TABLE TALK

TASTE OF PLACE

JONATHAN RICHARDS CRAFTS SMALL-BATCH SEA SALT THAT CAPTURES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER OF PALM BEACH

BY CARYN ANTONINI

WILLIAM SOMERO, COLORBOOK FILMS

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AT HIS STOREFRONT ON NORTH DIXIE HIGHWAY IN WEST PALM BEACH, JONATHAN RICHARDS SELLS HIS HANDCRAFTED SALT, NOW AVAILABLE IN A RANGE OF FLAVORS. HE ALSO HOSTS TASTINGS AND DINNERS WITH LOCAL CHEFS, OFFERING THE COMMUNITY A CHANCE TO CONNECT OVER ARTISAN INGREDIENTS.

MILES PEARSON

From its exterior, Palm Beach Salt Company almost begs to be discovered. With its matte black facade and reflective windows, the building reveals nothing of the craft taking place inside. Immediately intrigued, I arranged a meeting with owner Jonathan Richards.

Entering the cool interior, my eye was drawn to a periodic table on the far wall, the shelves lined with jars of infused salts, and a small dish displaying large, intricately designed flakes. It didn't take long to realize that I had stumbled upon something special.

Richards creates small-batch, artisanal sea salt that tells a story of Palm Beach itself. "Every ocean has different mineral content, different color, and different texture," he says. The salt he hand-harvests from the waters just off the Atlantic coast captures a true taste of place. Just as a fine wine reflects its terroir, sea salt expresses its merroir: the distinctive character imparted by the surrounding waters, shaped by mineral content, salinity, geography, and climate. The result is a taste of Palm Beach in every flake.

Richards launched Palm Beach Salt Company in 2022 with a vision of creating a pure expression of local sea salt to pair with local fare. Having worked as a chef in some of the area's finest restaurants, he understands how a quality finishing salt can elevate a dish. For example, he suggests sprinkling his Local Flake over a fish such as red snapper to achieve flavor harmony, as both the fish and the salt come from the same ecosystem—the merroir effect in action.

PAUL O'MEARA, JUPITER COMPASS

Richards believes this sense of place is meant to be shared and regularly hosts tastings and dinners at his facility, giving local chefs a platform. As he explains, it's a chance for them to "speak their own language" through their culinary creativity. Spend any time with him and it becomes clear that his bigger mission is to cultivate a deeper appreciation for the provenance of local food, and for the community to embrace it.

Beyond flavor, Richards is equally passionate about salt's nutritional profile. There's a misconception, he notes, that "salt is bad for us." He agrees, but only when it comes to processed salts. Unrefined salts retain trace amounts of naturally occurring minerals, such as potassium, magnesium, and calcium. Palm Beach Salt Company's salts naturally contain a higher magnesium content. In a warm Floridian climate, maintaining adequate magnesium is especially important for normal muscle and nerve function, while the mineral also supports cardiovascular health and other essential bodily processes.

For Richards, every harvest is a labor of love. His careful approach ensures that each flake retains its inherent value and reflects where it came from, just as Mother Nature intended. *(palmbeachsaltcompany.com)* ‹‹

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