
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Preserving traditional recipes



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Sam

Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Sam.

Rob

And I'm Rob. Now, all over the world people love to eat, and most of us have favourite food we like to cook. Often, this involves a recipe – that's written down instructions explaining how you combine the different items of food you are going to cook - the ingredients – into a meal. My favourite recipe is for **bangers and mash** - a cheap and popular British meal made of sausage and mashed potato.

Sam

Cooking is a big part of our lives, something pleasurable we do with others, and a way of discovering the flavours and tastes of other cultures.

Rob

In this programme, we'll be doing just that – discovering the food culture of Ghana in west Africa, and hearing about one woman's quest to preserve her country's traditional recipes. And, as usual, we'll be learning some related vocabulary along the way.

Sam

But before we start, I have a question for you, Rob. Your favourite recipe is the classic British dish, bangers and mash. It's easy to understand why mashed potato is called 'mash' - but how did sausages come to be known as 'bangers'? Is it:

- a) because 'bang' is an old-fashioned word for pork?
- b) because sausage-making machines used to make a banging noise? or,
- c) because sausages would explode in the frying pan, going 'bang'?

Rob

I think it's a) – 'bang' is an old-fashioned word for pork.

Sam

OK, Rob, I'll reveal the correct answer later. Food writer, Abena Offeh-Gyimah, was born in Ghana but moved to Canada as a child. After school she would go for burgers and fries with friends, before heading home to eat traditional Ghanaian food with her family, food cooked with ingredients like dawadawa, a spice made from roasting locust beans, and fufu.

Rob

Her mother's cooking gave Abena a love of traditional recipes - so much so that five years ago, she moved back to Ghana to rediscover her country's food culture. But when she arrived, Abena was surprised how much things had changed. Many traditional spices and ingredients were no longer being used, and it was more common to see tomato ketchup than Ghanaian chipotle sauce.

Sam

Here Abena describes how her grandparents used to cook in the old days, to BBC World Service programme, The Food Chain.

Abena Offeh-Gyimah

So, they would actually cook the yam, they would cook the plantain, and they would use, you know, the **mortar and pestle** to actually **pound** it, you know. Now in Ghana, you could just buy potato flour and just make fufu on the stove. But we're losing that, right? That communal experience of cutting the yam and cutting the plantain and cooking it.

Rob

Abena's grandparents made fufu the traditional way, using ingredients like yam and green bananas called plantains. These were placed in a **mortar and pestle** - cooking equipment made of a bowl - the mortar - and a heavy stone - the pestle - which is used to grind ingredients together.

Sam

The traditional method was to **pound** fufu – to crush it into a paste or powder. But nowadays many people buy ready-made flour and cook fufu the modern way, on a stove.

Rob

For Abena, this represented an unwelcome departure from ancestral ways of cooking, and she decided that something had to be done. Here's Ruth Alexander, presenter of BBC World Service's, The Food Chain, to continue the story:

Ruth Alexander

Abena was so **taken aback** about the loss of **know-how** about Ghana's traditional

recipes and ingredients in the towns and cities, that she decided she had to do something, and set off to rural areas on a fact-finding tour.

Abena Offeh-Gyimah

We travelled across the Accra East region in Ghana, just to **document** indigenous dishes, and to ask ‘what are people eating now?’, and learning that a lot of dishes are lost.

Sam

Abena was **taken aback** by the changes in Ghana’s food culture – she felt **shocked and surprised**. Traditionally, recipes were passed down orally from mother to daughter, instead of being written down, so a generation of young Ghanaians were losing cooking **know-how** – the practical skills and knowledge of how to do something.

Rob

Abena travelled around Ghana to **document** traditional recipes – to record information about them by writing them down, or taking photos, before they were lost forever.

Sam

If her story has inspired you to find out about your own country’s traditional recipes, or discover more about Ghanaian cooking, you can read more on Abena’s website, [Living the Ancestral Way](#).

Rob

And after all this talk of traditional Ghanaian food, it’s time for your question about a traditional British recipe, **bangers and mash** – or sausage and mashed potato. Now, you asked about the name ‘banger’, and I guessed that ‘bang’ was an old-fashioned word for pork. So, was I right?

Sam

You were... wrong, I’m afraid, Rob. The name ‘banger’ started in World War One, when meat shortages resulted in sausages being made using water, that caused them to explode, going ‘bang!’, when cooked.

Rob

Well, that’s certainly one way to spice up your cooking! OK, let’s recap the rest of the vocabulary, starting with **mortar and pestle** – a bowl and a heavy stone which is used to grind ingredients together.

Sam

To **pound** something means to crush it into a paste or powder.

Rob

If you're **taken aback**, you feel shocked and surprised.

Sam

Know-how is the practical skill and knowledge needed to do something, such as cook.

Rob

And finally, the verb **document** means to record information about something by writing about it or taking photos.

Sam

Once again, our six minutes are up. Bye for now!

Rob

Bye!

VOCABULARY

bangers and mash

(informal) sausages (bangers) and mashed potato, a common British meal

mortar and pestle

cooking equipment made up of a bowl (the mortar), and a heavy stone (the pestle) which is used to grind and pound ingredients together

pound

crush into a paste or powder

taken aback

feel shocked and surprised

know-how

the practical skills and knowledge of how to do something

document

record information about something by writing about it or taking photos of it