People who enjoy eating seafood on a near-daily basis have a good chance of meeting their daily iodine needs because they will often be able to get 50% of more of those needs from the seafood alone. A single serving of dairy foods on the same day might move this percentage up closer to 75%, and other foods would be able to make up the remainder.

For people who completely avoid seafood in their meal plan, iodine needs become a little bit trickier to meet. One meal plan addition worthy of consideration here would be to choose sea vegetables as a recipe component. Since 1 tablespoon of a sea vegetable like dulse can provide five times the daily iodine requirement all by itself, you could enjoy a recipe with this amount of sea vegetable and meet your iodine requirement over a five-day time period. Our 5-Minute Miso Soup with Dulse recipe will provide you with exactly that amount per serving. Dried kelp flakes or other forms of dried sea vegetables can be sprinkled on top of many dishes, and it is important to remember that it only takes one-fifth of a tablespoon—just a little bit more than half a teaspoon—to meet your recommended daily iodine level.

Of course, another alternative available to everyone is iodized salt. Iodized salt is a fortified form of table salt that has been processed to contain significant amounts of iodine. The general government standard for fortification of salt with iodine is 76-77 micrograms of iodine per gram of salt. However, many iodized salts don't actually end up containing this much iodine. An average marketplace range seems to be closer to 45-50 micrograms per gram. Still, at 6 grams per teaspoon, this level of 45-50 micrograms would mean that 1 teaspoon of iodized salt would be likely to contain at least 270-300 micrograms of iodine and 1/4 teaspoon would be likely to contain at least 67-75 micrograms. So it is easy to see how 1/4 teaspoon of iodized salt could provide about half of a person's daily recommended iodine. (This same 1/4 teaspoon would provide about 580 milligrams of sodium, or about 12% of the Daily Value.)

As a general rule, we always prefer whole, natural foods as a source of all nutrients, and there simply isn't any form of iodized salt that is whole and natural. By definition, iodized salt is a processed, fortified ingredient. It is possible, of course, to purchase iodized sea salt, but even in this situation, the sea salt has been fortified with iodine during processing. (While iodine is naturally present in sea salts along with other minerals, it is not present in amounts that would qualify the salt to be labeled as "iodized.")

In addition to our preference for whole, natural foods as a source of all nutrients, we also emphasize the pleasures of herbs, spices, and natural flavors found in fresh foods. The idea of substituting salt for the true pleasures of good cooking does not make sense to us. (That's why you will find many of our recipes to be devoid of table salt as an ingredient, and our ingredients followed by the option, "salt and pepper to taste.")

At the same time, we are not aware of any special problems related to the process of fortifying salt with iodine. In addition, we realize that many people rely on small amounts of iodized salt to boost up an otherwise deficient iodine intake level. Especially for persons who avoid seafood and dairy in their meal plans, iodized salt might make a logical addition to meet daily iodine needs. Obviously, the decision about whether to include iodized salt in a meal plan is a personal decision. From our perspective, it could be a very sensible choice, depending on all of the circumstances involved. We would, however, caution anyone who has been placed on a salt-restricted diet, or who suspects that they might fall into the minority of U.S. adults who are salt-sensitive in terms of blood pressure regulation, to talk over their best options for meeting daily iodine needs with their healthcare provider.

We would like to add one final note here on the relationship between salt and iodine intake. Processed foods in the U.S. have a well-deserved reputation for being overly high in salt. This trend has not been limited to fast foods or foods at a corner grocery. Many popular canned soups, frozen vegetables, and other widely enjoyed pre-packaged foods contain large amounts of salt. However, the salt added to processed foods is typically not iodized salt that has been fortified with iodine. For this reason, it simply is not correct to assume that consumption of a processed, high-sodium food is likely to provide you with the iodine you need, even if you venture out into processed, prepackaged foods as a regular part of your diet.