

# SALT OF THE EARTH

*Company creates tranquility yoga pods made of hand-carved Himalayan salt*

BY JULIE GEDEON



**HIMALAYAN SALT** has always possessed a special quality because of the pink diamond-like crystals formed by enormous pressure over millions of years. In ancient times, it was regarded as “the king’s salt,” unavailable to ordinary people. Now everyone can feel royally pampered in one of Circle Wellness Studios’ tranquility pods, in which Himalayan salt bricks line the walls.

Numerous homeowners already have a candleholder or lamp fashioned out of Himalayan salt. Many people believe the salt – especially when warmed – purifies air and helps

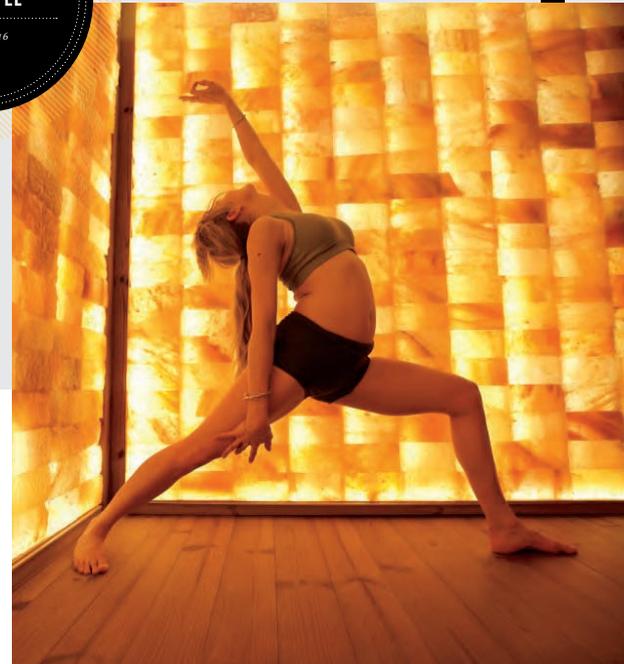
eliminate the positive ions generated by TVs, computers and other electronic devices that fill most homes. Walking into a therapeutic escape pod is definitely the next big luxurious step to unplugging for a while.

“The walls of hand-carved bricks and radiant heating create a beautiful, warm and relaxing space to meditate, do stretches or practices warm or hot yoga,” says Paul Hennessey, the company’s founder. “The salt walls function as insulation and give off not only a unique glow but also act as a thermal mass, increasing the

efficiency of the heating system. When you’re inside the space, there is radiant heat coming from all surfaces: the ceiling, floor and walls.”

Unlike a regular sauna, the radiant heat is more comfortable on the lungs and skin, especially with a ventilation system regularly introducing fresh air. Maintenance is minimal with the salt sterilizing the air and bacteria unable to survive on the bricks. The thermally modified wood on the inside of the structure doesn’t absorb moisture. “It doesn’t expand or contract,” Hennessey adds.

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Hennessey came up with the idea after visiting a Korean-style sauna in Toronto. The sauna had radiant heating built into its floors but also such wall elements as jade, amethyst crystals or a mud containing a high mineral content, depending on the benefits sought. “I later visited others in Korea where family and friends often spend an entire afternoon relaxing together in this space,” he says.

The salt came into play after Hennessey visited Salzheilstollen, a salt mine chamber transformed into a spa retreat by holistic

practitioners in southern Germany. “The experience resonated with me,” he says.

He called upon his experience in carpentry, installing swimming pools and hot tubs, and as a paramedic to come up with the tranquility pod.

The pod can be heated to 70 degrees Celsius. “We typically use it at 50 degrees Celsius to raise the body’s core temperature for a more therapeutic effect, enabling detoxification through sweating,” Hennessey says.

Fully automated controls adjust the temperature, ventilation, sound, lighting and

timing. “The heated surfaces need only about the equivalent power of a hairdryer with the salt’s insulating properties, so the pod can always be kept warm using very little electricity,” Hennessey says.

Each pod can be constructed within a household room or as a standalone outdoor unit. To protect the outdoor version from the elements, a charred wood technique developed in Japan is used to create an attractive water-proof shell out of Cyprus wood that is also resistant to insects and UV rays. ☛