

Food idioms vocabulary

Fruit

"The apple of my eye" – someone cherished

"A bad apple" – a corrupt person

"To upset the apple cart" – spoil plans / cause trouble

"To compare apples and oranges" – compare totally different things

"Cherry-pick" – select only the best

"The cherry on the cake" – final touch of perfection

"Life is a bowl of cherries" – life is wonderful, easy

"A second bite at the cherry" – another chance to do something, especially after having failed the first time

"To go bananas" – go crazy, or get very angry or excited

"A banana skin" – a difficult situation, fail in an embarrassing way

"A banana republic" – a small, politically unstable country

"Top banana" – the most powerful or important person

"A lemon" – something defective

"When life gives you lemons, make lemonade" – make the best of your situation

"Peachy" – everything's fine

"A plum job" – a desirable job

"Not give a fig" – don't care

"To go pear-shaped" – when a situation goes wrong

"Fruits of labour" – the rewards, benefits, or results that come from hard work and effort

"Forbidden fruit" – something desirable but not allowed

"Fruity" – something risqué, rude, or sexually suggestive

"To bear fruit" – to produce positive results or show success after effort or planning

"Fruitless" – unproductive, unsuccessful, not bringing any useful results

"Low-hanging fruit" – the easiest tasks or opportunities that can be achieved with little effort

"To have sour grapes" - someone who belittles an achievement because they could not obtain it themselves

Legumes

"To go nuts" – to become very excited, enthusiastic, or sometimes angry in a sudden way

"Spill the beans" – to reveal a secret or share information that was meant to be kept private

"Full of beans" – to be lively, energetic, and enthusiastic

"Like two peas in a pod" – to be very similar in appearance, behaviour, or interests

Vegetables

"A hot potato" – a controversial or difficult issue that people are reluctant to deal with

"A couch potato" – a person who is very lazy and spends a lot of time doing nothing

"Potato head" – a stupid or silly person

"Cheap as chips" – very inexpensive or good value for money

"Cool as a cucumber" – very calm and composed, especially in a stressful situation

"A wet lettuce" – a weak or useless person

"A vegetable" – an offensive term for a person in a coma or with very severe brain damage, unable to move or respond

Meat

"To bring home the bacon" – to earn money, especially to support a family

"To save someone's bacon" – to rescue someone from danger, trouble, or failure

"Meat and drink" – something very easy or enjoyable for someone, requiring little effort

"All meat and no potatoes" – something that is too serious or lacks fun and variety

"A piece of meat" – an objectifying term for someone seen only for their body, not as a whole person

"To have beef with someone" – to have a problem, conflict, or disagreement with a person

"To chicken out" – to lose courage and avoid doing something because it is scary or difficult

"Ham it up" – to exaggerate emotions or actions, often in a theatrical or silly way

"To tell a porky" – to tell a lie (from Cockney rhyming slang: pork pie = lie)

Dairy

"The big cheese" – an important or influential person

"Cheesy" – cheap, silly, or overly sentimental

"Cheesed off" – annoyed or irritated

"Don't cry over spilled milk" – don't worry about the past

"To milk something" – to take full advantage of a situation, often for personal gain

"Milk something dry" – to exploit or take as much as possible from something until nothing is left

"The land of milk and honey" – a place of great plenty, prosperity, and abundance

"The milk of human kindness" – natural compassion, gentleness, or goodwill towards others

"To have egg on your face" – to look foolish or embarrassed because of a mistake

"A good egg" – a kind, reliable, or trustworthy person

"A bad egg" – a dishonest or unreliable person

"A few eggs short of a dozen" – a silly or not very intelligent person

"You can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs" – you can't achieve success without some sacrifice

"To butter someone up" – to flatter or praise someone in order to gain favour

"Butter wouldn't melt in their mouth" – someone who looks innocent but isn't

"Bread and butter" – the basic source of income or mainstay of someone's life or work

"A piece of cake" – something that is very easy to do

"The icing on the cake" – something extra that makes a good situation even better

"To sell like hotcakes" – to sell very quickly and in large numbers

"To have your cake and eat it too" – to want two incompatible things at the same time

"Jammy" – very lucky, often undeservedly so (mainly British slang)

"Jam tomorrow" – a promise of good things in the future that never actually arrive

Fish

"To smell fishy" – to seem suspicious or not quite right

"To have bigger fish to fry" – to have more important things to do

"Drink like a fish" – to drink alcohol heavily or excessively

"A red herring" – something that distracts from the main issue or leads people in the wrong direction

"Like a fish needs a bicycle" – describes something completely unnecessary or irrelevant

"A fish tale" – an exaggerated or unbelievable story

"Plenty more fish in the sea" – there are many other possible opportunities, especially in love or relationships

"A big fish in a small pond" – an important or influential person, but only within a small group or area

"Not my kettle of fish" – not something I like or am interested in

Other sea creatures

"To feel crabby" – to feel easily annoyed, irritable, or in a bad mood

"A card shark" – a very skilled card player, often using cunning or trickery to win games

"A loan shark" – a person who lends money at very high interest rates, often using threats or violence to collect it

"To jump the shark" – the moment when a TV show or project declines in quality after trying too hard to stay interesting

"The sharks are circling" – a situation where rivals or enemies are waiting to take advantage of someone's weakness or failure

"The prawn sandwich brigade" – people at football matches who enjoy the hospitality but don't care about sport

"To have a whale of a time" – to have a lot of fun, to enjoy yourself very much

"To clam up" – to suddenly stop talking, usually from shyness, fear, or embarrassment

"The world is your oyster" – you have many opportunities open to you, and you can achieve anything if you try

Around the world

Spanish: pan comido – "eaten bread" → something very easy

German: das ist mir Wurst – "that's sausage to me" → I don't care

Italian: essere come il prezzemolo – "like parsley" → always turning up everywhere

French: les carottes sont cuites – "the carrots are cooked" → it's over, nothing more can be done

Chinese: 吃醋 (chī cù) – "to eat vinegar" → to be jealous

Japanese団子より花 (dango yori hana) – "dumplings rather than flowers" → preferring substance over show