
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

A different kettle of fish



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

Hello, I'm Feifei and it's time again for The English We Speak and with me today is Rob...

Rob

Hello everyone!

Feifei

Rob, what is that awful smell of fish?

Rob

Ah, you mean these smoked kippers that I've got here?

Feifei

Smoked kippers? Why have you got smoked kippers in the studio?

Rob

To illustrate today's phrase. And this long pan is a kettle. It's not the thing you boil water in.

Feifei

Oh right. So what is the fish-related phrase then?

Rob

The phrase is a **different kettle of fish** – we say it to mean a situation or subject being discussed is completely different from the one you are talking about.

Feifei

A strange phrase indeed. So we could say: writing English is a **very different kettle of fish** from speaking it?

Rob

Yes, we can – it means it's a different thing – let's hear some more examples...

Examples

I loved the first film but the sequel was a **different kettle of fish**.

Heating a ready meal in the microwave is one thing but preparing a freshly cooked meal is a **different kettle of fish**.

Camping on the beach would be amazing but camping in the rain would be **a different kettle of fish!**

Feifei

So, when something is **a different kettle of fish** it means to be completely different from something or someone else that has been talked about. I've got it Rob!

Rob

Good. You can also say **to be another kettle of fish**. So then Feifei, how about coming round to my house and eating some of this fish?

Feifei

Rob, going to your house is one thing but trying your cooking is **a different kettle of fish!**

Rob

Don't you like fish?

Feifei

Fish is ok – it's your cooking that isn't.

Rob

I shall eat alone then! Come on fishy-wishys...

Feifei

Bye.