



## **50 ITALIAN FOOD-RELATED IDIOMATIC PHRASES**

### **1. C'entra come i cavoli a merenda!**

Literal meaning: it is like cabbage as a mid-afternoon snack

Actual meaning: it has nothing to do with it, it doesn't match something, it is off-topic

### **2. Salvare capra e cavoli.**

Literal meaning: to save goat and cabbages

Actual meaning: to get out of a situation saving the interests of both parties involved.

### **3. Farsi i cavoli propri**

Literal meaning: to mind one's own cabbages

Actual meaning: to mind one's own business

### **4. Non m'importa un fico secco!**

Literal meaning: I don't care a dried fig

Actual meaning: I don't give a damn

### **5. Essere come il prezzemolo.**

Literal meaning: to be like parsley

Actual meaning: to be everywhere

### **6. Tutto fa brodo.**

Literal meaning: everything makes broth

Actual meaning: everything could be useful, anything goes

### **7. Gallina vecchia fa buon brodo.**

Literal meaning: old hen makes good broth

Actual meaning: being old is not always a negative thing

## **8. Lascialo cuocere nel suo brodo!**

Literal meaning: let him boil in his broth

Actual meaning: do not help him, let him fix things on his own

## **9. Se non è zuppa, è pan bagnato!**

Literal meaning: if it is not soup, it is wet bread!

Actual meaning: when two things are the same

## **10. Essere buono come il pane.**

Literal meaning: to be as good as bread

Actual meaning: to be a very good person

## **11. Essere un pezzo di pane.**

Literal meaning: to be a piece of bread

Actual meaning: to be a very good person

## **12. Trovare pane per i propri denti.**

Literal meaning: to find bread for your own teeth

Actual meaning: to find someone who is as good as you in something

## **13. Rendere pan per focaccia.**

Literal meaning: to give bread for *focaccia* (type of bread)

Actual meaning: to repay someone who has done something bad to you in the same way

## **14. Dire pane al pane, vino al vino.**

Literal meaning: to say bread to bread, wine to wine

Actual meaning: to be frank and open, to express your opinion openly

## **15. Chi ha il pane, non ha i denti.**

Literal meaning: those who have bread have no teeth

Actual meaning: those who have something but don't know how to use it or are not interested in using it

## **16. Tanto fumo e niente arrosto!**

Literal meaning: a lot of smoke and no roast

Actual meaning: all talk and no action

### **17. Rompere le uova nel paniere.**

Literal meaning: to break the eggs in the basket

Actual meaning: to upset someone's plans

### **18. Cercare il pelo nell'uovo.**

Literal meaning: to look for hair in the egg

Actual meaning: to be very fussy

### **19. Ridi, ridi, che la mamma ha fatto i gnocchi.**

Literal meaning: laugh, laugh, you mother has made gnocchi

Actual meaning: you laugh but do not realize that there is nothing to laugh about

### **20. O mangi la minestra o salti dalla finestra!**

Literal meaning: eat the soup or jump out of the window

Actual meaning: you have to do something no matter what, there is no choice

### **21. Non c'è trippa per gatti.**

Literal meaning: there is no tripe for cats

Actual meaning: there is no chance for something

### **22. Non tutte le ciambelle escono con il buco.**

Literal meaning: no all ring-shaped pies turn out with a hole

Actual meaning: not everything turns out as expected

### **23. Essere alla frutta**

Literal meaning: to be at the fruit, to have reached the fruit (referring to the fact fruit comes at the end of the meal)

Actual meaning: to be exhausted, to be really tired, to be at the end of something with no possible solution

### **24. Non è farina del mio sacco.**

Literal meaning: it's not flour that comes from my sack

Actual meaning: this is not your thought or your work (you copied it from somebody else)

### **25. Vestirsi a cipolla**

Literal meaning: to dress as an onion

Actual meaning: to dress in layers

## **26. Capire rave per fave.**

Literal meaning: to understand turnips for fava beans

Actual meaning: to misunderstand, not to understand properly

## **27. Mi ha raccontato la rava e la fava.**

Literal meaning: he told me the turnip and the fava bean

Actual meaning: he told me everything, more than I wanted to know, with a lot of unnecessary details

## **28. Cavare il sangue da una rapa.**

Literal meaning: to take out blood out of a turnip

Actual meaning: to obtain something impossible

## **29. Essere una testa di rapa.**

Literal meaning: to be a turnip head

Actual meaning: someone who is dull

## **30. Finire a tarallucci e vino.**

Literal meaning: to end in tarallucci and wine

Actual meaning: to end a fight or a discussion with a positive attitude

## **31. Non essere né carne né pesce.**

Literal meaning: to be neither meat nor fish

Actual meaning: something or someone that has no clear or defined features

## **32. Essere la ciliegina sulla torta.**

Literal meaning: to be the cherry on the pie

Actual meaning: the final touch, the thing that makes something perfect

## **33. Fare una frittata.**

Literal meaning: to make an omelet

Actual meaning: to make a mess, to cause a problem

## **34. Ci sta come il cacio sui maccheroni!**

Literal meaning: it's like cacio cheese on maccheroni pasta

Actual meaning: a perfect match, something that is just perfect for something else

### **35. Essere dolce come il miele.**

Literal meaning: to be as sweet as honey

Actual meaning: to be really sweet

### **36. Non è mica pizza e fichi!**

Literal meaning: it's not pizza and figs!

Actual meaning: referred to something serious, important, that has value

### **37. Che pizza che sei!**

Literal meaning: what a pizza you are!

Actual meaning: what a bore you are!

### **38. Andare liscio come l'olio.**

Literal meaning: to go as smooth as oil

Actual meaning: to go very well, with no hitches

### **39. Andare in brodo di giuggiole.**

Literal meaning: to go in jujube broth

Actual meaning: to be really happy and excited, to be over the moon with joy

### **40. Avere una faccia da pesce bollito.**

Literal meaning: to have a face like boiled fish

Actual meaning: someone who is completely inexpressive

### **41. Da un pero non nasce un melo.**

Literal meaning: a pear tree can't generate an apple tree

Actual meaning: people are usually similar to their parents

### **42. Una mela non cade lontana dall'albero.**

Literal meaning: the apple doesn't fall far from the tree

Actual meaning: people are usually similar to their parents (same as the one above)

### **43. Cascare dal pero.**

Literal meaning: to fall from the pear tree

Actual meaning: when you suddenly realize that reality is different from what you thought

#### **44. Piangere sul latte versato.**

Literal meaning: to cry over spilled milk

Actual meaning: to grieve over mistakes that cannot be fixed

#### **45. È una bella patata bollente!**

Literal meaning: it is a very hot potato!

Actual meaning: it is big problem, something difficult to be solved

#### **46. Far venire il latte alle ginocchia.**

Literal meaning: to cause milk on knees

Actual meaning: to be boring, to be irritating

#### **47. Venire spremuto come un limone.**

Literal meaning: to be squeezed as a lemon

Actual meaning: to be exploited

#### **48. Avere le fette di prosciutto sugli occhi.**

Literal meaning: to have slices of ham on the eyes

Actual meaning: not to see obvious things, not to be very perceptive

#### **49. Essere stipati come sardine.**

Literal meaning: to be squashed as sardines

Actual meaning: to be in a very crowded place

#### **50. È una minestra riscaldata.**

Literal meaning: it's a reheated soup

Actual meaning: usually referred to relationships with an ex-partner, conveying the meaning that a relationship with someone whom you have already been with can't work very well