



American Expression E1938 Baker's dozen

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A "baker's dozen" is a term used to describe a group of thirteen items or units, typically baked goods like bread, rolls, or pastries, that is sold or served together. This phrase has a unique historical origin and is often used as a colloquial expression. The term "baker's dozen" has found its way into common language usage beyond the bakery context, signifying not only a specific quantity but also a bit of extra generosity.

The origin of the term dates back to medieval England when there were strict regulations and penalties for bakers who were found to be shortchanging their customers. To avoid running afoul of these laws, bakers would often include an additional item when selling a dozen (12) to customers. This extra item was considered a form of insurance to ensure that the customer received the full quantity they paid for, even if one item was underweight or missing. Hence, the practice of selling thirteen items instead of twelve became known as a "baker's dozen."

Over time, this tradition of providing a little extra to ensure customer satisfaction persisted and was adopted by bakers in various cultures. In many cases, customers came to appreciate the added value and fairness of receiving thirteen items instead of twelve.

Today, the term "baker's dozen" is widely recognized and used beyond the realm of baking. It is often employed in informal speech and writing to refer to any situation where a little extra is given as a gesture of goodwill or to ensure completeness. For example, if someone says they received a "baker's dozen of compliments," it means they received more than twelve compliments, emphasizing the abundance of positive feedback.

In some cultures, the concept of a "baker's dozen" is linked to concepts of generosity and going the extra mile. It conveys the idea that providing a little more than expected can enhance customer satisfaction and build goodwill.

The use of a "baker's dozen" can also be seen in numerical superstitions and folklore. Some believe that the number thirteen is unlucky, which is why bakers might add an extra item to avoid the bad luck associated with providing only twelve. This belief has contributed to the notion of thirteen being an "unlucky" number in some cultures.

In summary, a "baker's dozen" refers to a group of thirteen items or units, with its origins in the practice of bakers providing an extra item to ensure customers received the full quantity they paid for. Beyond the bakery context, the term is used to signify a little extra given as a gesture of goodwill or to ensure completeness. It reflects the idea of going above and beyond expectations to enhance customer satisfaction and build goodwill. The phrase also has connections to numerical superstitions and historical practices related to fairness in trade.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. Can you share an example of a situation where you received a "baker's dozen" or encountered someone going the extra mile to provide more than expected, and how did it impact your perception of that experience?
2. How does the concept of a "baker's dozen" relate to customer service and building positive relationships with customers, and can you provide examples of businesses or industries that consistently apply this principle?
3. In some cultures, the number thirteen is considered unlucky. How does this superstition relate to the practice of providing a "baker's dozen," and have you encountered any superstitions related to numbers in your own culture?
4. Have you ever used the term "baker's dozen" in a figurative sense to describe a situation where someone went beyond what was expected to be generous or fair? What was the context of that situation?
5. How can the idea of a "baker's dozen" be applied beyond the realm of commerce and customer service, such as in personal relationships or community interactions, to promote goodwill and positivity?