

A Collection* of Colloquial Greek Sayings

This selection of Greek expressions has been collected from various sources. Of course it is in no way comprehensive – Greek is one of the richest languages for idiomatic expressions. One of the great pleasures of Greek is that the way the character of the people is revealed in their language and I hope you'll enjoy this selection.

I hope that I've got these right but I take no responsibility if anyone takes (unwanted) offence if you choose to use any of these! Corrections & further contributions from native Greek speakers welcomed.

In the table below a + sign in the right hand column indicates an entry added since the previous edition.

* These have been collated from various on-line message boards and groups as well as from my own classes. Many thanks to the far too many people whose work I have used in putting together this collection.

Colloquial Greek	English Translation & Literal Equivalent	Another Way To Say This...	
About Yourself			
Θα βάλω τα δυνατά μου να τους περάσω όλους	I'll do my best to beat everybody.	Θα προσπαδήσω πάρα πολύ να βγω πρώτος.	
Είμαι πεθαμένη από την κούραση.	I am dead tired.	Είμαι πάρα πολύ κουρασμένος	
Εχεί που έβλεπα τηλεόραση, με πήρε ο ύπνος	I was watching TV when I fell asleep. <i>(Literally: "sleep took me")</i>	Εχεί που έβλεπα τηλεόραση και κοιμηθήκα.	
Αυτόν τον καιρό είμαι τελίως άφρακος.	This time I'm completely broke.	Δεν έχω λεφτά.	
Τα έκανα θάλασσα στο τεστ	I messed up the test. <i>(Literally: "I made a sea of the test")</i>	Τα πήγα χάλια στο τεστ.	
Τα έκανα σαλάτα	I made a mess of a situation or a relationship. <i>(Literally: I made a salad)</i>		
Τρέχω και δεν φτάνω	"I'm very busy"		

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	<i>(Literally: "running without arriving")</i>		
Είμαι κομμάτια	"I'm exhausted" <i>(Literally: "I'm in pieces", – can also be used for "I'm drunk")</i>		
Έχω χάσει τα αυγά και τα καλάθια	"I have no idea what's going on" <i>(Literally: "I've lost my eggs and baskets")</i>		
Είναι σαν να μου μιλάς Κινέζικα	"It's incomprehensible.", "It's all Greek to me" (well you wouldn't expect them to say that would you?) <i>(Literally: "it's like you are speaking Chinese to me")</i>		
Το ρίχνω έξω	"I'm going out to have fun." <i>(Literally: "I pour it out")</i>		+
Το πήρα στραβά	"I misunderstood." <i>(Literally: "I took it twisted")</i>		+
About Other People			
Ό,τι του λέω το γράφει στα παλιά του τα παπούτσια!	Whatever I say you'll take no notice. <i>(Literally: "...you'll write it on your old shoes.")</i>	Ό,τι το λέω με γράφεις.	
Παίζει με τα λόγια του/ μασάει τα λόγια του	He is hiding something. <i>(Literally: he is playing with his words / he is chewing his words)</i>	Λογοπαίγνιο (wordplay) & Κάνω λογοπαίγνιο (I made a play on words) don't have the negative connotations of παίζει με τα λόγια του	
Βαράει μύγες	"He's doing nothing" / being idle <i>Literally: "he's swatting flies"</i>		
Σου σπάει τα νεύρα	"He irritates you"		

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	<i>Literally: "He breaks your nerves"</i>		
Αυτού ακόμα και οι κόκορές του γεννάνε	A very lucky person <i>(Literally: "even his roosters lay eggs")</i>		
Αυτό το ξέρει απ' έξω και ανακατωτά	He knows that inside out. <i>(From children learning their alphabet when a teacher would mix up letters as a test, Literally: "He knows that outside and mixed".)</i>		
Είναι φέτες	She's attractive / "fit" <i>(Literally: she is "slices").</i>		
Δεν σε βλέπω καλά σήμερα	"You don't look happy today." <i>(Literally: "I don't see you well today.")</i>		+
Relationships			
Τι σου κάνω και μας έκοψες την καλημέρα.	What did I do to stop you talking to me? <i>(Literally: "...that you stopped saying good morning")</i>	Τι σου κάνω και σταματάω να μιλάω σε κάποιον.	
Είναι δυο μήνες που τα χαλάσαμε.	It's two months since we separated. <i>(Literally: "it's two months that we broke")</i>	Είναι δυο μήνες που χωρίσαμε.	
Σου κάνει την ζωή πατίνι	"He makes your life hell" <i>(Literally: "He makes your life a roller skate")</i>		
Μιλας κατευθειαν στην καρδια μου.	When someone μιλάει κατευθείαν στην καρδιά σου, he says things that touch you, he sees things in you others might not. <i>(Literally: you speak to my heart')</i>		
Ο Γιώργος κι εγώ μιλάμε την ίδια γλώσσα	Two people share the same beliefs, similar ideas, way of thinking.		

