
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Eat your heart out



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak. I'm Feifei...

Rob

...and I'm Rob. Hello! In this programme, as you know, we like to add a little humour while teaching our phrases.

Feifei

Yes, usually it involves a misunderstanding. For example, we often pretend that one of the presenters doesn't understand the phrase.

Rob

Yes, they take it too literally: they only understand its word-for-word meaning.

Feifei

But with this phrase, that would just be too horrible.

Rob

And disgusting.

Feifei

And not to mention... physically impossible.

Rob

So let's not go there. Today's phrase is: eat your heart out.

Feifei

Scary, huh? Thankfully, it has nothing to do with eating an important part of your body.

Rob

It's an unusual expression. When people say it, they often follow it with the name of a famous or successful person that they want to be compared to.

Feifei

But why? It's easiest to explain with an example. Imagine you are painting a picture. When you finish, you say: Eat your heart out, Picasso!

Rob

What you are saying is that your painting is better than Picasso's.

Feifei

But, because Picasso was a true master and your own work is probably not at the same level, most likely you would be saying this as a joke!

Rob

And that's how people often use it: as a joke. After doing something impressive, they say 'eat your heart out' followed by someone who is famous for doing that thing.

Feifei

For example, after cooking a fantastic meal, they might say 'eat your heart out', and the name of a celebrity chef. Even if they don't think their cooking is better than the chef's.

Rob

It's almost like a fun way of expressing pride in your work, without sounding too arrogant. I think it's best if we hear a few more examples.

Examples

A: What a goal! How did you score that?!

B: Not bad huh? Eat your heart out, Ronaldo!

I've been practising all month and think I'm getting pretty good. Want to hear me sing? OK, here goes... Eat your heart out, Beyoncé!

A: Would you mind helping me lift this table?

B: No problem, I'll do it. Eat your heart out, Hulk!

A: Hey, it's just a table, you're not an Avenger!

Rob

This is The English We Speak from BBC Learning English. So there we are – humorously comparing someone's football skills to Ronaldo's, their singing ability to Beyoncé's and their strength to Hulk from the movies. And we've resisted all temptation to create a situation where we ask Feifei to actually eat a heart.

Feifei

Thank goodness. I really don't feel hungry in any case.

Rob

Neither do I. Bye!