

A Letter from the Publisher

Salt, unlike most seasonings, is more noticeable by its absence than its presence. For this week's cover story TIME has virtually upended the saltcellar in order to leave nothing absent from its report on the less than salubrious effects of salt. Yet, despite the warnings linking consumption of salt and hypertension, a number of TIME staff members who worked on the cover story find that well-intentioned dictates of the mind do not always govern the whims of the palate.

S. Chang, a Tokyo correspondent, takes the strictures against salt with the proverbial grain. Salt, he says, "is one of the loveliest things ever discovered by humanity." Obviously a man of moderation, he cites Confucius as suggesting that too little salt is as bad as too much. Says Chang, who likes to salt his tempura: "In the use of salt there is nothing wrong as long as intelligence is exercised." Medicine Writer Claudia Wallis, who wrote the story, first became familiar with the formula and properties of sodium chloride in Chemistry 15 when she was a pre-med freshman at Yale. While writing the cover story, she suddenly contracted what she called a salt fit. "I developed a craving for pretzels, and despite my feelings of guilt,

I succumbed to the urge and almost overdosed on a huge package." Result: a large thirst and even more guilt.

While researching the story, Adrienne Jucius, who read through stacks of scientific treatises on sodium chloride, evolved what she calls a "salt consciousness," and adds, "I have not refilled the salt shaker since working on the story." Patricia Delaney, who reported on the cover from the Midwest, notes that her favorite Chinese restaurant is cutting back on salt, but the chef's inspired substitution of splashes of bourbon for soy sauce has proved "delectable." At home, Boston's Sue Wymelenberg banned salt from her table. "The taste of breads, pasta, cookies, omelets and fish was unmarred," she says. "But I didn't reckon on new potatoes and fresh peas—it took three zestless mouthfuls to bring out the shaker again."



Writer Wallis with salty temptation

Senior Editor Timothy Foote, who edited the story and therefore "sits above the salt," is noted as a trencherman of more than fair enthusiasm. Since he worked on the cover story, his gastronomic ardor has cooled. Says he: "Now I suspect every innocent slice of Brie that comes my way."

John A. Meyers

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Cover: Illustration by Iku Akiyama



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MARCH 15, 1982

\$1.50

TIME

KISSINGER: PART 3
Facing Brezhnev
And Mao



Salt: A New Villain?



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