

Now, the VOA Learning English program *Words and Their Stories*.

We received a list of expressions about food from Elenir Scardueli, a listener from Brazil.

Today we will talk about some good things to eat.

If something is new and improved, we say “it is the best thing since sliced bread.” In the past, bread was only sold in loaves in baked goods stores. Today, American supermarkets sell sliced bread in plastic bags. Many people thought this was easier because you did not have to cut the bread yourself.

The person who makes the most money in a family is called “the breadwinner.”

“Bread and butter issues” are those that are most important to Americans and affect them directly -- like jobs and healthcare.

“Half a loaf is better than none” means that getting part of what you want is better than getting nothing at all. If you know which side your bread is buttered on, then you know what your best interests are and will act to protect them.

Many Americans like their bread toasted. Toast is cooked with dry heat until it starts to turn brown. But you are in big trouble if someone tells you “you’re toast.”

If you say something is “a piece of cake” it means something is really easy, like a test you take in school. Cakes are often covered with a sweet topping, called icing. “Icing on the cake” means something good that happens in addition to another good thing. Another expression says “you can’t have your cake and eat it, too.” This means you cannot have everything your way, especially if two wishes oppose each other.

Hotcakes are also called pancakes. They contain flour, eggs, milk and baking powder. You cook them in a frying pan and eat them with fruit or a sweet topping. If a new product is popular and selling well, you might say “it is selling like hotcakes.”

But if a friend of yours did something bad, you might stop being friends with him immediately or “drop him like a hotcake.”

“Flat as a pancake” describes something that is, well, really flat.

A “tough cookie” is not something you want to eat -- it is a person who is difficult to deal with, and would do anything necessary to get what he or she wants. This person could be “a sharp cookie” -- or someone who is not easily fooled. Very often things do not go the way we planned. Instead of getting angry or sad, you might just accept it and say “that’s the way the cookie crumbles.”

Many pies are also good to eat. If something is easy to do, you could say it is “easy as pie.” But if you do something wrong or bad, you might have to apologize and show you are sorry. In other words, you might have to eat “humble pie.”

If you have an idea or plan that is not really possible, someone might say it is “pie in the sky.” If something is really easy to do, you might say “it is like taking candy from a baby.” But that would not be a very nice thing to do!

This program was written by Shelley Gollust. I’m Faith Lapidus.

You can find more *Words and Their Stories* at our website, voaspecialenglish.com.

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