

# With a pinch of salt...

PANIC buying is something Clive Osborne takes with a pinch of salt. For he is surrounded by the stuff.

Mr. Osborne is a director of the Maldon Crystal Salt Company who found themselves snowed under with extra work as housewives snapped up the country's salt supplies this week. But Mr. Osborne said today: "There wasn't a shortage until they started panic buying."

As the small family firm brought in more staff to help pack the orders, Mr. Osborne, 31, said: "We are having trouble coping. It suddenly hit us last Wednesday when large London stores rang us to double orders or make new ones.

"Someone told me the panic buying started because of a story about a salt crisis in Siberia, but we don't get salt from Siberia"

All British salt is home-produced, mostly from mines in Cheshire.

Mr. Osborne said: "We make about three tons a week from the River Blackwater, compared to the nine million tons a year made in the country.

"The industry has really been taken by surprise. Now we are a month behind, with orders and inundated with new ones."

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