

Mysteries & Superstitions of Salt

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For centuries, salt has been used for protection, purification, and preservation. In Rome and Abyssinia, salt was used as currency. The word *salary* comes from the Latin word *salarium*, which means “salt allowance.” In Greece, the trade of salt for slaves gave us the term “not worth his salt.”

In the Roman Empire during the year 77 A.D., Pliny wrote in *Naturalis Historia*, the antidote for poison was to crush some herbs and a grain of salt. It was recommended this should be taken on a fasting stomach to prevent poisonings for that day. Threats of poisoning were then taken less seriously, “with a grain of salt.”

Among the Romans and Greeks, bread and salt were also associated with offerings to the gods, deemed acceptable because of its purity and rarity. In Ancient Egypt, salt was used in the mummification process. Bags of salt and Natron (a salt found in Egypt) were placed inside of the body during the 40 days of mummification.

In the Middle Ages, salt was associated with witches and witchcraft. It was considered a tool to prevent witchcraft and for destroying a witch. A common belief is that salted food can't be hexed. For witches, salt is sacred. It represents the earth element, as salt is mined from the earth. It also represents the water element, as salt can be evaporated from seawater. Some witches mark their circles with it. Making a circle of salt will protect what or whomever it encircles. It is magically considered a great defense against evil.

Salt is also used in baptismal water, water that's used in exorcism, and Holy Water. Salted water can be used as a substitute for blood in witchcraft rituals. It attracts luck and money while driving away demons and witches. Salt symbolically represents life because it's essential to life in humans, animals, and plants. However, an overabundance of it causes death. Too much salt in a field will destroy its fertility.

Vampires also have a history with salt. In the Philippines, a vampire by the name Aswang Mannanggal is a strange vampire. She separates her body below the ribs or waist and flies with dangling innards as she hunts. The



only way to kill the Aswang Mannanggal is to find her hidden lower half and rub salt all over its skin. The salt destroys this lower half, and when the upper half returns she won't be able to reassemble her body and will die.

In Greece, more specifically the isles of Crete and Rhodes, the Catacano vampire can be trapped behind a line of saltwater. Then decapitating it will kill it.

The Estrie will steal and eat bread and salt from the human who harmed it to heal any wounds it might receive in a fight. The French Gaukemaes is a vampire witch. She attacks and drains the victim's energy at night. She won't be able to attack you in your sleep if you place some salt under your pillow.

Most cultures toss a pinch of salt over their left shoulder when they spill salt to ward off any evil that may be lurking behind them, a tradition believed to originate from Leonardo da Vinci's painting of *The Last Supper*. Judas Iscariot had spilled the salt, foreshadowing evil and bad luck.

However, in Latin American cultures, it's believed that spilling salt will bring a severe case of bad luck and the only thing that can stop the evil or bad luck is a cleaning from a Curandero. The term for this belief is the Spanish word *Salado* (salted or salty), which means you have bad luck. ♦