

Idiom by Lon Yan

加鹽加醋

jia1 yan2 jia1 cu4

The Consumer Council and the Centre for Food Safety jointly tested some popular lunch dishes at restaurants, and found many contained too much salt. So they called on restaurants to reduce sodium content in their food and cautioned people about the serious health consequences of excessive salt intake.

In fact, the advice should be extended beyond food, because many people like to add salt not only to their food but to their words too, so much so that there is a popular expression about this – “加鹽加醋” (*jia1 yan2 jia1 cu4*).

“加” (*jia1*) is “to add,” “鹽” (*yan2*) “salt,” “加” (*jia1*) “to add,” again, and “醋” (*cu4*) vinegar. Literally, “加鹽加醋” (*jia1 yan2 jia1 cu4*) is “add salt and vinegar.” Salt and vinegar are seasonings, and they add flavor to food. But

the expression is not intended to be used for its literal, but for its figurative meaning, which is “to exaggerate,” “to embellish,” “to blow something up.”

“加鹽加醋” (*jia1 yan2 jia1 cu4*) is the essence of sensational news reporting – to embellish or even fabricate fact. It is also an annoying habit of some people.

If you came to work five minutes late, and your colleague told your boss he didn’t see you the whole morning, it is “加鹽加醋” (*jia1 yan2 jia1 cu4*).

People who have the habit of “加鹽加醋” (*jia1 yan2 jia1 cu4*) cannot be trusted, and a witness who “加鹽加醋” (*jia1 yan2 jia1 cu4*) while on the stand could end up in jail for perjury!

Terms containing the character “加” (*jia1*) include:

加強 (*jia1 qiang2*) – to strengthen; to reinforce

加價 (*jia1 jia4*) – to increase price

加班 (*jia1 ban1*) – to work overtime

加薪 (*jia1 xin1*) – to raise salary