

Everything has an end, only the sausage has two

Alles hat ein Ende, nur die Wurst hat zwei

This is a humorous way of saying that everything comes to an end at some point.

The saying incorporates word play, since ein Ende can mean both "an ending" and "one end," allowing for the punchline that a sausage has two ends rather than one. Originating from Francis Beaumont's comedy The Knight of the Burning Pestle, published in 1613, featuring Master Humphrey, who courts a beautiful young girl named Luce. Humphrey tells the young girl's father that all things have an end – except for black pudding, which has two. He expresses his endless love in this bloody simile:

Although, as writers say, all things have end, And that we call a pudding hath his two, Oh, let it not seem strange, I pray, to you, If in this bloody simile I put My love, more endless than frail things or gut!

In Germany, this proverb was mentioned as early as 1867 in the German dictionary of proverbs Deutsches Sprichwörter-Lexicon by Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Wanderer. However, the mainstream use of this phrase can be credited to German singer Stephan Remmler and his song Alles hat ein Ende nur die Wurst hat zwei (1986).



Now we have the salad!

Jetzt haben wir den Salat!

Everything is all messed up!

In the 15th century, the word "Salat" was derived from the Italian word "insalata," which referred to a mixed dish that was served cold. Since the 19th century, the word "Salat" has been used figuratively in Germany to describe a mess or general chaos, since a salad contains many different ingredients that are mixed together, resulting in a dish that looks quite messy.

So when your German friend says "Now we have the salad!", they mean that something has gone wrong and the result is a big mess.



The morning hour has gold in its mouth Morgenstund hat Gold im Mund

Those who wake up early in the morning will be more productive and therefore successful.

This proverb is based on the Latin phrase "aurora musis amica" (aurora is the friend of the muses.) It is based on the old Norse idea that Aurora – the personification of dawn – has gold in her hair and in her mouth.

In Norway it is said that pieces of gold fall out of Aurora's mouth when she speaks and from her hair when she combs through it. And in Sweden, people think that a golden ring falls out of her mouth when she laughs. The phrase means that those who wake early in the morning are rich with time and opportunity.

Erasmus von Rotterdam, one of the most influential scholars of the northern Renaissance, wrote the phrase 'Dawn is a friend of the muses' to encourage his students in Holland, advising that the best work one can do is often in the earliest hours of the day.



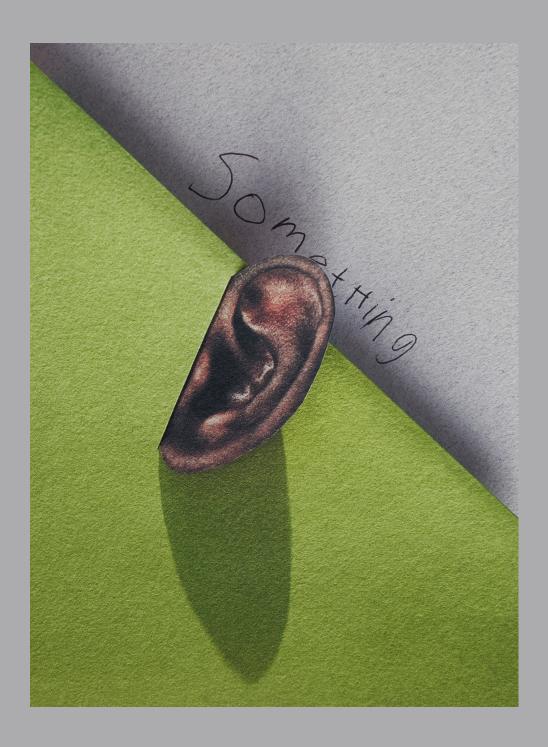
To perform an egg dance

Einen Eiertanz aufführen

To dance around the subject and avoid getting to the point.

An egg dance was a traditional Easter game dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries. Originally, the expression "egg dance" referred to an intricate dance that was performed among raw eggs – sometimes even blindfolded. The eggs would be placed on the ground for a dancer to then move among them, trying to break as few as possible.

In Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship (1795), the leading character Wilhelm buys a young peasant girl from a band of travelling performers after seeing her being beaten for refusing to do the egg dance. To thank him for saving her from captivity she performs her egg dance for him blindfolded. Nowadays, this idiom describes someone who avoids talking about a problem the same way the dancers avoided stepping on the raw eggs, all the while moving carefully through the situation.



To write something behind the ears

Sich etwas hinter die Ohren schreiben

To remember something well, and not forget it!

In the Middle Ages, when important contracts were signed, such as the laying of boundary stones, it was common for children and young people to be present. They were to act as witnesses should any dispute arise. To ensure that they would recall the agreement even in old age, they would be pulled by the ears or given a slap around the ear. This was referred to as "writing the event behind their ears."



Not to take the sheet of paper in front of the mouth

Kein Blatt vor den Mund nehmen

To speak in a forceful and direct way, especially when saying something unpleasant to someone.

In the world of theatre, actors used to hold a sheet of paper or a leaf in front of their face when saying something offensive or malicious. That way they could not be held accountable for it later. The sheet of paper was used to cover the face and make the voice unrecognisable.

Another theory is that the actors pretended to read from the sheet of paper to highlight the fact that what they were saying was not their own opinion.



To have a tomcat

Einen Kater haben

To have a hangover.

What do cats have to do with this expression? The answer is: nothing at all.

"Kater," which means tomcat in German, has evolved from the word "Katarrh." Catarrh is an inflammation of the mucous membranes, and since the symptoms that arise after drinking too much alcohol are similar to those of catarrh, students from the University of Leipzig used to say "I have catarrh."

In the 19th century, this expression made its way into everyday speech. Over time, the word "Katarrh" became "Kater." So if you have a tomcat, what you actually have is a hangover.



It's all about the sausage

Es geht um die Wurst

It's the moment of truth!

This phrase is used during a moment when you need to give it everything you've got, whether it's a competition, a game or a job interview. The use of the sausage relates to the historical importance of sausages in Germany. This phrase was first documented in Leipzig in 1881, but its origins are thought to date back much further.

Throughout this period in Germany, fairs and festivals were becoming increasingly popular in towns and villages across the country. Many games and competitions would offer large and high-quality sausages as the winning prize. Unlike today, sausages were a high end and expensive food that could easily be worth a week's wages for someone of a lower class. Winning a sausage prize would be a great honour and treat for the family, allowing them to share a delicious delicacy that they wouldn't normally be able to afford.

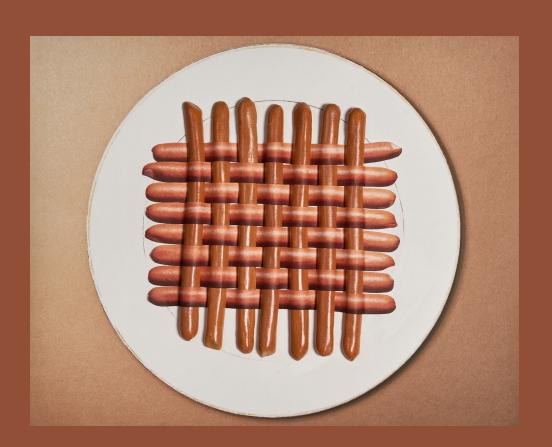


To say something through the flower Etwas durch die Blume sagen

To express criticism in an indirect way.

This idiom goes back to the flower language, in which flowers are assigned certain symbolic meanings. For example, young girls used to reject their suitors by offering them certain flowers, such as cornflowers and poppies.

When you say something through the flower, you make a statement (often criticism) in an indirect or less offensive way to avoid hurting the recipient's feelings. Whether it's gentle or blunt criticism – a common ironic response to a rebuke from a German is "Danke für die Blumen!" (Thanks for the flowers!)



