Domestic uses for salt

The uses of salt in our cooking are legion – far too many to list, but of course the Scots would put flavouring their porridge to the top of the list. Just a few uses of salt in the kitchen include ice-cream making where a salt and water mixture draws heat from the cream; removing bitterness from vegetables such as aubergine; giving colour to processed meats; controlling the fermentation process and the only food preservation method before refrigeration was invented. Then we shouldn’t forget the use of salt in the modern drinking culture. I’m not sure how many of us indulge in tequila shots, but the accepted way of imbibing the spirit is to lick the back of the hand, pour on salt, lick the salt off, down the tequila in one, then bite into a slice of lemon or lime. Apparently, the salt lessens the bite of the alcohol and the citrus enhances the flavour!

But the domestic uses of salt are not limited to food preparation; it can help with many other tasks. If a fishy smell is lingering, a lemon wedge dipped in salt and rubbed over the hands, chopping board or work surface will soon get rid of it. The cleaning of vegetables such as cabbage or lettuce with salt in the water will get rid of any insects. If you are not sure how fresh that egg is, put it into a bowl of salt water – if it floats it is old. Soaking whole unshelled nuts in brine overnight means that they will emerge from their shells whole if the end of the shell is tapped with a hammer. If something bubbles over into the bottom of your oven, put a handful of salt over the spill which will bake into a light crust which can easily be wiped off when the oven has cooled. Blood stains on clothes can be removed with a soak in cold salty water. If someone spills red wine on your best white tablecloth, pour a little salt on top immediately, and then soak the cloth after the meal is finished. In the garden, a sprinkling of salt will deter ants, kill slugs and snails and prevent weeds growing between paving slabs. A pinch of salt added to the water flowers are placed in will prolong the life of your arrangement.