
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Do you like garlic?



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. It smells delicious sizzling in oil and it's great for keeping vampires away, but don't eat it on a first date! I'm talking, of course, about garlic. Neil, do you like garlic?

Neil

Oh yes, I love garlic. I had a very garlicky meal last night.

Beth

Mmm, I know – I can smell it from here! Here is Jason Chan, an Australian chef who specialises in Asian cuisine, and Poul Erik Jensen, a Danish chef living in France, talking about their love of garlic to BBC World Service programme, The Food Chain:

Jason Chan

I love garlic because it's a **versatile** ingredient that can be used for cooking and offers various health benefits.

Poul Erik Jensen

We use it a lot and so, from stocks to soups – and in vegetable dishes, meat dishes – there's very certain a clove of garlic in somewhere. Yeah, **it's unimaginable** not using garlic.

Neil

Jason loves garlic because it's **versatile**, meaning it can be used in many different ways. And Poul thinks cooking without garlic **is unimaginable**, meaning it's difficult to imagine because it would be so bad.

Beth

Love garlic or hate it, in this episode we'll be finding out more about this **versatile**, strong-smelling food. And, as usual, we'll be learning some useful new words and phrases as well.

Neil

And remember – you can find all the vocabulary from this episode on our website, bbclearningenglish.com. Now, Beth, I have a question for you. It's a little-known fact that of the 600 varieties of garlic, many grew only in the former Soviet Union and were unavailable in the West until the fall of communism in the 1990s. So, which of the following varieties of garlic grew in the former USSR? Is it:

- a) rocambole,
- b) fire, or
- c) riesig?

Beth

Oh, I have no idea. I'm going to guess fire.

Neil

OK. We'll find out if you're right at the end of the programme. Garlic is much more than just a cooking ingredient. For centuries, garlic was an important food throughout ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, as well as India and China. It was the Roman Empire that brought garlic to European countries like France. And everywhere garlic grew, it was praised for its health-giving powers.

Beth

Here, BBC presenter Rumella Dasgupta asks author and garlic expert Robin Cherry about garlic's medicinal uses, on BBC World Service's The Food Chain:

Rumella Dasgupta

And what kind of illnesses or conditions would they have treated, for instance?

Robin Cherry

Everything from cancer, scurvy, the plague, respiratory **ailments**... it was used as an **aphrodisiac**.

Neil

Garlic was used to treat respiratory **ailments**. An **ailment** is another word for an illness or minor health problem, so a respiratory **ailment** is an illness of the lungs.

Beth

In Ancient Greece, garlic was also used as an **aphrodisiac** – a food or drink believed to increase sexual desire. But interestingly, this was the same reason why some cultures avoided eating garlic altogether, including a religious group from India called Jains.

Neil

Yes, Jainism is an ancient Indian religion, like Hinduism and Buddhism, based on the idea of 'ahimsa', or non-violence. But unlike many Hindus and Buddhists, Jains' definition of non-violence includes plants and vegetables. Jains don't eat garlic because uprooting the plant kills both it and the soil ecosystem it grows in.

Beth

Here's Sonal Ved, a Mumbai-based cooking-show host and author of many books on Indian cuisine, explaining another reason why Jains avoid garlic to BBC World Service programme, The Food Chain:

Sonal Ved

According to Hinduism also, garlic is considered a food which is called a 'tamasic' food. It is believed to **stimulate** desire, passion, aggression. And that's why they **abstain from** eating those kinds of food: because it is believed to impact your spiritual growth and also your mental clarity.

Beth

Jains **abstain from** eating garlic. If you **abstain from** doing something, you choose not to do it. For example, you might **abstain from** tobacco or alcohol because you know they're bad for your health.

Neil

Like the Ancient Greeks, Jains believe that garlic **stimulates** sexual desire. The verb to **stimulate** means encourage it or cause it to develop and grow.

Beth

Modern medicine has confirmed some of these ancient beliefs about the health benefits of garlic, including reduced blood pressure and better gut health. OK Neil, isn't it time you revealed the answer to your question?

Neil

Yes, Beth. I asked you which variety of garlic grew in the former USSR.

Beth

And I said fire. Was I right?

Neil

You were absolutely correct.

Beth

Yay!

Neil

Fire or Georgian fire is a hot, white garlic from the Republic of Georgia in the former Soviet Union. OK, let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with **versatile**, an adjective meaning to have many different purposes or uses.

Beth

The phrase, **it's unimaginable** is used to say that something is difficult to imagine because it would be so good or so bad.

Neil

An **ailment** is an illness or health problem.

Beth

An **aphrodisiac** is a food or drink believed to increase sexual desire.

Neil

If you **abstain from** something, you choose not to do it.

Beth

And finally, to **stimulate** means to encourage something or cause it to grow. Once again, our six minutes are up. If you've enjoyed this episode then head over to our website, bbclearningenglish.com, where you'll find a quiz and worksheet to practise the vocabulary you've learnt. See you again soon. But for now, it's goodbye!

Neil

Goodbye!

VOCABULARY

versatile

having many different uses or purposes

it's unimaginable

used to say that something is difficult to imagine because it's so good, bad, large, etc

ailment

illness or minor health problem

aphrodisiac

food or drink believed to increase sexual desire

abstain (from something)

choose not to do something

stimulate

encourage or cause to grow, develop or become active