

sik6

Beyond "eat": 6 Cantonese slang expressions with 食

食 (sik6) literally means "to eat." But pair it with the right word and it builds slang for getting rejected, taking the blame, or telling someone off. Here are 6 expressions every learner should know.

PART 1

Spot the meaning 🧐

Tap a card – the real slang meaning is on the front, the (much funnier) literal translation is on the back.



食屎

sik6 si2

a rude way to tell someone off

LITERALLY

"eat shit" — harsh, rude tone

sik6 si2 laa1 nei5!

Eat shit! / F*** off!



食蕉

sik6 ziu1

a playful way to tell someone off

LITERALLY

"eat a banana" — lighter, joking tone

sik6 ziu1 laa1 nei5!

Go eat a banana!



食檸檬

sik6 ning4 mung1

to get rejected (romantically)

LITERALLY

"eat a lemon"

dim2 zi1 sik6 zo2 ning4 mung1

...but ended up getting rejected



食死貓

sik6 sei2 maau1

to be unfairly blamed

LITERALLY

"eat a dead cat"

dim2 gaai2 ngo5 jiu3 sik6 sei2 maau1 aa3?

Why do I have to take the blame?



食軟飯

sik6 jyun5 faan6

to live off a partner financially

LITERALLY

"eat soft rice"

jat1 tai2 zau6 zi1 keoi5 sik6 jyun5 faan6

You can tell he lives off her



食女

sik6 neoi5

to chase women for hookups

LITERALLY

"eat women"

zau1 wai4 sik6 neoi5

hooking up with different women



食回頭草

sik6 wui4 tau4 cou2

to get back with an ex

LITERALLY

"eat the grass behind you"

jau6 sik6 wui4 tau4 cou2 aa3?

Why are you back with your ex?

PART 2

The 6 expressions, up close 🔍

Same word, six completely different vibes. Here's how each one actually gets used – and how strong it sounds.

💩🍌 食屎 / 食蕉 – **telling someone off**

👹 **harsh → playful**

食屎 *sik6 si2* = **a rude way to tell someone off**

食蕉 *sik6 ziu1* = **a funny, playful way to tell someone off**

1 食屎啦你！食蕉啦你！ *sik6 si2 laa1 nei5! sik6 ziu1 laa1 nei5!*

→ Eat shit! Go eat a banana! / Fuck off!

👉 **Tone check**

食屎 is much stronger and ruder. 食蕉 can still sound rude depending on tone, but it's usually more joking and less aggressive than 食屎.

🍋 食檸檬 – **getting rejected**

💖 **romantic**

食檸檬 *sik6 ning4 mung1* = **to get rejected, especially when asking someone out**

2 佢約咗個女仔食飯，點知食咗檸檬。

keoi5 joek3 zo2 go3 nei5 zai2 sik6 faan6, dim2 zi1 sik6 zo2 ning4 mung1.

→ He asked a girl out for dinner, but ended up getting rejected.

👉 **When you'll hear it**

食檸檬 is commonly used when someone gets turned down romantically – a lemon standing in for that sour, puckered feeling.

🐱 食死貓 – **taking the blame**

😬 **unfair**

食死貓 *sik6 sei2 mau1* = **to take the blame for something you didn't do**

3 明明都唔係我做嘅，點解我要食死貓呀？

ming4 ming4 dou1 m4 hai6 ngo5 zou6 ge3, dim2 gaai2 ngo5 jiu3 sik6 sei2 maa1 aa3?

→ I clearly didn't do it, so why do I have to take the blame?

👉 When you'll hear it

If someone makes you 食死貓, they're pinning responsibility on you for something that genuinely wasn't your fault.

🍲 食軟飯 – living off a partner

😏 mocking

食軟飯 sik6 jyun5 faan6 = to rely financially on a romantic partner

4 佢女朋友餐餐都畀晒錢，一睇就知佢食軟飯啦。

keoi5 neoi5 pang4 jau5 caan1 caan1 dou1 bei2 saai3 cin2, jat1 tai2 zau6 zi1 keoi5 sik6 jyun5 faan6 laa1.

→ His girlfriend pays for every meal. You can tell straight away that he lives off her.

