

# Proposal to Add a Salt Shaker Emoji to the Unicode Standard

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## 1. Introduction

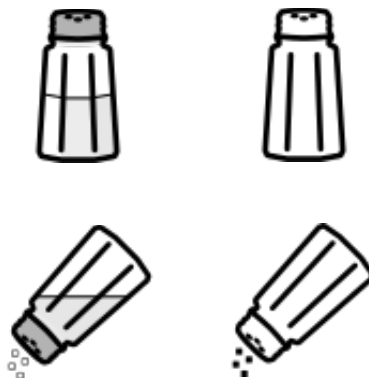
I hereby request the addition of a salt emoji, in particular a salt shaker, to the Unicode Standard. Rationals, glyph examples, character properties as well as discussion of inclusion and exclusion factors are included on the following pages.



As per emoji submission guidelines (<http://www.unicode.org/emoji/selection.html#submission>) this document does not include the character proposal form.

## 2. Glyph and Design

While there are many ways to depict salt besides shakers – open piles, in bowls, in cardboard containers, as rock salt crystals etc. – I believe that a salt shaker representation would be the superior option for end users. Piles, bowls and cardboard boxes could easily be mistaken for sugar or other substances unless the glyphs are somehow labeled with the word “salt”, which is less than ideal for small font sizes. Most people probably wouldn't recognize a stylized chunk of rock salt as being salt and would rather assume it to be some generic rock or rough gemstone.

A salt shaker on the other hand is universally recognized. Even the iconic shape of the object alone is well-known and immediately associated with salt. Therefore I propose a salt shaker emoji rather than a more generic salt. While this presentation is not ideal for every possible circumstance, it is definitely the best option in my opinion. Should the Unicode Consortium not be fond of the shaker regardless, this document should be treated as if it proposed general salt instead. The semantics of the character would remain almost unchanged if the shaker wasn't part of the glyph, albeit it would be far less recognizable.



There are two different designs the salt shaker emoji could potentially be using. It could either stand upright (  ) or be turned around so that salt is being poured out (  ). The turned version is probably more easily recognizable at small sizes. It also feels more dynamic and the action of pouring salt enhances the intended effect of the emoji. Nevertheless I consider the two versions to be glyphic variants and do not propose distinct characters or standardized variation sequences to differentiate them. This should be dealt with at the font level. I would personally prefer the pouring

version as the representative glyph for the official code chart. Vendors can choose to include a large letter S on the cap of the shaker, as is often the case in real life, or a label specifying the contents as salt.

### 3. Character Properties

The preferred name of the character is “SALT SHAKER”. It should be added to the Supplemental Symbols and Pictographs block near other food-related emoji. Properties of the salt shaker emoji should be identical to those of other emoji.

- General Category: Other Symbol (So)
- Canonical Combining Class: 0
- Bidirectional Class: Other Neutral (ON)
- Bidi Mirrored: No

No case-mapping is required. The character does not decompose in any way. It is not whitespace nor a control character. It has no numeric value. It does not make use of emoji modifiers. It has emoji presentation by default. In collation order it should be sorted near other food-related emoji, possibly following HOT PEPPER or FORK AND KNIFE. It should definitely be part of the food category, perhaps in a new “food-salty” or “food-condiment” subcategory.

### 4. Factors for Inclusion

**A. Compatibility:** There are no known legacy character sets containing a salt shaker. Valve's Steam service offers a custom-made salt shaker emoji amongst others. These however are implemented by automatically replacing certain strings of characters with an embedded graphic. The streaming site Twitch also includes similar salt emotes in chat.

**B. Expected Usage Level:** Salt has been used as a condiment and preservative for millennia in all regions of the world<sup>[1]</sup>. It is part of an astonishing number of meals and dishes everywhere as seasoning and often as an integral part of the pickling process<sup>[2][3]</sup>. I expect there to be demand from users to express via emoji that a certain dish contains too little or too much salt for their taste. Furthermore a salt shaker can be combined with existing food emoji to represent salted or otherwise cured variants of said meals, for example a sequence with U+1F952 CUCUMBER to represent pickles or with U+1F37F POPCORN to differentiate salty from sweet popcorn. Salt shaker glyphs can be used on packaging and signage to inform consumers that a certain product contains salt, which may be vital dietary information. If memory serves me right the inclusion of characters such as U+1F95C PEANUTS in Unicode 9.0 had similar motivations.

