

Random Thoughts 31

Cake

We are all familiar with the baked dessert called “cake.” They come in all types, sizes, and flavors. Originally, a long time ago, they were modifications of bread. When I was a kid, homemade cakes and pies were the main desserts at home. The word “cake” is also used in idiomatic expressions. Here are a few of the more common ones.

Take the cake

It is used to describe something that is really amazing or incredible and also as a compliment for something that is really good. For example, if I see something that seems incredible, I would simply say, “That takes the cake!” I would also say that expression when I see something that I think was really good. The saying began in the southern part of the United States during the latter 19th century during an event called a **cakewalk**. This was a dance contest held on emancipated black slave plantations. The couple that won the contest was awarded a large cake. Accordingly, to “take the cake” meant to win first place.

Piece of cake

This is used to refer to any task or job that is very easy to do. It seems that this expression was started by pilots in the British Royal Air Force in the late 1930s to describe an easy mission. How it came about, though is a mystery. A similar expression having the same meanings is **easy as pie** and how that expression came about is also a mystery.

The icing on the cake

This refers to anything that makes a good situation even better. As you probably know, the **icing** on a cake is the sugary coating

Sell like hotcakes

This is used to describe a product that is so popular that it sells very quickly. In the 19th century hot cakes, another name for pancakes, were often sold at church benefits, fairs, and other functions. They were so popular that they always sold quickly.

Nutty as a fruitcake

It is used to describe a very strange or crazy person. A **fruitcake** is a cake made with candied or dried fruit, nuts, and spices, and optionally soaked in spirits. They are normally served in celebration of weddings and Christmas. **Nutty** is a colloquial expression meaning insane or crazy.

You can't have your cake and eat it, too.

This is a very old and common expression meaning, you cannot or should not have or want more than you deserve or is reasonable or that you cannot and should not try to have two incompatible things. It is similar to the expression **you can't have it both ways** which means the same thing.