

SANIBEL SALTWORKS, LLC

A capstone project turned coastal business



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Sanibel Saltworks, LLC: The Business Plan

Executive Summary

Sanibel Saltworks, LLC (DBA: Sanibel Saltworks, L25000493290) is a small-batch artisan sea salt company dedicated to producing premium, hand-harvested salt sourced from the clean, mineral-rich waters of the Gulf of America on or near Sanibel Island. The company's mission is to craft high-quality, naturally evaporated sea salt using sustainable, low-impact methods while honoring the ecological sensitivity of the region. Sanibel Saltworks aims to serve local markets and direct-to-consumer online shoppers seeking authentic coastal products with a strong sense of place.

The decision to form Sanibel Saltworks as a limited liability company (LLC) rather than a corporation reflects the need for flexibility and protection as the business grows. An LLC structure provides a liability shield, meaning members are not personally liable for the obligations of the business in their capacity as members (Schwidetzky 2). This allows my company to operate confidently in a coastal, product-based environment while maintaining the straightforward management and tax advantages that an LLC offers.

With a vision to become a recognized artisan salt brand in Southwest Florida, Sanibel Saltworks emphasizes quality, craftsmanship, and the unique "terroir" of the Florida Gulf. The business is differentiated by its hand-harvested approach, small-batch production, solar-evaporation techniques, and eco-conscious practices that minimize environmental impact. These elements create a product that stands apart in purity, flavor, and story by reflecting the character of Sanibel Island itself. Positioned at the intersection of sustainability and coastal tradition, Sanibel Saltworks is poised to build a loyal customer base, expand through local culinary partnerships, and grow into a trusted regional brand rooted in authenticity and respect for the environment.

Business Description

- Product: Sea salt flakes and/or crystals harvested from the Gulf, optionally flavored or blended (e.g., plain culinary finishing salt, flavored salt, body salts, seasonings).
 - Harvest Location: Coastal zones near Sanibel Island / Gulf of America, chosen for clean water, good sun/wind for evaporation, low disturbance zones. Each batch after batch 1 will be marked on GPS to add onto the label.
 - Process Overview: Collect seawater → filter sediment → boil to brine → distribute into shallow pans to solar evaporate → harvest crystals by hand → dry, package and label → Move to market.
 - Sustainable and ecological focus: minimal fossil-fuel use (primarily sun & wind evaporation), minimal mechanical disturbance of shoreline or dunes, respect for marine ecosystems (avoid turtle and wading bird nesting zones), checking water quality and avoiding polluted sources.
 - Legal/Regulatory: Must ensure compliance with local marine/coastal regulations (Florida State, County), food safety standards (for edible salt), packaging & labeling regulations, environmental permit if required for harvesting or using pans/trays in coastal zones (Florida Statutes §500.80).
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Market Analysis

- Target Market:
 - Food-savvy consumers (gourmet cooks, finishing salts).
 - Local restaurants/seafood venues in the Sanibel/Captiva/Lee County area that want a “local product” story.
 - Lee County Tourists = Over 4 Million tourists visit lee county each year (VCB) I intend to tap into that annual visitor market.
 - Online niche market for artisan salts and gift packs.
 - Competitive Landscape: There are already small enterprises in Florida harvesting sea salt from the Gulf. Example: “Sea Salt Florida” in the Sarasota/Bradenton region.
- USP: Emphasis on clean Gulf water, hand-craft, small batch, local provenance, eco-friendly.
- Pricing: Because it’s artisan and small batch, it can command a premium finishing salt price vs commodity salt.
- Distribution channels: Farmers markets, local food shops and gift stores, restaurants, online website + shipping, possibly subscription or gift packs.

Operations Plan

- Site Setup: Access coastal water where seawater can safely be collected in food-grade buckets and placed into trays/pans for evaporation.
- Equipment & Materials: [Food-grade buckets](#) and or containers for seawater collection; filtration/settling devices; [shallow pans/trays](#) (made of food-safe material) placed in sunny/windy spot; drying racks; packaging materials ([food-safe jars/bags/labels](#)); optional flavoring materials.
- Process Steps(Farhner):
 1. Collect seawater from a safe clean location.
 2. Filter and strain to remove any large sediment and debris.
 3. Boil seawater till approximately 1/3rd of the water has evaporated and collect the magnesium chalk that has accumulated around the sides of the jarring pot.
 4. Transfer brine to shallow and flat pans
 5. Evaporation will concentrate salt and form salt crystals ; monitor the local forecast paying attention to sun, wind and humidity.
 6. Harvest salt crystals by hand.
 7. Dry crystals to stable moisture content
 8. Package.
 9. Label
 10. Prepare for shipping and distribution.
- Workforce: Initially small (owner, Katie Hayes + owner's husband, Ben Smith).
- Sustainability and Ecological Footprint: Use solar/wind evaporation, avoid heavy machinery, limit physical impact on coastline (portable trays or non-permanent installation), respect local wildlife/tide/season. Example practices described in Gulf-coast artisan salt making.
- Quality Control: Test water quality both in-house and through independent water testing companies ; ensure salt does not carry pollutants such as micro-plastics (Xu and Duan); ensure food-safe packaging; keep batch records; traceability.