In addition to its literal use there are also metaphorical meanings associated with salt, which appear to make up the majority of use cases requested by users. The term “salty” or just “salt” is a well-established slang term on the Internet, especially within the online multiplayer video game community, meaning “mad”, “angry” or “upset”, usually due to one's own failure<sup>[4][5]</sup>. According to KnowYourMeme this meaning of the word has been used on the Internet for at least 14 years in some way or form and is still in widespread use today<sup>[6]</sup>. Most if not all online gamers and other English-speaking Internet users should be well aware of this meaning. The ability to represent this concept as a pictograph rather than as words would be consistent with the way all other emoji characters are used. In a more general sense the salt shaker emoji can also be used in conjunction with e.g. U+1F62D LOUDLY CRYING FACE or other similar smileys as an amplifier to describe “salty tears”, or to mean coarseness, roughness and dryness.

I have included several charts supplied by Google Trends showing the frequency of searches for “salt emoji” in comparison to other emoji. It can be seen that interest in the newly added internet slang emoji SELFIE, FACE PALM and ROLLING ON THE FLOOR LAUGHING is comparable to or even far surpassed by salt emoji searches on Google (*Fig. 1-3*). Emoji candidates for Unicode 10.0 such as DUMPLING, FORTUNE COOKIE and ORANGE HEART receive almost consistently less search interest than the salt emoji (*Fig. 4*), even though those have already been tentatively approved and received some social media coverage. On the other hand, the most popular Unicode 9.0 emoji, for example BLACK HEART, SHARK and BUTTERFLY, are considerably more popular than salt (*Fig. 5*). This should come as no surprise, however, and in my opinion this doesn't constitute a fair means of comparison considering the amount of public attention these characters got.

Google search for the term “salt” returns 466 million results, which is more than for pepper (159 million), sugar (380 million), chili (143 million) and herb (138 million). I could not think of any existing emoji foods that are directly comparable to salt, so I tried for rice (394 million), honey (186 million), bread (221 million), egg (295 million), chocolate (290 million), milk (388 million) and potato (141 million) to get some rough idea. None of these surpass search results for salt. Search interest for these foods ranges from 28% to 85% of that of salt.

**C. Image distinctiveness:** A salt shaker is an easily recognizable, very common household object and salt as a substance is known to all cultures and peoples on Earth. There are shakers for other condiments and flavorings whose shapes are often identical to salt shakers. However, the specific design of the salt shaker emoji – especially with colored glyphs as most vendors employ – should make it quite clear that salt rather than pepper is meant. U+1F35A COOKED RICE is occasionally mistaken for a bowl of salt. This is an issue of font design or display size, though, as rice and salt are quite distinct from each other. One possible source of confusion could be the similarity of salt to sugar since both are white, crystalline substances, but sugar is far more commonly encountered in cube shape or in open bowls than in shakers. There are no other Unicode characters that represent a more general or more specific sort of salt.

**D. Completeness:** A salt shaker emoji can be seen as an extension to the large set of already existing foodstuffs emoji. Furthermore it adds to the new set of Internet slang emoji (FACE PALM, ROLLING ON THE FLOOR LAUGHING and SELFIE). It can also be considered to complement characters such as U+1F37D FORK AND KNIFE WITH PLATE and U+1F944 SPOON, all being commonly found on kitchen tables.

**E. Frequently Requested:** A quick Twitter search reveals that users quite frequently bemoan the lack of a salt emoji and use animated GIFs or the literal words “salt emoji” or “insert salt emoji” as a replacement. Included in this document are some screenshots of and hyperlinks to tweets mentioning a salt emoji. These are just a collection of some of the first search results when using the search term “salt emoji” on twitter.com (*Fig. 6*). A quick, informal analysis of tweets posted between 27<sup>th</sup> June and 05<sup>th</sup> July 2016 revealed that the words “salt emoji” are mentioned between 20 and 36 times a day. Almost all of those tweets mention the lack of a salt emoji in some form. It should be noted that while the majority of those tweets doesn't mention a salt *shaker* specifically, this should be the preferred presentation due to the reasons outlined above.

During my research I also found some requests to the makers of the communication app Discord<sup>[7][8]</sup> as well as to Apple, inc.<sup>[9]</sup> to add a salt emoji. However, these didn't seem to be quite as numerous.

## 5. Factors for Exclusion

**F. *Overly Specific:*** Salt is a generic substance. The salt shaker emoji proposed here is meant to be representative of all kinds of salt one could possibly find, even if not all of them always come in shakers. There are countless salt shaker designs on the market and this proposal doesn't favor any of them.

