
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Would you eat a Kalette?



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Sam

And I'm Sam.

Neil

'Kalettes', 'CauliShoots', and 'Tenderstems'... Can you guess what they are, Sam?

Sam

Well, they sound like the names of pop groups to me!

Neil

Yes, good guess, but in fact the truth is even stranger – they're varieties of vegetable being grown in the UK by a new generation of fruit and veg growers. Forget traditional carrots, leeks and potatoes - vegetables today are getting a modern makeover thanks to breeding methods which mix two different plants to produce something completely new, known as a **hybrid**.

Sam

The **hybrid**, Kalette, for example is a mix between kale and a Brussel sprout.

Neil

Tenderstems are a mix of traditional broccoli with a type of Chinese kale.

Sam

And CauliShoots are small green stems with mini cauliflower heads shooting out the side. These exciting new varieties, which look very different from traditional vegetables, are increasingly popular on farms, in shops and in restaurants across the UK. In this programme, we'll hear all about these new vegetables and the people who grow, cook and eat them. And, as usual, we'll be learning some new vocabulary as well.

Neil

Sounds good, Sam! But first I have a question for you. One of the first hybrids on sale in the UK was named, Cotton Candy, because of its sweet, caramel flavour. But is Cotton Candy:

- a) a cherry?
- b) a strawberry? or
- c) a grape?

Sam

Well, if it's sweet, I'll guess it's a strawberry.

Neil

OK, well, we'll reveal the answer later in the programme. The Kalettes which Sam mentioned earlier, were introduced in the British market in 2010 under the name, 'Flower Sprouts'. They were advertised as a healthy vegetable that could be cooked or eaten raw and became extremely popular.

Neil

The inventor of the Kalette is Jamie Claxton, one of the UK's top seed producers and head of plant breeding firm, Tozer Seeds. Here's Jamie chatting with, Leyla Kazim, presenter of BBC Radio 4's, The Food Programme.

Leyla Kazim

And so how did the idea of the Kalette even come about in the first place?

Jamie Claxton

We do quite a lot of **blue-sky** breeding where we just try **wacky** stuff and see what happens.

Leyla Kazim

Were you looking at sprout and a kale going, 'I could do something exciting with this'.

Jamie Claxton

We were looking at the whole of the brassica family, those are all *brassica oleracea* - Brussels sprouts, kales, cauliflowers, and just thinking how... Obviously we knew they would cross pollinate easily and produce unusual veg, and we were just kind of thinking we need to create something that's more modern, you know, Brussels sprouts and kales are very traditional... Throw a few things in together in a **mixing pot** thing and see what comes out.

Neil

Jamie says Kalettes were the result of blue-sky breeding. This phrase comes from another expression, **blue-sky thinking**, which means using your imagination to try to come up with completely new and original ideas.

Sam

Some of Jamie's plants were **wacky** - unusual in a funny or surprising way, but this was all part of the fun of breeding and growing new vegetables. Jamie threw his ideas into **the mixing pot** – a place where different ideas mingle together to create something new.

Neil

Hybrid vegetables add exciting new colours and tastes to traditional veg, such as the deep purple leaves of rainbow kale, or the sweet nutty flavour of a CauliShoot. As a result, they have become fashionable with many British chefs, including Jack Stein, son of TV chef, Rick, who runs a restaurant in the seaside town of Padstow in Cornwall.

Sam

Here's presenter of BBC Radio 4's, The Food Programme, Leyla Kazim, again, talking to Jack about what makes a great new vegetable.

Leyla Kazim

When you're looking at new varieties of veg, are there any particular traits that you're looking for that will help in the kitchen?

Jack Stein

I mean, obviously it's gonna be down to taste really, and it's gonna be down to what it looks like on the plates. The colour, the **texture**, the taste, all these things are really important, but I think **novelty** and things like the Kalettes were great. I mean, they were originally called 'Flower Sprouts'.

Neil

Jack names two features of great hybrid veg. First, there's the **texture** – the way something feels when you touch it...

Sam

And second, **novelty** – the fact that something is new and unusual. Added to the surprising way many new varieties look, and of course their great taste, modern vegetables have provided a welcome new addition to traditional British cooking.

Neil

And don't forget the unusual names too, Sam, like the 'Cotton Candy' fruit I asked you about in my question.

Sam

Yes, I guessed Cotton Candies were a new variety of strawberry. Was I right?

Neil

You were wrong I'm afraid, Sam. In fact, Cotton Candy is a variety of grape, so called because they're very sweet and taste like you've been to the fairground. OK, let's recap the vocabulary we've learned from this programme about new **vegetable hybrids** – plants which have been grown by mixing two different plants together.

Sam

Blue-sky thinking involves using your imagination to try and think up original ideas.

Neil

Something which is unusual in a funny or surprising way could be described as **wacky**.

Sam

The mixing pot is a place where different ideas or ingredients get mixed to create something new.

Neil

Texture means the way something feels when you touch it.

Sam

And finally, **novelty** is the quality of being new or unusual. If you've enjoyed this programme, why not take the taste test by cooking some hybrid vegetables yourself.

Neil

And remember to join us again soon for more trending topics and useful vocabulary here at 6 Minute English. Goodbye for now!

Sam

Bye bye!

VOCABULARY

hybrid

plant (or animal) which has been bred by mixing two different parent plants (or animals)

blue-sky thinking

using your imagination to try and think up completely new and original ideas

wacky

unusual in a funny or surprising way

the mixing pot

place where different ideas or ingredients are mixed to create something new

texture

the way something feels when you touch it

novelty

the quality of being new or unusual