivitamin and mineral supplements.

- **Contains:** Trace minerals
 - **Use for:** Cooking, food preservation, medicinally
 - **Shelf Life:** Indefinite
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Canning and Pickling Salt

Canning and pickling salts contain no iodine, anti-caking agents, or other additives. The main feature of these salts is their tiny grain size,

which allows them to dissolve faster in liquids. They are refined so they also don't have any trace minerals.

- **Contains:** Trace minerals
- **Use for:** Cooking, food preservation, medicinally
- **Shelf Life:** Indefinite

How to Store Salt Long-Term

It's important that you keep salt in a dry place so it doesn't absorb moisture from the air. You'll also want to keep it away from strong-smelling items so it doesn't pick up the odors from around it. If you are storing iodized salt, you'll also want to take care to keep the salt away from heat because heat will degrade iodine.

For disaster prepping, the main thing you need to think about is keeping the salt safe from physical damage. You don't want a roof beam to smash against your salt and cause it to spill all over, nor do you want nasty flood water to seep into your salt containers.

Below are some of the best methods for storing salt so it stays good and safe to use for decades.

Air-Tight Plastic Containers

Simply put the salt into an air-tight container. You can keep the salt in its original packaging and put this into the container. Or, to save space, dump the salt out of its packaging into the container.

Buckets

Buckets are great for storing large amounts of salt. You can dump salt directly into the bucket, leave it in its original packaging, or repackage

it in bags. The great thing about buckets for salt storage is that they are mostly indestructible. A roof beam could fall down on your salt bucket and it might survive.

Unfortunately, though, buckets usually are not completely waterproof. If you live somewhere prone to flooding, you might need to take extra steps to keep water from getting to your salt stockpile – such as sealing the salt in Mylar bags first.

Alternatively, you can seal around the bucket lid with silicon sealant. Obviously, the seal will be broken when you open the bucket. A simple solution is to use gamma lids instead. Even after sealing around the bucket/lid area, you'll still be able to open the lid. The O-ring on the gamma lid is very waterproof.

Vacuum Sealing

You can vacuum seal salt to keep moisture out of it. This will help prevent clumping. However, some air will eventually still seep through the bags.

Because vacuum sealer bags aren't exactly cheap, I wouldn't bother using them for salt. You can just put the salt in double zip bags instead: press as much air out of the bags as you can, close them, roll down the top of the bags, and tape the edges with packing tape.

Mylar Bags

Mylar is a metal-like material which won't let any air through. Not only does this protect the salt from moisture, but also keeps it safe against floods.

The bags could literally be floating around in flood water and the salt inside would still be safe to eat. Mylar bags can still be punctured (such

as if a roof beam falls on them), so a lot of people take the extra step of putting Mylar bags into buckets.

If you aren't in a flood zone, it might be overkill to store salt in Mylar bags; regular zip bags will work just as well.

*Note that you should not use oxygen absorbers when storing salt in Mylar bags. Read more about Mylar food storage and oxygen absorbers here.

Mason Jars

Mason jars with two-piece lids provide a very tight seal. Moisture won't be able to get into the jar, so your salt will stay dry and clump-free. The downside is that Mason jars can break. If you live in areas prone to earthquakes or other natural disasters, it might be better to store salt in plastic containers buckets.

***Do Not Store Salt in Metal Containers**

Never put salt in metal containers for long-term storage. Salt will corrode metal containers, causing rust and chemicals to get into your salt.

How I Store Salt

I personally use this method for long-term salt storage:

1. Buy bags of salt (not boxes)
2. Put the bags of salt into sturdy zip bags
3. Close the bags and seal the edge with plastic packing tape
4. Put the bags into a bucket with a gamma-seal lid
5. Use silicon sealant to waterproof the bucket lid

This method should keep my salt safe through most disasters but is still cheap and easy. If I lived in a hurricane area though, I would probably use Mylar instead of zip baggies.

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