**G. *Open-ended:*** Many herbs and spices come in shakers and are popular, but I see no reason why there should be considerable demand for any of them to be included as emoji characters. The most popular condiments by far besides salt are probably pepper and sugar. I am not aware of any metaphorical meanings of pepper apart from being spicy, which as a concept is already better represented by U+1F336 HOT PEPPER, and causing people to sneeze, which already has an emoji representation in the form of U+1F927 SNEEZING FACE. Sugar shouldn't be needed either since there already exist plenty of characters that can denote literal and metaphorical sweetness. It is however not unlikely that a demand for a pepper shaker or pepper mill emoji could arise in the future.

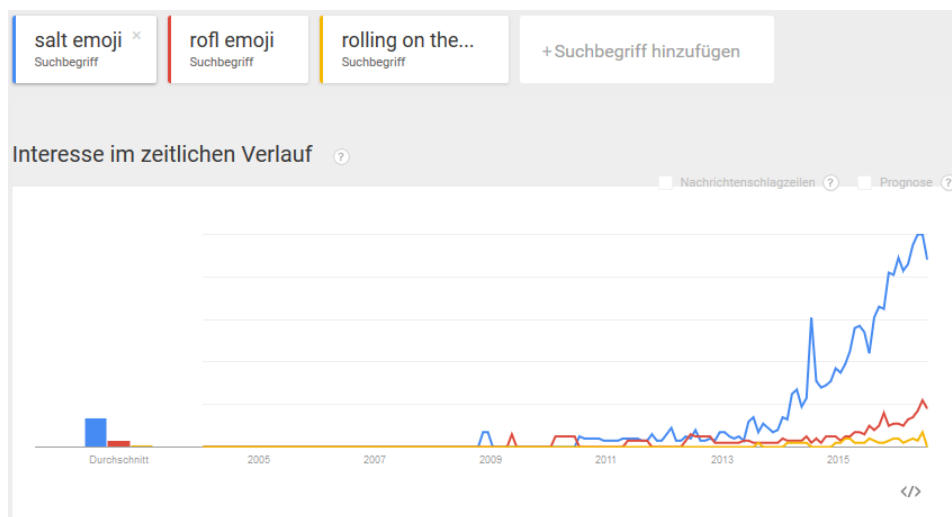
**H. *Already Representable:*** The Alchemical Symbols block contains several symbols for various kinds of salts. None of these are recognizable at all for laymen and thus should not be preferred over a new, pictographic character. The CJK radicals 𩇑 (U+2EE7) and 𩇒 (U+2FC4) as well as some CJK Unified Ideographs bear the meaning of salt. Again these are not suitable for emoji representation. There are some food emoji which are usually prepared with salt such as U+1F35F FRENCH FRIES. However, they most likely don't provoke the concept of salt by themselves. I cannot think of any sensible way that a salt shaker could be represented by conjoining a sequence of existing characters.

**I. *Logos, Brands etc.:*** Salt and the shakers it is stored in are produced by hundreds of companies from all over the world and are not specific to certain brands. Even real-life salt shakers usually don't display branded imagery or company logos. Salt is not a person and not a deity.

**J. *Transient:*** Given the immense popularity of salt and salted food all over the world I expect the salt shaker emoji to stay in use even in the far future. Its metaphorical meaning also appears to be of long-term nature. If the information supplied by KnowYourMeme is accurate, then the term “salty” has been part of Internet jargon for as long as the term “selfie”, which received an emoji in June 2016. Online gaming communities are thriving and ever growing and so usage of the salt shaker emoji is quite likely to increase with time for many years. And even if the metaphorical meaning of salt should one day be considered obsolete – which is the case for every other part of popular culture as well – the literal meaning of salt as a food condiment and preservative will forever remain.