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	<i>(Literally: George & I speak the same language)</i>		
Διατροφή	This usually means diet as in Μεσογειακή διατροφή ("Mediterranean Diet"), a diet as a preference or cultural issue. It differs from δίαιτα which is a diet prescribed by a doctor for health improvements. BUT it can also mean the sum of money paid by one partner in a divorce to the other to support the children.		
Εσύ μου έριξες Χ	"He turned me down" <i>(Literally: "he threw me an X").</i>	Έφαγα πόρτα: "I got rejected." (maybe from a job or by a date) <i>(Literally: "I ate door")</i>	
Bad Behaviour			
Χθες το βραδύ το πίζαμε λιγάκι έξω.	Yesterday evening we went a little over the top. <i>(used especially after a night out when you've stayed up later, drunk more, danced more, enjoyed yourself more than you planned.)</i>	Χθες το βραδύ το παρωκάναμε λιγάκι.	
Βρε παιδιά, μην κάνετε σαν το σκύλο με τη γάτα!	Children, don't argue! <i>(Literally: "Don't put the dog with the cat.")</i>	Μν μαλώνετε!	
Ανοίξαμε τον ασκό του Αιόλου	All hell broke loose. We opened a can of worms. <i>(Literally: "We opened the pouch of Aeolus "This comes from the Odyssey: Aeolus gave Odysseus a bag containing all winds but the west wind so that he could sail home. With Ithaca in sight, his crew - thinking it held presents - opened it while Odysseus slept, and the imprisoned winds blew them all the way back to Aeolus's island.)</i>		

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Ήπια τα κερατά μου	I'm really drunk. <i>(Literally: I drank my horns)</i>	Είμαι πίτα <i>(Literally: I'm pie)</i> Είμαι μεθυσμένος Είμαι κομμάτια <i>(Literally: I'm in pieces – can also be used for I'm really tired)</i> Είμαι τύφλα. <i>(Literally I'm blind".)</i>	+
Δίνω ξύλο	A warning, behave yourself or you'll suffer the consequences..A joke threat often made to children if they don't do as they are told ! <i>(Literally: I am giving wood)</i>		
Θα φας ξύλο	I'm going to beat you up" <i>(Literally: "You're going to eat wood"</i>		
Τρώω ξύλο	I'm being beaten up" <i>(Literally: "I'm eating wood")</i>		
Σαπίζω (κάποιον) στο ξύλο σκοτώνω (κάποιον) στο ξύλο	To beat someone up severely...		
Αθώα περιστερά'	Used where in English you might say, "Don't come the old innocent with me." An ironic expression to someone pretending to be innocent or unaware. <i>(Literally: innocent pigeon)</i>		
Αυτός είναι για τα πανηγύρια	He is behaving inappropriately <i>(Literally: "He is for the festivals")</i>		

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Κάνει την πάπια;	Are you ignoring what's going on? Or Are you pretending this difficult situation doesn't exist or isn't your fault? <i>(Literally: "Are you making the duck?")</i>		
Ψυχή δεν υπάρχει στο δρόμο.	There's no-one on the street. <i>(Literally: "no soul on the street")</i>	Δεν υπάρχει κανένας στο δρόμο.	
Μην το χάσετε αυτό το έργο.	Don't miss this film. <i>(Literally: "Don't lose this film")</i>	Να δεις αυτό το έργο. Δες αυτό το έργο.	
Οι δρόμοι πλημμυρίσανε από κόσμο!	The streets were full of people. <i>(Literally: "flooded with.." or "stuffed with..")</i>	Οι δρόμοι ήταν γεμάτοι κόσμο.	
Πηγαίνεις μέσω Λαμίας;	Did you take the long way round? Sarcastic response to someone's late arrival, a reason for being late <i>(Literally: "Did you go via Lamia?")</i>		
Φάγαμε την καμήλα, έμεινε η ουρά.	We've broken the back of it but there is a little more to do. <i>(Literally: "We have eaten the camel, the tail is waiting." Alexander Tsipras, Prime Minister of Greece, talking about dealing with the Greek debt crisis).</i> "η ουρά" can also be translated as "queue"	το βόδι (the Ox) and τον γάιδαρο (the donkey) are alternative animals to use here.	
The Weather			
Σκάει ο τζιτζικας	Very hot weather <i>(Literally: it's bursting the cicadas")</i>		
Βρέχει καρεκλοπόδαρα	Very wet weather, equivalent of English "raining cats and dogs" or "raining stair rods". <i>(Literally: "It's raining table legs")</i>		

