
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Eat humble pie



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hi, Feifei. I'm glad you've come to watch me train for the pie-eating competition. I'm going to be the new champion! I'm so sure of it – no one's going to beat me, I'm the best!

Feifei

How can you be so sure you are going to win?

Rob

Because I love eating.

Feifei

But you're so thin. I can't imagine ten of these huge pies fitting inside your skinny body.

Rob

Don't worry, they will – I'll eat them all and very quickly.

Feifei

So let me start the clock. Are you ready?

Rob

Yes!

Feifei

Here we go!

Rob

Okay. Right, let me try some of these... (eating pies). Lovely! Lovely!

Feifei

Well, two down ... eight to go.

Rob

Okay, a bit more ...(eating more pies)

Feifei

That's four now ... five and ...

Rob

No! No! I can't eat anymore!

Feifei

Are you sure?

Rob

Yes, I'm full up!

Feifei

If you can't finish these, you're going to have to eat humble pie.

Rob

Humble pie? I won't have room for any type of pie. I'm stuffed! But I see what you mean. I have to admit that I was wrong when I said I could eat all those pies.

Feifei

Yes, in English, when we say someone has to 'eat humble pie', we mean they have to admit they can't do something they boasted about. It's a bit humiliating for them.

Rob

Yes. That person then has to act in an apologetic way. 'To eat humble pie' is today's expression in The English We Speak. Let's hear some examples of how it's used.

Examples

The factory owner had to eat humble pie after a lot of customers complained about his product.

Peter is so arrogant. He said he could finish the work much quicker than anybody else in the office. I hope he has to eat humble pie.

Rob

So, I can't eat ten pies in a few minutes after all. We still have all these pies, which are very tasty actually. You can have some, Feifei.

Feifei

Thank you. Mmm, not bad. This is an interesting expression, Rob. I wonder where it came from.

Rob

Well, some people say it might have come from 'umbles', which is an old word for animal

organs like kidneys, intestines, etc. In the past, rich people might have considered eating an 'umbles pie' as a punishment. But who knows?

Feifei

Well, Rob, I don't think eating all those pies is a punishment. We just have to eat one at a time and enjoy each one.

Rob

Good idea! Okay. Shall we start now?

Feifei

Yes.

Rob

Here it goes. Okay. Bye bye!

Feifei

Bye!

Rob

Lovely!