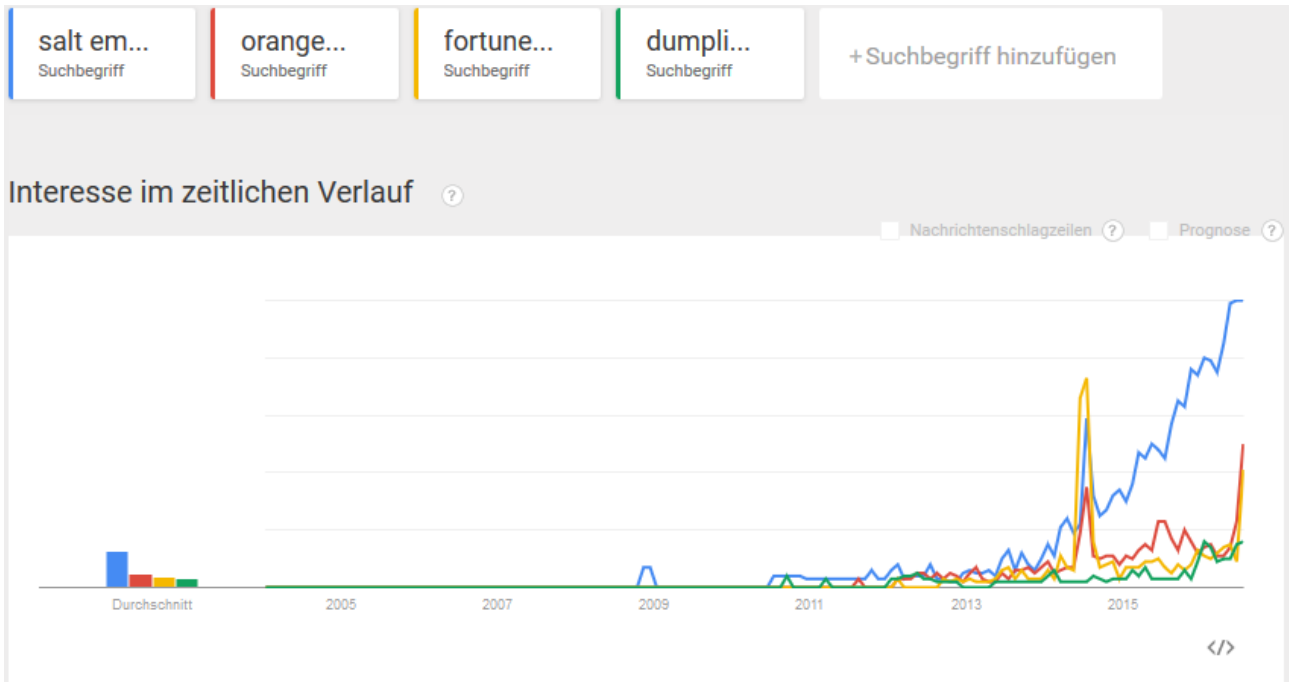
**Fig. 1:** Salt emoji (blue) vs. facepalm emoji (red)



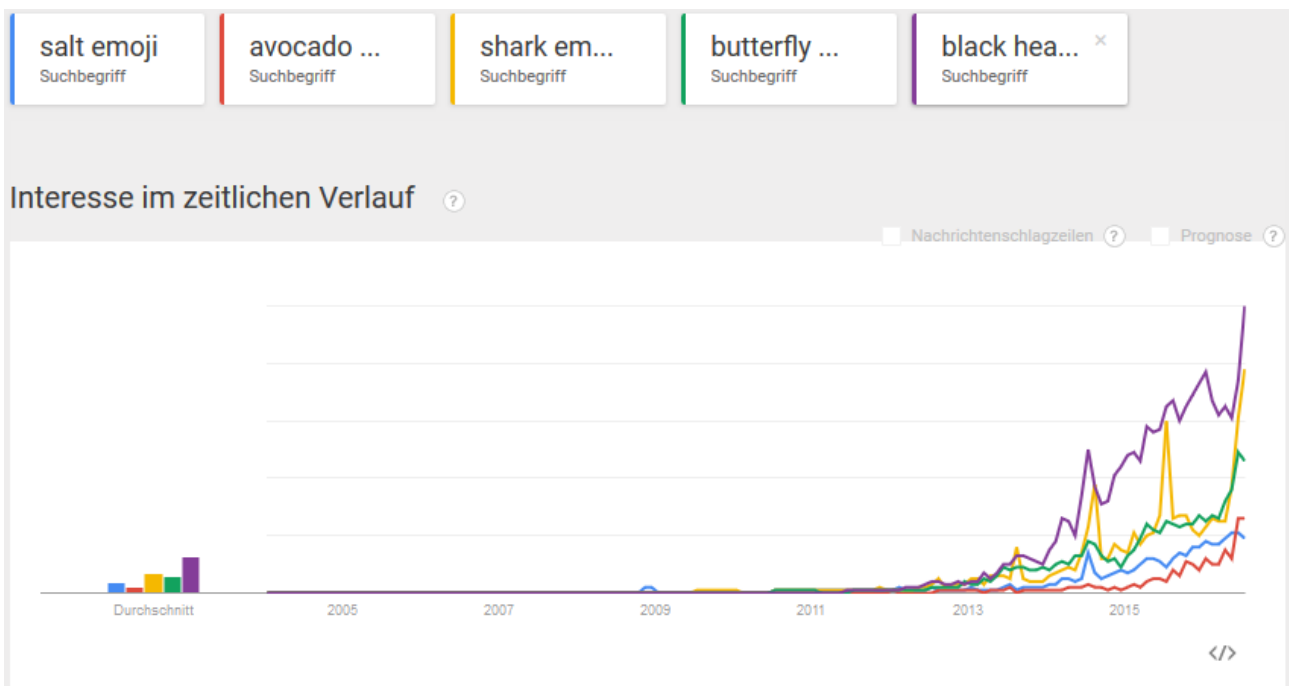
**Fig. 2:** Salt emoji (blue) vs. rolling on the floor laughing emoji (red, orange)