Marketing & Sales Strategy

- Branding: Emphasis "From the Gulf near Sanibel", "Hand-harvested", "Small-batch artisan", "Eco-conscious coastal production", "Tide to Table", "Salt is healing for the Body (Lynch)"
- Packaging & Story: Use clear jars(initially 2oz-4oz) with white metal lid , screen printed with story of location, process, sustainability. Possibly include miniature "how we do it" note. Colors will include Periwinkle(#CCCCFF) Deep Navy Blue(#) with accents of white and Pink
- Local Promotion:

- Partner with local restaurants/seafood spots who can use or sell your salt as a “local finishing salt”.
- Farmers markets on Sanibel and throughout Lee County.
- Gift shops and tourist-oriented stores.
- Online Sales: [Build a website](#), social media presence (Instagram/Facebook/TikTok) with the coastal imagery, process photos, harvest shots. Use SEO for “Florida hand harvested sea salt” etc.
- Sales Channels: Direct-to-consumer (online & local)
- Pricing Strategy: Because artisan, sell at premium relative to commodity salt. Possibly have multiple SKUs: basic plain salt, flavored salt, larger gift jars.
- Volume Forecast: Estimate initial production capacity (e.g., X lbs/month) based on evaporation capacity, trays area, weather conditions, womenpower. Set conservative targets in the first year to build brand & sales.

Financial Plan

- Startup Costs Estimate:
 - Equipment: buckets/containers, trays/pans, drying racks- \$145.73
 - Packaging & labeling materials- \$232.89
 - Website/branding/marketing materials - \$ 300.07 for 1 year
 - Legal/permit fees (coastal/marine regulations, food business certification) \$0.00
 - Initial working capital (labor, utilities, insurance)- TBD My husband’s labor is expensive.
 - Ongoing Costs: Labor, packaging, shipping, marketing, maintenance of trays/evaporation area, quality testing -TBD but projecting \$400.00 for now.
 - Revenue Projections: Based on unit price × volume. For example, if I sell artisan finishing salt at say \$15 for a 4 oz jar (just example), and aim for 500 jars in year one, revenue = \$7,500; scale up as I grow.
 - Break-Even: My break even rounded up is approximately 72 4oz Units
 - Growth Plan: Increase production capacity, add new SKUs (flavored salts, body salts, soaps, vanilla extract, aprons, christmas ornaments), expand online market beyond local region, wholesale to national gourmet food retailers.
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Risk Assessment & Mitigation

- Risks:
 - Environmental / weather risk: humidity, rainfall, storms interrupt evaporation.
 - Water quality/pollution: Gulf water near Sanibel may be affected by runoff, Lake Okeechobee discharges, industrial and boating activity; must ensure safe for food use.
 - Regulatory/compliance risk: marine regulations, food safety, packaging labeling, shipping of food items.
 - Competition: Other artisan salts in Florida and beyond; need to differentiate.
 - Scale & economics: Small-batch production can limit volume and raise cost per unit; must ensure price supports margin while keeping the main goal in focus.
 - Mitigations:
 - Choose harvest spots carefully, monitor water quality regularly.
 - Use a flexible production schedule; build supply to weather downtime.
 - Develop an excellent brand story and strong local ties.
 - Keep overhead low initially, test at farmers markets before large investment.
 - Explore diversification to add revenue streams.
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Milestones & Timeline

- Month 0–3: Research & planning: site selection, water testing, permits/legal, branding & packaging design. Start first batch testing.
 - Month 4–6: Setup evaporation trays/pans, continue trial harvesting, small batch production, create website & marketing materials, test local sales (farmers market).
 - Month 7–12: Launch full product line, expand to retail partners, ramp up online sales, collect customer feedback, refine process.
 - Year 2: Scale up production capacity, add flavored/seasoned salt SKUs, explore wholesale/regional distribution, maybe visitor-experience or tours.
 - Year 3+: Evaluate adding complementary products (bath salts, spa salts), export possibilities, branded merchandise, subscription model.
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Sustainability & Ethical Considerations

- Use environmentally low-impact methods: solar/wind evaporation, **minimal** electric heating.
- Respect coastal ecosystem: Keep trays non-invasive, avoid disturbance of seagrass beds and aquatic nesting zones.
- Ensure water used is from a clean source; maintain transparency about sourcing.
- Packaging: Use recyclable / eco-friendly materials with as little plastic components as possible. .
- Community: Engage local community and promote local economy; possibly host educational tours or visits that highlight sustainable harvesting once office/ manufacturing space is running.

Conclusion

This business plan demonstrates the viability of a small-scale artisanal sea salt operation near Sanibel Island. Through strategic site selection, distinctive branding, sustainable production practices, and focused marketing to local and gourmet audiences, Sanibel Saltworks is well positioned to establish a unique presence in the market. Beyond its role in cooking, salt offers diverse uses for wellness, skincare, and body care (Graber and Twilley 2:05), broadening the potential for future product expansion. Historically, salt was regarded as a highly valuable and widely traded commodity (Neumann), reinforcing its timeless importance and supporting Sanibel Saltworks' mission to deliver a premium, authentically crafted product. Long-term success will depend on maintaining strict cost control, delivering consistently high-quality and genuine goods, and sharing a compelling brand story that resonates with consumers who value pure, locally made sea salt.

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