

## Too many cooks spoil the broth

Youtube: <https://youtu.be/DwEmOubKjck>

Today's vocabulary is a proverb. A proverb is a wise saying which gives you advice about how to live your life. Today's proverb is: *Too many cooks spoil the broth*. So, *cooks*. *Cook* has two meanings in English. It can be a verb or a noun. As a verb, it means to make food. For example: *he cooked dinner*. As a noun, it refers to somebody who makes food, usually as a job. So, for example: *he works as a cook*. So *a cook* is a person. Sometimes we say *chef* and sometimes we say *cook*. They are pretty much the same. So *too many cooks* means too many people making the food. Oh, and by the way, *too many* means more than you need or more than is good, more than enough. *Broth*. *Broth* is a kind of soup. It usually has meat in it. So think of *broth* meaning soup. And *spoil*. *Spoil* means to ruin something--to make it not nice or not useable. In this case, when we talk about *spoil the broth* it means make the broth not delicious. So the proverb means: If there are too many people making the soup, the soup won't be delicious.

So the imagery behind this proverb is that there are many people in the kitchen and they are all making the same soup, and each person has different things they want to add. For example, one cook really likes garlic, so they will put in a lot of garlic. But one person likes cinnamon, so they'll put in some cinnamon. One person likes chili peppers, et cetera. Now, as you know, when you are making soup, a little seasoning is very good but a lot of seasoning is not delicious. So because there are too many cooks and each cook is putting in their own seasoning, the soup is not delicious.

I'll give you an example: the king was going to have a big dinner for his guests, so he hired all the best cooks in the land to make a special broth. But each cook had a different idea of how to make the best broth.

"We should put more peppers in to make it spicy," one cook said.

"No the best broths are sweet. Put in more sugar," said another.

"More garlic," said a third.

"No more onions," said another.

"More fish."

"More fruit."

"More sauce."

Each cook could make a delicious broth by himself, but together they made a terrible broth.

So, that is the literal meaning of this proverb. But what does it mean in everyday use? Well, as you can imagine, it means if you have too many people working on a project, the project will fail--it will not be good. So here is another example:

It was a team project at work, but everyone had different opinions. Michael and Sue couldn't agree on the report. Sam and David both argued about the budget. Jim and Lisa didn't

like the PowerPoint presentation that Adam had made. And pretty soon they were all fighting with each other and the project was a disaster.

Now interestingly, we actually have two proverbs in English with different meanings. *Many sorry Too many cooks spoil the broth* but also *Many hands make light work*. *Many hands make light work* means if you have many people, the work will be easier. *Too many cooks spoil the broth* means if you have many people, the work will be more difficult, and it will fail. These two proverbs have completely different meanings. So, some people think *Too many cooks spoil the broth*, some people think *Many hands make light work*.

But some people think that actually these two proverbs are not contradictory, but rather they apply to different situations. So if you have some sort of work which requires a lot of strength or a lot of muscle, for example building a house or cleaning up the litter from the beach, then you need many people and *many hands make light work*. But if you have any sort of work which requires artistry or requires creativity, or any kind of artistic work, for example: writing a story, painting a picture, writing a poem, making a movie, then in this case *too many cooks spoil the broth*. That's just one opinion.

Let me know what you think. Do you agree with *too many cooks spoil the--spoil the broth* or do you agree with *many hands make light work* and also let me know if you have any similar proverbs in your own language.