

10 Common Refranes.

So, you're probably wondering what on earth a 'refrán' is right about now...

And nope, they're **NOT** chunks or idioms ('modismos') - they're actually more like proverbs (i.e., short sayings that convey wisdom, moral lessons, or practical advice).

And Mexicans absolutely **LOVE** them!!

So, without further ado, here are 10 of the most common...



El que se fue a la villa perdió su silla



Literally means: He who went to the village lost his chair.

This one loses a bit of its charm in English because 'villa' rhymes with 'silla' in the Spanish version (rhyme is a **VERY** common theme in refranes!).

The lesson? If you ignore an opportunity, someone else might snatch it up!

It's also a favorite among kids, who often use it to call dibs on candy, toys, or (quite literally!) chairs.

Salió más caro el caldo que las albóndigas



Literally means: The broth ended up being more expensive than the meatballs.

Meatballs?

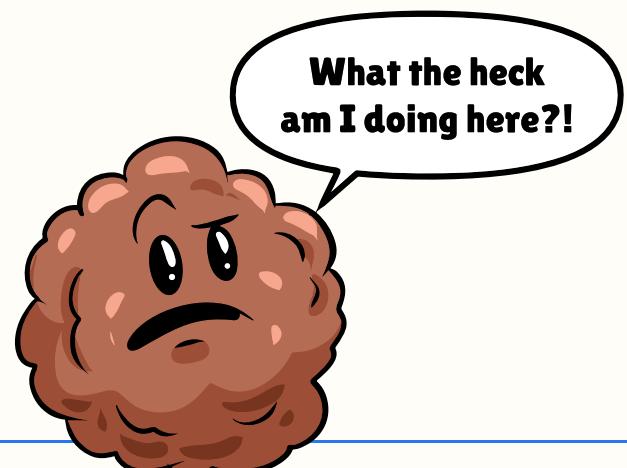
Nope, we're **NOT** in Sweden!*

Mexicans actually have their own take on this scrumptious Scandinavian classic, and it's so popular that 'albóndigas' even star in their own proverb!

And what does it mean?

Well, just that the solution or effort ended up being more trouble (or more expensive!) than the problem itself.

*I'm not knocking Mexican meatballs, BTW... they're delicious!



El muerto y el arrimado a los tres días apestan

Literally means: Both the dead and the uninvited guest start to smell after three days.

This one evokes a lovely mental image, doesn't it?

An 'arrimado' is a freeloader or unwanted guest and, well, three days of hosting one sounds like a fair limit to me!

And despite its implicit morbidity, this 'refrán' is often used in jest.

So, when leaving a party, you might say (with an accompanying twinkle in your eye) -

Ya nos vamos. Ya sabes que el muerto y el arrimado a los tres días apestan.

P.S. The English equivalent - "Guests, like fish, start to smell after three days" - is attributed to Benjamin Franklin.

Le hizo lo que el viento a Juárez

Literally means: It did to him what the wind did to Juárez.

This one just means that the person in question was completely unaffected by something.

But who on earth is Juárez?

Well, he's a (very popular!) former president of Mexico who's depicted in a famous mural looking immaculately groomed, while a flag flutters dramatically in the background. It gives the impression that not even the wind could ruffle or affect him.

I don't know about you, but I'm getting serious moon-landing conspiracy vibes...



Este arroz ya se coció



Literal translation: This rice is already cooked.

This is a **VERY** common way of saying 'it's a done deal'.

It's usually a celebratory 'refrán', used when something's finally done, settled, or decided - so no further action is needed (yippee!).



Gallina vieja hace buen caldo



Literal translation: An old hen makes good broth.

This fun proverb says that older people - or things that have been around for a while - still have a lot to offer thanks to their experience and wisdom.

As for whether an old hen really does make good broth, well, you'd have to ask Gordon Ramsay ;)



Se me juntó el lavado con el planchado



Literal translation: I've got both the washing and the ironing to do.

This one actually has two meanings:

1 When someone has a ton of chores or work to do - a bit like the English, 'I've got too much on my plate right now'.

2 Or, in a far juicier context, when someone who's been cheating on their partner ends up in the same place as both their spouse **AND** their lover.

Ouch.

Más vale pájaro en mano que ciento volando



Literal translation: A bird in the hand is worth more than a hundred flying.

This is a favorite of abuelitas Mexico over!

Yep, Mexican grannies often remind us to be content with what we have rather than risk it all for something uncertain. Maybe old hens **DO** make good broth ;)

It's just like the English proverb, 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush'.



Al que obra mal se le pudre el tamal



Literal translation: He who does wrong, his tamale goes bad.

Yep, another example of a rhyming 'refrán' ('mal' and 'tamal', in case you missed it).

It just says that if you do bad things, there'll be negative consequences - kinda like the English, 'What goes around, comes around.'

Yep, Mexican karma is alive and kicking, folks... cause no one, and I repeat, **NO ONE**, wants to eat a spoiled tamale!



Cada loco con su tema



Literally means: Every fool has their fancy.

'Cada loco con su tema' is similar to the English saying, 'to each their own'.

However, it can also refer to chaotic conversations. You know, when everyone's talking about something different, and there's no real logical thread.

Uh-oh!