

## Spice of Life: Salt and Pepper Ceremonies

During the Middle Ages, when salt was a valuable commodity, salt would be kept on the table in elaborate metal or glass dishes as a status symbol. Being granted the favor of sharing the salt cellar of the host was seen as a sign of great respect. The social status of a guest was often measured simply by judging the distance at which the person sat from the master's large salt cellar placed near the middle of a long table: the phrases above the salt and below the salt alluded to the former custom of seating persons of higher rank above and those of lower rank below that container. In the more recent past, salt was still very costly and precious. For example, before refrigeration salt was the main ingredient for preserving food.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salt\\_cellar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salt_cellar)

Consider a personal ceremony, event, or life function. Design a salt-and-pepper set for this event. What kind of service does this require – to be treated like treasure? – rugged daily use? - ceremonial?

Design the salt-and-pepper for this event and a context, e.g. box, tray, etc., in or on which the piece exists.

Read from Philip Rawson: Part III Symbolism of Form	
Ceramics as Treasure	p. 64
Life Functions	p. 69
Imitation	p.73
Ceremonial	p. 77



Margaret Bohls

Consider scale, elevation of the foot, edge quality, color, reflectivity, and negative space in response to your event. Remember the implications of continuation/completion and juxtaposed or continuous articulation when considering the forms in relation to your event.

How does your set relate to the hand? Make your sets functional for picking up and holding for use.

Technical issues:

- Make shakers with stoppers that fits and can be removed for filling
- Make objects that sits well on a flat surface or in a holder, holes that allow an appropriate amount of seasoning to be dispensed.

State your personal content.

Create 8 sketches of potential ideas express your concept and that use formal (design) considerations to make these readable to the viewer and visually engaging.

Make 4 salt-and-pepper sets with a context for your occasion.

Technical tips:

- Choose and obtain your stopper before making your shakers. Suggestions are rubber stoppers, plastic stoppers, or cork stoppers.
- If your stopper is round, your fill hole must be round to prevent granular condiments from leaking out around a round stopper.
- If you use a rubber stopper like the one in the image to the right, the wall of your shaker should have a wall thickness that will fit between the stopper edges shown
- You need to inset the bottom hole so the stopper is off the table and the shaker sits on its bottom edge, NOT the stopper.



- The Phoenix stoneware clay shrinks 12%, the Helios porcelain will shrink 13% at cone 10. You need to make your holes big enough in the leatherhard state to shrink 12%-13%, possibly have some glaze in them, and end up a useful size after glaze firing.
- Ream the holes out with a wire or toothpick after glazing. Holes with glaze in them tend to fire closed.
- You need to glaze the interiors of your shakers to keep the clay from absorbing moisture and contributing to the salt getting lumpy.



**Figure 1** Holes flush w/the bottom. Shakers sit on corks and are not stable. Do NOT do this.

**Figure 2** Hole is recessed so there is space for the stopper end above the table plane.

**Resources**

Salt cellars, info on salt history: Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salt\\_cellar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salt_cellar)

Stoppers are available in hobby stores or online.

Many online suppliers including:

- Aftosa ceramic supply: <http://www.aftosa.com/accessories.html>
- National Art Craft: <http://www.nationalartcraft.com/categoryA.asp?gid=12&cid=107>
- AFA library

**Evaluation:**

- Sketches and required research
- stated content evident in the works
- technical skill (S & P are functional in the hand, bottom/foot treatment of S & P appropriately finished and stable, stopper fits well and is removable for filling, shakes the appropriate amount of condiment, forming and finishing craftsmanship – even walls, appropriate weight for size, considered foot finish, glaze application, etc.).
- Aesthetic skills (clarity of decision about type of service and relation to formal elements, context for s & p works aesthetically, design decisions support the concept, surface treatment appropriate to concept)



**Ian Symmons.**  
 “My salt shaker is a hanging nester, the upper section of the shaker shows an eighteenth century eastern European village; the support structure for the salt