




THE SALT PANS OF JANUBIO

salt that really tastes of salt



The origins of the salt pans of Janubio, the biggest sea salt production area on the Canary Islands, can be found at the end of the XIX century. In 1895 history has it that Vicente Lleó Benlliure started to use the sea behind the black beaches of Janubio to build the first evaporation basins to obtain sea salt, and with continuous work and extension during the following 50 years, the now very impressive salt pans were formed. Even though the days of glory of the pans have gone, they are still a very important part of the history of Lanzarote.

The process of production is basically the same as it was 100 years ago. The seawater is filtered by the beach and stays in its natural form. From there it is pumped into a canal that directs the water to big evaporating basins, which can be seen next to the road. There the sun and the always present wind, start the first phase of concentration. From the big basins the water is directed through pipes into smaller basins, where more and more water evaporates and the salt concentration in the water increases steadily. When at last the salt crystallizes, it can be collected manually with a rake and then is put in a heap with the help of a shovel. Later it gets collected, stored in the warehouse, cleaned and packed. All the work in the salt pans is done by hand and the only thing that has changed since the old days are the pumps and engines, they were run by windmills or by hand. Some of the windmills remain on the plant, leaving a reminder of their recent past.

The salt pans are still in private hands but the time when you could make a living with the production of sea salt is long gone. Since fishing and the fishing industry has gone, making space for tourism, the demand for salt

has declined drastically. Nowadays only 20% of the salt plant is used, and a big part of the work is spent in the maintenance of this unique landscape. There are plans to build a viewing point and a tourist centre where visitors will be able to find out about the ecological and natural salt production. In guided tours through the salt pans visitors could learn about the history of salt production and the history of the island. For the preservation of the salt pans and the municipality of Yaiza such a centre would be very important, but it is still unclear whether or not these plans will be implemented.

Salt from Janubio, which is carefully controlled so that it is fit for human use, can be bought in some supermarkets on the island or you can go to the production plant where a kilo of sea salt is sold for 50 cents. The shop is open from 07.00 to 14.30. As well as a great insight into the old traditions of how it was produced, you will help to preserve a unique and impressive part of the industrial history of Lanzarote - part of its identity and culture. *PS: Lots of residents and restaurants are using this salt exclusively for cooking* ■