To ask for extra sausage

Eine Extrawurst verlangen

To expect special treatment.

It is assumed that this expression goes far back into the Baroque period, where it was quoted by Abraham a Santa Clara (1644-1709), a famous Augustinian preacher. The origin of this saying might be explained by the fact that poor people could not afford sausages in the Middle Ages. Sausages and butter were once particularly expensive and valuable, and were therefore considered a delicacy.

Occasionally, poorer families were offered a sausage as a gift, which was considered by some to be special treatment. Being given an extra sausage was equivalent to receiving a special favour. This idiom carries negative connotations. If someone said to you "Jetzt verlangst du aber eine Extrawurst!" ("Now you're asking for extra sausage!") they would be suggesting that you are requesting something that you do not deserve.



To take somebody on the arm

Jemanden auf den Arm nehmen

Are you joking?

Usually you take small children on your arm. But when a German asks you "Nimmst du mich gerade auf den Arm?" (Are you taking me on your arm right now?), they want to know if you are messing with them – since you are basically treating them like a small, gullible child. This idiom was first documented in 1850.



To have tomatoes on one's eyes

Tomaten auf den Augen haben

To be blind to something that is right in front of you.

In Spain the tomato was considered the "fruit of sin" until the late Middle Ages. Traitors and thieves were often punished and publicly humiliated, as they were made to walk around the streets for weeks with "Tomates en los ojos" (tomatoes on the eyes). This would make other villagers aware of their crimes, and was also intended to make the criminals walk into things and endure mishaps as a kind of retribution.

They saying "to have tomatoes on one's eyes" is still used today in many European countries when people fail to see something obvious.



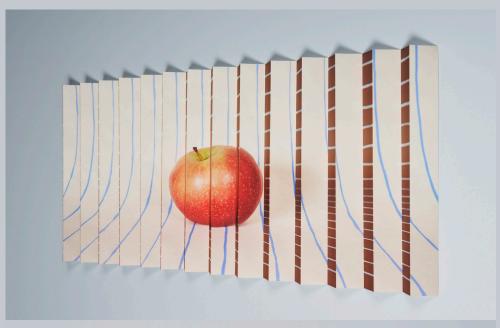
We're sitting beautifully in the ink

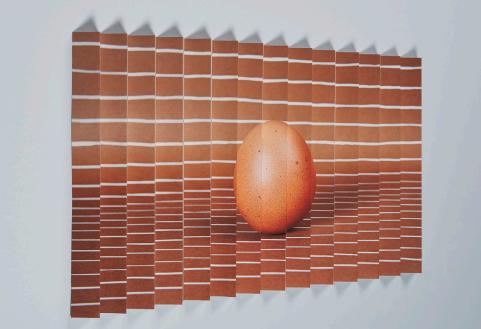
Wir sitzen schön in der Tinte

To be in trouble through one's own fault.

This idiom dates back to the 16th century, when it was first used in 1520 by German preacher Johann Geiler von Kaysersberg who said, "You are full of sin ... you are stuck in ink". In this instance, ink is symbolic of a stained mess that is hard to get off.

The image of being sat in a puddle of ink paints a vivid picture of being in a mess of your own creation. If you're "sitting beautifully in the ink" you're in an unfortunate situation that you want to get out of as quickly as possible.





For an apple and an egg

Für'n Appel und 'n Ei

To get a good deal

In the past, apples and eggs were used to compensate people for small services on farms. As these foods were readily available and cheap, buying something "for an apple and an egg" means that you have made a good bargain. This saying was already common in the 18th century.



He who has water up to his neck, shouldn't let his head drop

Wem das Wasser bis zum Halse steht, der sollte den Kopf nicht hängen lassen

If you're in big trouble, don't give up!

The German saying "jemandem steht das Wasser bis zum Hals" (someone is up to their neck in water) was documented in the 17th century. This idiom is believed to have originated from a literal image where someone is deeply submerged in water, and the act of dropping one's head would cause them to drown. The image emphasises the need to stay afloat, and to face challenges and not give up, even when things seem hopeless.