👉 Tone check

Traditionally used for a man who lives off a woman. It almost always carries a negative, mocking, or teasing tone.

🔴 食女 – chasing hookups

🔴 red flag

食女 sik6 neoi5 = to pick up, hook up with, or sleep with different women

5 佢成日落 club，周圍食女。 keoi5 seng4 jat6 lok6 club, zau1 wai4 sik6 neoi5.

→ He's always going clubbing and hooking up with different women.

👉 Tone check

Usually describes a man who frequently pursues women for casual sex. 食女 can sound objectifying and often has a negative, red-flag connotation.

食回頭草 *sik6 wui4 tau4 cou2* = **to get back together with an ex**

6 你唔係話以後都唔會再搵佢咩？做咩又食回頭草呀？

nei5 m4 hai6 waa6 ji5 hau6 dou1 m4 wui5 zoi3 wan2 keoi5 me1? zou6 me1 jau6 sik6 wui4 tau4 cou2 aa3?

→ Didn't you say you'd never contact them again? Why are you getting back with your ex?

👉 **When you'll hear it**

Can be used more broadly for going back to something from the past, but it's especially common – and especially judgmental – in relationship contexts.

PART 3

Test your street Cantonese 🎯

8 quick questions covering all 6 expressions. Tap an answer for instant feedback. 加油 (gaa1 jau4)!

Question 1 of 8

食檸檬 (*sik6 ning4 mung1*) really means:

To eat a healthy snack

To get rejected, especially romantically

To feel sour about something small

Question 2 of 8

Fill in the blank: 佢約咗個女仔食飯，點知食咗___。

蕉 (ziu1)

檸檬 (ning4 mung1)

死貓 (sei2 maau1)

Question 3 of 8

食死貓 (sik6 sei2 maau1) describes:

Trying an exotic dish

Taking the blame for something you didn't do

Getting startled by a pet

Question 4 of 8

Between 食屎 and 食蕉, which is the milder, more playful way to tell someone off?

食屎 (sik6 si2)

食蕉 (sik6 ziu1)

They're equally rude

Question 5 of 8

食軟飯 (sik6 jyun5 faan6) describes someone who:

Only eats soft foods

Relies financially on a romantic partner

Cooks rice for a living

Question 6 of 8

食女 (sik6 neoi5) is used to describe a man who:

Has a lot of female friends

Frequently pursues women for casual hookups

Is raising a daughter

Question 7 of 8

食回頭草 (sik6 wui4 tau4 cou2) means:

To regret a decision

To get back together with an ex

To return a favor

Question 8 of 8

你唔係話以後都唔會再搵佢咩？做咩又食回頭草呀？ – **what is being questioned here?**

Why someone changed jobs again

Why someone is getting back with an ex they swore off

Why someone is eating leftovers

Answer key

Printed separately from the worksheet above so students don't see it by accident.

1. **To get rejected, especially romantically** – 食檸檬 literally means "eat a lemon" but really means to get rejected – especially when asking someone out.
2. **檸檬 (ning4 mung1)** – 佢約咗個女仔食飯，點知食咗檸檬 – "He asked a girl out for dinner, but ended up getting rejected."
3. **Taking the blame for something you didn't do** – 食死貓 literally "eat a dead cat" – means being unfairly blamed for something that wasn't your fault.
4. **食蕉 (sik6 ziu1)** – 食蕉 ("eat a banana") is a lighter, more joking version. 食屎 ("eat shit") is much stronger and ruder.
5. **Relies financially on a romantic partner** – 食軟飯 literally "eat soft rice" – traditionally describes a man who lives off his girlfriend or wife financially.
6. **Frequently pursues women for casual hookups** – 食女 literally "eat women" – describes someone who frequently chases women for casual sex. It often carries a negative, red-flag connotation.
7. **To get back together with an ex** – 食回頭草 literally "eat the grass behind you" – means going back to a previous romantic partner, usually with a slightly judgmental tone.
8. **Why someone is getting back with an ex they swore off** – The speaker is calling out a friend for reconnecting with an ex after saying they never would – classic 食回頭草.

咪亂用呀！(mai5 lyun6 jung6 aa3!) — Don't misuse these!

Try dropping one into a real conversation with a Cantonese-speaking friend – carefully 😊

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