



## WORDS AND THEIR STORIES

# 'Icing on the Cake' Is As Good As It Sounds

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And now, *Words and Their Stories*, from VOA Learning English.

On this program we explore English words and expressions. We give you examples and notes on usage.

Today we talk about a **delicious dessert** made from flour, butter, sugar, and **flavorings** such as vanilla, chocolate, or my favorite, coconut. We are talking about cake!

Cake is a commonly served sweet treat at celebrations. And the word also appears in several English idioms.

Back in 2022, we taught the idiom to have your cake and eat it too. This means to have the best of both worlds. You do not have to choose between two good things. Another expression is a piece of cake. This describes something that is very easy to do or finish.

Because of all the sugar and butter, we probably should not eat too much cake. But it is so good! And sometimes having a lot of something good is better. That is the message of today's show.

Most cakes are made up of two parts: the part made from flour and the sweet topping, or icing.

Now, a cake without the sweet icing on top is already great. After all, it's made with lots of butter and sugar. It's sweet and satisfying. So, the icing is not really necessary. But it makes the cake extra special.

## Icing on the cake

And that is the meaning of the idiom icing on the cake. Something already good is made better by the addition of something else. If you describe something as icing on the cake or the icing on the cake, you mean that it makes a good thing even better, or sweeter!

Let's hear an example.

*She loves her new job and her new co-workers. So, getting her own parking spot was the icing on the cake! She hates looking for parking.*

The idiom icing on the cake has another meaning. It can be someone's greatest **accomplishment** or victory.

Here is an example of that usage.

*He had achieved the highest level of success in the company. So, his **fancy** new title was simply icing on the cake.*

## Cherry on top

We have another dessert saying that means about the same thing. Some cakes or ice cream dishes have a special topping: a sweetened cherry.

So, if something is the cherry on top, it is an addition that turns something good into something great!

*The Taylors bought the house without even knowing it had a large garden in the back. That was the cherry on top since they both love to garden.*

Sometimes we use the 'cherry on top' when making an appeal for assistance.

Let's say, I really need a friend's help. I might say, "Please help me! Pretty please with a cherry on top." This specially worded appeal often does the trick and the help comes! But, just know that it can also make you sound a little **desperate**!

And that's all the time we have for this Words and Their Stories. Until next time ... I'm Anna Matteo!

*Anna Matteo wrote this lesson for Learning English.*

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## Words in This Story

**delicious** – *adj.* appealing to one of the bodily senses especially of taste or smell

**dessert** – *n.* a usually sweet course or dish (as of pastry or ice cream) usually served at the end of a meal

**flavoring** – *n.* a substance added to food or drink to give it a desired taste

**accomplishment** – *n.* an ability, social quality, or skill gained through training or practice

**fancy** – *adj.* impressive

**desperate** – *adj.* being beyond or almost beyond hope