Culture and Salt

Salt-glazed Pottery

Salt-glazed pottery is made by a dramatic process of glazing a stoneware clay using salt at temperatures of over 1,200°C to create a sodium silicate glaze.

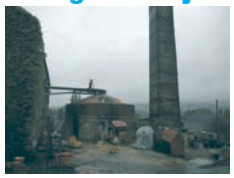
Creigiau Mawr Pottery, Carreglefn, Anglesey

www.creigiaumawrpottery.com
Richard Daniels sources clays and slips from his local area and uses local sea salt to get the varied effects that makes each firing a new experience.

John Hudson Pottery, West Yorkshire

www.hudsonclaypotter.co.uk
John Hudson's pots are found nationwide in museums, period houses as well as for television period pieces and as working examples in the kitchen areas of Hampton Court. John makes replica Wakefield Salt Figurines. Dating to c.1560 they were symbolic table pieces that designated those who were 'above' or 'below the salt'. Original examples are to be found at Cardiff Museum.

Errington Reay Bardon Mill, Hexham



www.erringtonreay.co.uk
The only surviving licensed salt glazed pottery in the UK delivers unique salt glazed planters and garden pots to garden centres across the country.

Bridge Pottery, Cheriton, Gower

www.mickisaltglaze.co.uk
Micki Schloessingk is one of very few potters making contemporary wood-fired salt-glazed pots. She imports both her clay and salt from the Guérande, France.

Heritage Foods

Salt has a bad press these days but it has a vital role to play in preserving food without using other chemicals or artificial preservatives. Those who use good quality salt are also more likely to cook using fresh ingredients.

Weobley Salt Marsh Lamb

www.gowersaltmarshlamb.co.uk/
On the north shore of the Gower peninsula large salt marshes cover 4000 acres of land within the Burry Estuary. The sheep that graze on this tidal marsh gain their main nourishment from this unique pasture, which consists of saltmarsh grasses, samphire, sorrel, sea lavender and thrift.

Historic Food, Wreay Farm, Shap, Cumbria

www.historicfood.com
Specialist tuition in a range of historic kitchen activities includes courses in preserving, salting and smoking.

Bio-diversity of Salinas and Salt Marshes

The saltmarsh landscape is wild and flat and characterised by a specialised community of salt-loving plants known as halophytes. Amongst these is 'glasswort' or 'marsh samphire' *(Salicornia)* that may be found at lower tidal levels and in particularly muddy regions. This plant is used for culinary purposes as a 'poor-mans-asparagus', although it is actually quite a delicacy and on the continent is now being cultivated in some salinas as part of market diversification.

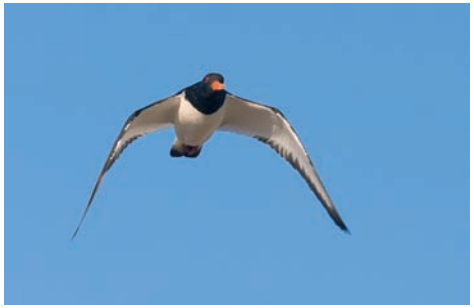
Other plants include sea lavender and the cord grass *Spartina anglica*, a tall and vigorous plant that originated as a result of a genetic mutation from an infertile hybrid between the native European Spartina and an American Spartina species.

The vegetation gives some shelter to migratory water birds such as curlew and redshank, which feed on small snails known as Hydrobia, ragworms and crustacea within the mud and pools between the plants.

The Solway salt marshes are grazed by sheep and cattle throughout the year, this keeps the sward height very low, much like a playing field. This management is vital for the wintering flocks of wildfowl (ducks, geese and swans) which over-winter on the Solway in their thousands. Pink footed geese, whooper swans and barnacle geese share the grazing in the marsh with wigeon, teal and pintail ducks.

In summer the marshes are home to breeding terns, waders such as redshank and oystercatcher and colonies of gulls. The biodiversity of salt tolerant plants is based on their salt tolerance with certain species toward the intertidal zone and other, less salt tolerant plants, at the landward edge.

Samphire was named for the patron saint of fishermen, being a corruption of the French 'Saint Pierre', growing in rocky salt-sprayed regions or in coastal marshes. Sometimes called sea asparagus or sea pickle.



Oystercatchers are striking, black and white wading birds on the foreshore and marshlands with long bright red bills. Their bill is used to break into shellfish, and each individual inherits a particular technique from its parents. Despite the name, oystercatchers are not known to eat oysters and in fact favour mussels.

Photographs by Richard Daniels, Brian Irving, Ivan Day and Andrew Fielding

ECOSAL ATLANTIS