

# Brittany Pointe Estates Veterans Affairs Committee



BPE Pointer Article

## Veterans' Corner by Bob Berger

After serving for 23 years of active duty and another 24 years working for the Department of Defense/ Health Affairs, there had been numerous times working side by side with members of the Navy. No matter what the environment I found myself in, they always had the good manners to offer the guest a cup of coffee. Now don't get me wrong, I love coffee a lot! Then there is the Navy's version of the hot drink. It seems that every time I partook of this black gold, I was awake for multiple days and nights. Then taking the Tums to reduce the burn. Thankfully, I did not suffer any hair loss. If you ever thought that Starbucks was a strong dark roast coffee, join the Navy. When I read this article on the Military.com website, I read every morning, I just knew this story had to be shared. Please enjoy it and thank a sailor for his or her service and surviving all that coffee.

### **“Why WWII Navy Veterans Added Salt to Their Coffee?”**

By Military.com by [Blake Stilwell](#)



Crewmen have coffee aboard the USS Corvina while docked at New London, Connecticut, 1943. (Nationals Archives and Records Administration)

In 1914, Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels banned alcohol from all U.S. Navy property, and ever since the cup of coffee has replaced the sailor's grog aboard American ships.

Those black beans became just as important for fueling the Navy as diesel fuel or uranium. Descendants of sailors who fought in World War II might have noticed their dad or grandpa adding a dash of salt to their morning coffee and wondered why on Earth they would do that.

There are actually two reasons "old salts" have been known to do this (and it's not why they're called old salts).

Aboard Navy ships mornings don't happen at the same time for every sailor. As a result, the ship keeps coffee brewing all the time, so no matter when your morning is, a cup of joe is ready somewhere.

But anyone who has ever had a big steaming cup of government coffee knows, it's not the best. That's true today, and it was true during World War II.

When your coffee tastes terrible you have a few options. You can add cream and sugar -- if it's available. Or you can cut the bitter taste some other way. For World War II era sailors, the most readily available way was through the use of table salt.

You might have seen some people salting fruit like cantaloupe and grapefruit or to their beer. That's because when presented with both flavors at the same time, human taste buds can be fooled into ignoring bitter tastes and reacting more strongly to salty tastes instead. Salting coffee did the trick to reduce the bitter flavor and made the brew more palatable.



An enlisted coffee mess aboard a submarine. (National Archives and Records Administration) But that's not the only reason sailors of that era grew accustomed to salty coffee, bringing the preference home with them when the war ended. The desalination units on World War II-era ships that converted sea water to drinking water weren't 100% efficient at removing the salt from the water. As a result, the coffee retained a slightly salty flavor, so sailors just got used to the taste.

Now that we know that trick, we can all feel free to buy the world's worst bulk coffee and, with a little salt, make it seem like Juan Valdez himself brought it to you from the mountains of Colombia.

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