



American Expression E0086 Big cheese

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The term "big cheese" is an idiomatic expression that refers to a person who holds a position of great importance or influence, often in a particular domain or organization. It is a colloquial way of describing someone who is considered powerful, influential, or authoritative in their field.

The origin of the phrase is uncertain, but it is believed to have originated in the United States in the early 20th century. It is thought to have derived from the concept of a cheese wheel, which represents something substantial and valuable. The "big cheese" was then used metaphorically to describe individuals who had achieved significant status or power.

The term "big cheese" is often used to refer to someone who is a leader or top decision-maker within an organization or industry. It conveys the idea that this person holds a prominent position and has significant control or influence over others. The "big cheese" is typically seen as someone who is highly respected and whose opinions and actions carry weight.

Furthermore, the term can also be used more broadly to describe individuals who are influential or important in any given context. It can refer to someone who has achieved great success in their profession, gained widespread recognition, or amassed considerable wealth and resources.

However, it's important to note that the term "big cheese" is often used informally and can carry a slightly ironic or playful undertone. It may be used to both acknowledge someone's influential status while also subtly implying a touch of exaggeration or humor.

In summary, "big cheese" is an idiomatic expression used to describe a person who holds a position of significant power, influence, or authority. It is often associated with leaders, decision-makers, and individuals who have achieved great success or prominence in their respective fields. While the term conveys respect and admiration, it can also carry a light-hearted or ironic tone.

Questions for Discussion

1. In your opinion, what qualities or characteristics do you associate with someone referred to as the "big cheese"? How does their role and influence differ from other individuals in their organization or field?
2. Can you think of examples from history or current events where individuals have been considered the "big cheese" in their respective domains? What factors contributed to their influential status, and how did they exercise their power or authority?
3. How does the concept of the "big cheese" impact organizational dynamics and decision-making processes? Does the presence of a prominent leader or influential figure shape the culture and direction of an organization, and if so, in what ways?
4. Are there potential drawbacks or challenges associated with being the "big cheese"? How might the pressure of holding a position of power or influence impact an individual's decision-making, relationships, or personal well-being?
5. How does the perception of who qualifies as the "big cheese" vary across different industries, cultures, or societies? Are there instances where individuals who may not fit the traditional mold of power and authority still hold significant influence or are considered the "big cheese" in their respective fields?