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Ήλιος με δόντια	A sunny day that's really cold. <i>(Literally: "sun with teeth")</i>		
Πέφτουν μύτες (απ'το κρύο)	It's really cold. <i>(Literally: noses are falling off from the cold)</i>		
Πάγωσε ο κώλος μας	It's really cold <i>(Literally: freezing my arse)</i>	Also, more politely: πάγωσε ο απ'αυτός μας	
Έγινα παπί	I got soaked. <i>(Literally: I became a duck)</i>		
Ωραίος καιρός αν είσαι μανιτάρι, η σαλίκαρι, η έστω μούχλα	It is wet – very wet. <i>(Literally: Beautiful weather if you are a mushroom or a snail or at least mould.)</i>		
Greetings & Farewells			
Τα λέμε	"See you later" <i>(Literally: "We'll talk of it")</i>		
Bad Situations			
Είναι Της πουτάνας το κάγκελο	It has got out of hand. <i>(Literally: "it's a whore's fencepost.")</i>		
Είναι μπουρδέλο εδώ	"It's a mess here" ... <i>(Literally: "it's a brothel")</i>		
Του έδωσε τα παπούτσια στο χέρι	He got fired. <i>(Literally: "he was given his shoes in hand")</i>		

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Σε γράφω στα παλιά μου τα παπούτσια	I am not paying you any attention / I'm not counting on you. <i>(Literally: "I am writing to you on old shoes")</i>		
Δεν παλεύεται	"that's unbearable" <i>(Literally: "it can't be fought")</i>		
Αυτό το χωπιό είναι στου διαόλου την μάνα.	"that village is really far away"... <i>(Literally: "that village is by the devil's mother")</i>		
Γίνανε μαλλιά κουβάρια	They got into a fight" <i>(Literally: "they become yarn balls").</i>		
Πετάχτηκε σαν την πούρντι	They got involved when they should not have. <i>(Literally: "They popped out like a fart*")</i> This is the translation given by Neo Kosmos but Dirty Greek gives "κλανιά" for fart. I'm sure there are plenty of words for it!		
Insults			
Έχεις καθαλήσει καλάμι	You are very high and mighty. You're a diva. <i>(Literally: "you are astride a reed").</i>		
Είναι τούβλο	He is stupid <i>(Literally: "he's a brick").</i>		
Εσύ σε κερατώνει	He is cheating on you. <i>(Literally "he puts horns on you").</i>		
πήγαινε να δείς αν κουνιούνται οι βάρκες	Go jump in a lake! <i>(Literally: "go see if the boats are moving").</i>		
Σιγά τα λαχανά.	What you said was really dull. (as dull as a cabbage). <i>(Literally: "Slowly the cabbage")</i>		

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Το κακό σου τον καιρό	You are saying silly things. <i>(Literally: "Your bad weather")</i>		
Good Luck!			
Χτύπα ξύλο	"Let's hope so." <i>(Literally: "knock wood")</i>		
Καλά ξεμπερδέματα!	"I hope things get better" A wish to give someone who is in trouble. <i>(Literally: "Good un-mix ups")</i> <i>(see also my post : Greek Good Luck)</i>		
Warnings			
Τα μάτια σου δεκατέσσερα.	"Watch out! Keep your eyes peeled!" <i>(Literally: Your eyes 14.)</i>		
Ακού να δείς.	"Pay attention" <i>(Literally "Hear to look")</i>		
Κάτσε στα αύγα σου.	Relax! Stay where you are! Do not run off and do things in haste! <i>(Literally: "Sit on your eggs")</i>		