
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Why we love dumplings



This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Neil

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

Beth

And I'm Beth.

Neil

In China they're crescent shaped and filled with pork and cabbage, in Nepal they're called *momos* and are fried with buffalo meat. In Ireland they're soaked in Guinness gravy, and Italians fill them with spinach and call them *gnocchi*. They can be steamed or fried and are found all over the world. I'm talking, of course, about dumplings.

Beth

Dumplings are a group of dishes where a filling is wrapped inside pieces of cooked dough. They're basically dough envelopes with a filling inside. Fillings can be anything from meat and fish to vegetables, tofu or cheese. And the dough is usually based on a starchy grain like wheat, rice, corn or potato. In fact, the English word, 'dumpling', comes from a 17th century adjective, *dump*, meaning 'dough-like'.

Neil

The really amazing thing about dumplings is that they're found all over the world. Over the centuries, different countries and regions have experimented with flavours and fillings to create something unique. Wherever in the world you are there's probably a special kind of dumpling for you!

Beth

In this programme, we'll be sampling a dumpling from the West African country of Ghana. And, as usual, we'll be learning some useful new vocabulary as well.

Neil

Great! But first I have a question for you, Beth. Probably the most famous British dumplings, suet dumplings, are cooked on top of a chicken or beef stew. They're made from suet... but what exactly is that? Is suet:

- a) wheat?
- b) potato? or,
- c) animal fat?

Beth

Hmmm, I think suet is made from animal fat.

Neil

OK, Beth, we'll find out if that's the correct answer later in the programme. The origins of dumplings are a mystery. Historians think the dish is very old, but no-one knows for sure when or where the first dumpling was cooked. One theory puts the birthplace of the dumpling along the Silk Road, linking China with Central Asia, and Turkey.

Beth

One way or another, the dumpling journeyed through the Middle East and across Africa to Ghana, where today it's a favourite way of adding carbohydrates to a dish, as well as soaking up sauce and juices. Kafui Adzah is a businesswoman and fan of the Ghanaian dumpling called, *kenkey*.

Neil

Here she introduces *kenkey* to Ruth Alexander, presenter of BBC World Service programme, The Food Chain:

Kafui Adzah

I love *kenkey*. In fact I had *kenkey* this afternoon!

Ruth Alexander

You've had some this afternoon?

Kafui Adzah

Yes.

Ruth Alexander

Ah, lovely. And it **hits the spot**?

Kafui Adzah

Absolutely, and... the Ga-Adangbe is one of the tribes in Ghana and *kenkey* is their **staple food**, even though it's eaten across the whole country.

Ruth Alexander

How is it then eaten?

Kafui Adzah

Now we have to eat *kenkey* with what we call *shito* – chilli sauce. OK. But we also have the black sauce... it's like with shrimps, fish, and all sort of proteins in it. And then... **Yum Yum!** You go at it! **You dig in!**

Ruth Alexander

Is this really satisfying **comfort food**?

Kafui Adzah

It is very satisfying, in fact *kenkey* is loved by most people who do manual work because it fills the **tummy** and it takes you almost a whole day before you feel hungry again.

Beth

Kafui says eating *kenkey* really **hits the spot**. If **something hits the spot**, it's exactly what you wanted and totally satisfies you.

Neil

Kenkey dumplings are made from maize sourdough and eaten across Ghana. For some tribes, *kenkey* is their **staple food** – a basic and important type of food that

is regularly eaten by a large portion of the population. In Britain for example, bread and eggs are staple foods.

Beth

Kenkey takes time to make - the maize needs to be soaked in water for a week. But when they're ready and served with a hot chilli sauce, Kafui uses two phrases to show it's time to eat. **Yum yum!** is used to say that food tastes or smells very good, and **dig in!** is another exclamation meaning: don't wait, start eating and eat as much as you like.

Neil

For Ghanaians, *kenkey* is **comfort food**, something which is enjoyable to eat and makes you feel happier. And what's more, it fills your **tummy** or stomach.

Beth

Whatever type you eat and wherever in the world you eat them, dumplings are a great way to spread a little love, including in Britain!

Neil

Ah yes, it looks like we're back to my earlier question. I asked you what the traditional British suet dumpling is made from. Beth guessed it was animal fat, which was... the correct answer! Suet dumplings aren't the healthiest, but for some Brits they're certainly **comfort food** - food that makes you feel happier because it tastes good, or because it reminds you of home.

Beth

OK, let's recap the rest of the vocabulary we've learned in this programme, starting with the idiom **hits the spot**, meaning that something is satisfying and exactly what you wanted.

Neil

A **staple food** is a basic and important type of food that is regularly eaten by a large portion of the population.

Beth

The exclamation **yum yum!** is used to say that food tastes or smells delicious.

Neil

If you say **dig in!** you're inviting someone to start eating as much as they want.

Beth

And finally, **tummy** is an informal word for stomach. Once again our six minutes are up, but remember to join us again next time for more trending topics and useful vocabulary, here at 6 Minute English. Goodbye for now!

Neil

Bye!

VOCABULARY

hits the spot

(idiom) is exactly what you needed or wanted; gives total satisfaction

staple food

basic and important type of food that is regularly eaten by a large portion of the population

yum yum!

exclamation used to say that food tastes or smells very good

dig in!

used to invite someone to start eating and encourage them to eat as much as they want

comfort food

food that makes you feel happier because it tastes good to eat, or because it reminds you of home

tummy

(informal) stomach