**Fig. 3:** Salt emoji (blue) vs. selfie emoji (red)



**Fig. 4:** Salt emoji (blue) vs. orange heart emoji (red), fortune cookie emoji (orange), dumpling emoji (green)



**Fig. 5:** Salt emoji (blue) vs. avocado emoji (red), shark emoji (orange), butterfly emoji (green), black heart emoji (purple)

**Wes** @Wes\_McGehee  
\*insert salt emoji\*

**Harouna Mutombo** @HMutombo22  
@94donnyy \*inserts salt emoji\*

**Eve** @schweizer\_eve  
Okay let's all post a boomerang of sparklers on same !!

**Dalton//Alli** @daltonsfowers  
Goodnight King of Salts. (I think we need a salt emoji) @DaltonRapattoni

**Sensational ++** @sammywavvy  
@\_love\_shy\_ @el\_ahhh @booz\_house we need the salt emoji ASAP

**Nathan** @n\_kozel  
i still dont understand why theres no salt shaker emoji

**Rex** @Peggerton  
How is there still no salt shaker emoji?

**Sensational ++** @sammywavvy  
@\_love\_shy\_ where's the salt emoji

**Blake Blair** @Blake\_B25  
Is there a salt emoji?

**ct** @cole\_giglio  
@586God I wish there was a salt emoji

**Caucasian Confucius™** @586God · 14 Std.  
@cole\_giglio too bad there isn't 🙄

Fig. 6: Collection of recent tweets mentioning the salt emoji. Hyperlinks and more examples attached below.

## References

- [1] Wikipedia: “Salt”, section “History” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salt#History>)
- [2] Wikipedia: “List of pickled foods” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_pickled\\_foods](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_pickled_foods))
- [3] Wikipedia: “Pickling” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pickling>)
- [4] Urban Dictionary: “salty” (<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=salty>)
- [5] Online Etymology Dictionary: “salty” (<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=salty>)
- [6] KnowYourMeme: “Salty” (<http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/salty>)
- [7] <https://feedback.discordapp.com/forums/326712-discord-dream-land/suggestions/13369047-salt-emoji>
- [8] [https://www.reddit.com/r/discordapp/comments/4ia9uq/we\\_need\\_a\\_salt\\_emoji/](https://www.reddit.com/r/discordapp/comments/4ia9uq/we_need_a_salt_emoji/)
- [9] <https://discussions.apple.com/thread/7584245?start=0&tstart=0>

Tweets mentioning salt emoji

- [https://twitter.com/Wes\\_McGehee/status/750212661787430912](https://twitter.com/Wes_McGehee/status/750212661787430912)
- <https://twitter.com/njoey54/status/750197494408093696>
- <https://twitter.com/SamValone11/status/750098936665346050>
- <https://twitter.com/daltonflowers/status/750190381925445632>
- <https://twitter.com/Peggerton/status/750052478800924672>
- <https://twitter.com/HMutombo22/status/750055711841787904>
- <https://twitter.com/sammywavyy/status/750164668426182656>
- <https://twitter.com/KingJHip/status/750056947487911936>
- [https://twitter.com/Blake\\_B25/status/750189817502236672](https://twitter.com/Blake_B25/status/750189817502236672)
- [https://twitter.com/n\\_kozel/status/750083175687258112](https://twitter.com/n_kozel/status/750083175687258112)
- [https://twitter.com/cole\\_giglio/status/750124906319343616](https://twitter.com/cole_giglio/status/750124906319343616)
- <https://twitter.com/sammywavyy/status/750195969359114240>

## License

The four sample images and the sample font included in this proposal were created by me and me alone. I hereby declare that the Unicode Consortium and its members are granted the right to use, edit and redistribute these contents in any way they want without restrictions.

Copies of the sample images and font are available at the following address:  
[http://www.mediafire.com/download/49yvauq2gg0jvio/salt\\_shaker\\_emoji.zip](http://www.mediafire.com/download/49yvauq2gg0jvio/salt_shaker_emoji.zip)

Screenshots were taken from Google Trends (<https://www.google.com/trends/>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com>).