Another possible origin is cited in the Bible; Isaiah 8:8 says, "Its water will come as a flood into Judah. It will cover the land and it will rise as high as people's necks!" In this verse, Isaiah describes the Assyrian army's invasion of Judah as a flood that reached up to the necks of the people. When the waters reach that high, the possibility of drowning is real, but as the head is not underwater there is still hope.



To let someone take the sausage from your bread

Sich die Wurst vom Brot nehmen lassen

To put up with something; to accept disadvantages without protest.

It's not entirely clear where this idiom comes from, but its origin is easy to guess: Sausages were once particularly expensive and valuable. They are also nutritious, and bread with a slice of sausage simply tastes better than plain bread. If you let someone take the best and most valuable part of your sandwich, it implies that you tolerate a lot from others without protest.

The phrase is also often used in its negated form: If someone says, "I won't let them take the sausage off my bread!" they mean that they won't tolerate being taken advantage of.



To be a nose length ahead

Jemandem um eine Nasenlänge voraus sein

To hold a narrow lead over somebody.

This idiom likely originates from the world of equestrian sports. The "nose length" refers to the length of a horse's head. If one horse was "a nose length ahead" of another in a race, it means it crossed the finish line just before the other horse.



To have a bird

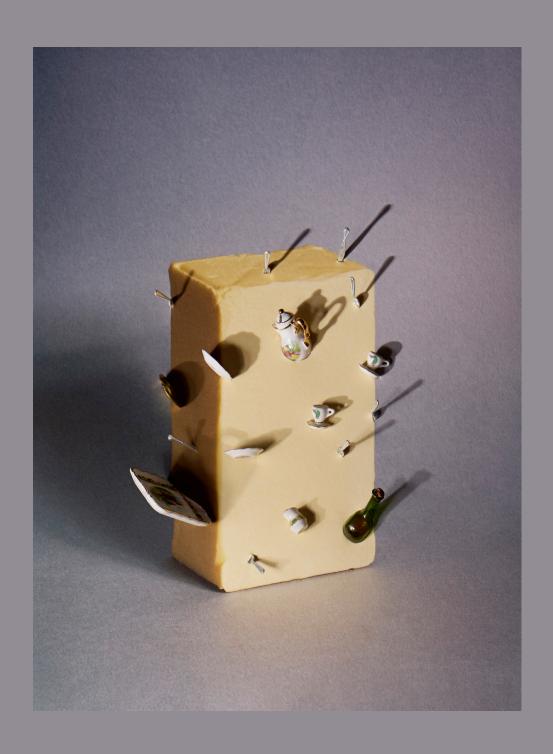
Einen Vogel haben

To be acting crazy.

This idiom is attributed to an old folk belief according to which animals, such as birds, live in the minds of the mentally ill.

Originating from the middle ages when it was thought that people of unsound mind literally had birds nesting in their heads and flying around, causing madness.

A similar phrase is "eine Meise haben," meaning "to have a tit." Meise translates to the English bird "tit." Here the word "Meise" originates from the yiddish "Maase" or "Maise," meaning "story." Over time the definition evolved from story into "rambling" or "silly" speech. If somebody has a bird, the implication is that they are acting crazy.



Everything is in butter

Es ist alles in Butter

Everything is fine. Everything is good.

In the middle ages, glasses and other valuable, fragile objects were encased in butter in order to transport them safely and prevent them from breaking. Butter was heated and the liquid was poured over the breakable glass or porcelain goods in large wooden barrels. Once set, the hardened butter protected the delicate products and ensured that everything would be safe for the duration of the journey. On arrival, the butter was warmed, and the transported items were gently removed from the liquid and cleaned.

During transportation someone would ask "Ist noch alles in Butter?" (Is everything still in butter?) to check if things were intact during a bumpy journey. Over time this phrase came to mean that everything was going smoothly, and everything was well.