

SANTA BARBARA

# LIFE & STYLE

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*spring  
it on!*

weekend  
**ESCAPES**  
*close to home*

**HAPPIER &  
healthier**

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# PASS THE SALT

Photographed by Stephanie Plomarity  
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It seems to me that the more our world evolves, the more we seek the time-tested advice from our past. We dust off old books looking for re-discovered wisdom, and we stock our cupboards with ancient grains hoping for a health breakthrough. But before we can correctly pronounce the word ‘quinoa,’ we’ve unavoidably moved on to our next fascination.

Fully aware of this trend, I am going to claim in bold confidence that I have zeroed in on the ultimate ingredient that’s stood the test of time.

While casually walking down State Street one afternoon, I decide to take a second look at “Salt.” Its sign, characterized by various pinks and

an organic-shaped etching of a rocky mountain, happened to particularly catch my eye. I peek over and notice an inviting staircase leading downward and the beginnings of a beautiful retail space at its base. Blame it on an inherent spirit of inquiry but I can’t help but tiptoe myself down to examine.

As it turns out, Salt is an awe-inspiring hidden gem. Offering more than just a fanciful retail space, Salt features two salt caves, a variety of spa treatments, classes, and events that celebrate the healing benefits of the resident pink Himalayan salt, dating back over 250 million years. Adding beauty, health, cleanliness, and flavor to our lives, Salt is Santa Barbara’s own center for apothecary magic—and I want in.



Chava, the manager of Salt, meets me with a warm greeting, and we head to the entrance of the largest Himalayan salt cave in North America. “The largest? In all of North America?” I repeat back to her as if I’ve misheard. She nods with a smile and continues to tell me about the natural wonder. I pull back the curtain and my jaw drops; the cave is what dreams are made of. Completely bedazzled in crystalline pink, the walls, floor and entire ceiling are studded with the jewel-like mineral. I take a timid first step inside, and I bury my toes into a white sand beach of finely-ground Himalayan salt. I peer around the room in fascination; zero-gravity lounge chairs, selective lighting and calming music await in peaceful elegance. Directly above, hundreds of salt stalactites make up the quartz-lined ceiling. The cave effortlessly displays every expression of salt known to the geological world. I am in a trance.

I decidedly ready myself for a treatment and its complimentary cave session when Chava reveals the secret of the caves. Like a crowning jewel of the entire experience, I learn that the air is infused with microparticles of salt that can be absorbed through the skin and deep into the lungs, promoting healing through a process called halotherapy. I soak up every word because the air feels like it’s followed a fresh rain—pristine and calm—lighter than you could imagine. I drink it in. The sensation is inarguably novel.

My heavenly visit to Salt continues with a Himalayan Salt Scrub and Massage. My massage therapist Catherine ushers me to the back, unveiling a secret wing of Salt through a hallway peppered with tranquil candlelight. She points out the Salt Lounge and three available spa rooms. Passing by the lounge, I notice two women chatting quietly and sipping on spa water. They appear to be sharing in the excitement of their upcoming treatments while allowing their bare feet to play in the salty sand crystals.

I’m asked to select one of two divine body scrubs. The added medicinal benefit of the Peppermint and Tea Tree Himalayan calls out to me despite my initial intrigue with the Sweet Almond and Coconut and its obvious decadence. The warm granules of massage salt are placed on my lower back, and I practically melt, forgetting the dilemma completely. She alternates between using the coarse grains as a gentle massage and then with more vigor to exfoliate my skin. This

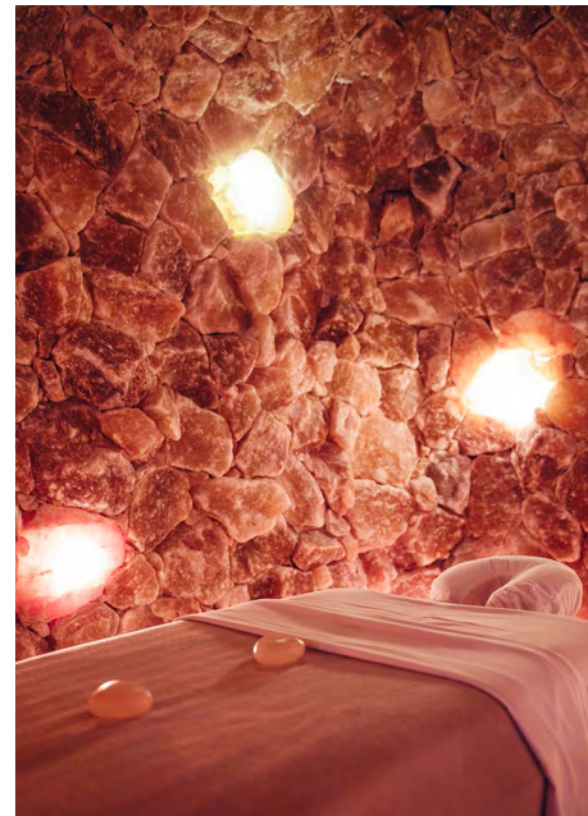
technique, mixed with the aroma of the scrub and the overall quality of the massage, goes far beyond my expectation. Catherine focuses the grit on the areas of my skin crying for extra attention like my hands, elbows and feet. The scrub continues to soften in a refreshingly pure way, not masked with artificial fragrance or unnecessary goo. It’s followed with a deep tissue massage, and the mineralizing duo is perfect: deeply therapeutic, moisturizing yet clean—a combination truly unique to the organic benefits of everyone’s favorite mineral. Flute music dances quietly in the air and the scent of tea tree oil caps off a flawless experience.

With improved posture and a lightened heart, I seemingly glide out of the massage room and settle into a chair in the large salt cave for my 45 minutes of sweet relaxation. It’s deeply meditative—my mind quiets and slips into a state of complete serenity. Picturing the micro-healing benefits of halotherapy swirling around the air and into my cells, perhaps through a process akin to osmosis, causes me to sink even deeper into my zero-gravity chair. The only thought that seems to cross my mind is how I can replicate this type of restorative therapy at home. A visit to the retail section is in order.

The soap bars are the first to catch my eye as I admiringly peruse the products. Each salt brick is simply elegant with a rustic beauty that could adorn a coffee table or bookshelf. Whimsical arrangements of crushed salts, lip balms and mineral drinks show off its versatility. I meander to the back of the boutique where cooking slabs, room sprays and cozy crystal lamps further convince me that every home could use this type of sophisticated, earthy charm.

With my selections in tow, I thank Catherine and Chava for my afternoon of unparalleled revitalization. They’re gracious, allowing their beautiful spirit and dewey skin to glow, which I fully attribute to their daily dose of halotherapy. They invite me back for an upcoming yoga class, and my mind delights simply at the thought.

I intentionally savor the last few breaths of the infused oxygen and leave with nothing less than a soul rejuvenation. It appears as though my newfound appreciation for the multifaceted mineralized gem has secured my place in ancient history. I think I’ll celebrate by decorating my bookshelf with its pink elegance. ✕



## SALT

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