

## Grammar - Idioms about Food

Idioms, especially about food, are often used to summarize or characterize a situation.

### Too many cooks spoil the broth

Broth is the liquid flavor of soup. This phrase means that when too many people contribute to something, it decreases in quality.

1. The project failed because everyone tried to lead. **Too many cooks spoil the broth.**
2. Let one person take charge—**too many cooks will spoil the broth.**

### Spill the beans

To accidentally reveal something that was secret.

1. It was a secret until he spilled the beans.
2. Don't say anything or you'll spill the beans!

### Get caught with your hand in the cookie jar

To get caught doing something wrong, usually stealing. It refers to kids getting caught trying to get cookies.

1. The manager **got caught with his hand in the cookie jar** when they found the missing funds.
2. She was **caught with her hand in the cookie jar** when the teacher saw her cheating.

### Get egg on your face

Do something that is embarrassing or shameful in public. It refers to people throwing eggs in disgust at officials or performers.

1. **He got egg on his face** after forgetting the client's name.
2. The politician **got egg on his face** when the video leaked.

### Take with a grain of salt

To believe something is only partially true.

1. I **take what he says with a grain of salt**—he often exaggerates.
2. That review was too positive; **take it with a grain of salt.**

# Idioms with Food

Watch video using **idioms with food** in five conversations.

## Too many cooks spoil the broth | [PDF Worksheet](#)

**Man:** How is the new marketing campaign coming along?

**Woman:** Not good. We have all these ideas but no one agrees on anything.

**Man:** Sounds like you have too many people adding input.

**Woman:** Definitely! As they say, *too many cooks spoil the broth*.

**Man:** Indeed.

## Spill the beans | [PDF Worksheet](#)

**Man:** Hey, so I hear you are transferring to New York.

**Woman:** What? What are you are talking about?

**Man:** The boss told me he was transferring you.

**Woman:** No one told me that.

**Man:** Oh no! Did I just *spill the beans*?

**Woman:** Ah, yeah. It appears you may have.

**Man:** Well, you better talk to the boss ... but you didn't hear it from me.

**Woman:** Don't worry. I'll cover you.

## Hand in the cookie jar | [PDF Worksheet](#)

**Man:** Did you hear what happened to Jack?

**Woman:** No, what?

**Man:** He was fired yesterday.

**Woman:** Really, why?

**Man:** He got *caught with his hand in the cookie jar*.

**Woman:** Really, how?

**Man:** He was using his travel budget for personal expenses.

**Woman:** Oh, no! He seemed like such an honest guy.

**Man:** Well, looks can be deceiving I guess.

## Get egg on your face | [PDF Worksheet](#)

**Man:** How was your presentation?

**Woman:** Not good. I made a total fool of myself.

**Man:** Oh, I am sure it was not that bad.

**Woman:** No, it was terrible. During the presentation, I used the wrong slide deck.

**Man:** Oh, no!

**Woman:** It was the slide deck for another client - their main competitor.

**Man:** How embarrassing!

**Woman:** Yeah, I totally *got egg of my face*.

**Take with a grain of salt** | [PDF Worksheet](#)

**Man:** So, how are the survey results looking?

**Woman:** Pretty good. 80% of those polled said they like our new product.

**Man:** Well, I would *take those results with a grain of salt*.

**Woman:** Why do you say that?

**Man:** Because only loyal customers took the survey.

**Woman:** Oh, I see. Still, it's a good start.

**Man:** True, just a little misleading.

## Quiz

*Answer these questions about the interview.*

1) Who are the cooks in this conversation?

a) Her boss

**b) People working with her**

c) The company cooking staff

2) How did he spill the beans?

a) He talked to the boss.

**b) He revealed her transfer.**

c) He forgot to buy her lunch.

3) How was Jack caught with his hand in the cookie jar?

a) He was not working.

b) He was eating at work.

**c) He was using company money on himself.**

4) How did she get egg on her face?

a) She could not speak.

b) She did not arrive on time.

**c) She used the wrong presentation.**

5) What should they take with a grain of salt?

**a) The survey data.**

b) Their loyal customers.

c) The people in the meeting.

## More Corporate Idioms

### **To touch base**

I bet you guessed, but just in case, this phrase refers to the rule that a runner in baseball must touch the base on which he/she is standing before running to the next base. In business, before taking an important action, you often “touch base” to get approval or make sure that it is a good idea.

Meaning: Briefly make or renew contact with someone. To update someone or have a quick conversation with them.

“I just wanted to touch base and make sure you hadn’t changed your mind about seeing me.”

“I just wanted to quickly touch base with you: did you get an email from my secretary about the meeting?”

### **Kill two birds with one stone**

Meaning: Solve two problems with one action or solution.

“I might as well kill two birds with one stone and drop off my tax forms while I’m at the mall for the computer part I need.”

### **Let’s table it**

Meaning: Postpone a discussion or activity until later. Usually used near the end of a meeting when a conversation is dragging and everyone just wants to go home.

“You’ve all raised some good points. Let’s table this until next week’s meeting.”

### **In the same boat**

Meaning: To be in the same bad or difficult situation.

“You filed the wrong paperwork, too? We’re in the same boat!”

“How are you feeling? I heard it’s been tough for you, too. We’re in the same boat.”

### **In the bag**

Meaning: Certain or sure to be won, achieved, or obtained.

“The election is in the bag.”

“The negotiations are looking great, but the deal is not in the bag yet.”

### **Move the needle**

Meaning: To make a difference; to have a noticeable impact on something.

“They hired her to increase sales, but her strategies failed to move the needle.”

“We need to move the needle on global poverty.”

### **Lots of moving parts**

Meaning: A complicated situation with a lot of variables or components. Usually used when it would take too long to explain something in detail.

“We’ve looked at some venues and talked to sponsors and next week we’re going to start working on the marketing for the event. There are lots of moving parts, but luckily we have a great team.”

### **Get your ducks in a row**

There are a couple of theories regarding the origin of this idiom. The most obvious (and adorable) one is the way mother ducks organize their ducklings to walk in straight lines while travelling.

Meaning: Getting yourself organized before doing something.

“Once we get our ducks in a row — do an appraisal, talk to the lawyers — it should be easy to sell the property.”

“I still need to get my ducks in a row, but I’m feeling quite optimistic about this new project.”