LEARN VENEZUELAN SPANISH

¡Épale, chamo!: Venezuelan Words, Phrases, Sayings, and Greetings

If you are one of those who look first at who is the author of what you decide to read, I know, my name doesn't sound very Venezuelan, but even in that there is a bit of Venezuelan culture, I can tell you with total certainty that Venezuelans love to invent names, especially the Maracuchos (people who are from a western part of the country).

Let's see, I was born in Falcon, a state in the north of the country. s a child I lived in about 3 different states, then I moved to an area near the capital called San Antonio de Los Altos and now I live in Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, so, I guarantee you that this is going to be full of words, sayings, expressions and culture that will make you understand Venezuela from a different perspective. So go ahead, welcome to **a bit of Venezuela!**

"Un pelo" of context

"Un pelo" means a little bit of something, in this case it means that I am going to explain a bit of the culture that you need to know to see where the words and expressions usually come from.

Venezuelans tend to make jokes or take the funny side of the vast majority of the opportunities that come our way. History goes hand in hand with this: we are a mixture of cultures between Latin American bordering countries and European countries (such as Spain, France, Portugal, Italy and England); even the Arab countries left us a little bit of themselves! So many phrases are combinations of languages or funny situations that ended up fitting in our expressions. Enough years have passed for the language to evolve and these words have become part of our identity.

I'm not going to fool you, there are words that are like that, **just because.** Let's leave the preambles and let's go with some slang and expressions that will help you understand Venezuelans!

Common Venezuelan words

Chévere:

This phrase is the Venezuelan jewel to identify us, it is a positive word. It is the equivalent of “bien”, “bueno” and “está bien”, all in one word, it can also mean that you agree with what you were told. In English, it is equivalent to awesome, great, amazing, good or right depending on the context it is used.

¡Mosca!:

No, it is not the bug (fly); it means to be very aware of something that is happening, usually something that comes up suddenly.

Echar los perros:

In nearby countries, it can be an offense or harassment (it makes sense, since it literally says, “to throw out the dogs on someone”). However, for Venezuela and Colombia, it means to flirt with someone.

Tener ratón / estar enratonado:

Another reference to an animal, this time the (ratón) mouse. Party at night, and the next morning you will probably wake up: enratonado (with a hangover); you will surely need a good soup.

Corotos:

Literally, it is “thing” or “object”, but this word comes with history. A president (Guzmán Blanco) had a collection of pictures painted by the French Jean Baptiste Corot, when he finished his term and vacated the presidential house, he told the workers “Be careful with the Corotos”, they only understood that the president was ordering them to be careful with things (corotos) in general and not really with the paintings.

Bululú:

It means that something is a mess or is disorganized, specifically by a large number of people.

Naguará:

A favorite of foreigners, it was born in Barquisimeto (western state of Venezuela) and is now used in many more states. It is difficult to define, but it is used to express surprise, disbelief orand indignation.

Pichirre

Basically, describes someone who is cheap.

Macundales:

Like corotos, it means things or objects Atthe height of the oil boom in Venezuela, foreign companies came with their own “Mack and Dale” tools. The workers would pick up their macundales (try to say the brand quickly) at the end of the workday, so a deconstruction of English now lives in the Venezuelan lexicon.

Mamarracho:

Someone who is careless with his or her physique, even something that is badly done or left in a very sloppy way. It comes from the Arabic “muharrig” and means clown or buffoon.

Chamo:

Another typical word to identify us. With it, you can call a friend or a stranger, usually young, it is the equivalent of “bro” or “mate”.

Common Venezuelan phrases

¿Vas pendiente?

“Ir pendiente” is not that you are overly attentive to something (“Estar pendiente”, be aware), it’s more of a light way of saying if you are interested in a proposal or invitation.

¡Sí, Luis!

It is easier to say directly “I don’t believe you”, but no, we choose to say to someone we don’t believe: “Yes, Luis” and if you want to make it even clearer, we add: **“Tú crees que yo me chupo el dedo” (You think I suck my thumb)**, to say that you are not naïve or a child because only babies suck their thumb.

Te va a atropellar un carrito de helado:

I know, it sounds weird to say “You’re going to get run over by an ice cream cart”, but this phrase is said to someone who wants to be too smart, who wants to take advantage of a situation or someone. Sarcastically speaking, you tell them to be careful with an ice cream cart (because of the small size of the ice cream cart in Venezuela).

Me saca la piedra:

This is said when a situation, something or someone gets on someone’s nerves, bothers him or her in a big way.

¡Bájate de la mula!

It is an expression to tell someone that they have to pay money, or contribute financially.

Common Venezuelan sayings

El pan nuestro de cada día:

It refers to the fact that something is part of our everyday life. It is even used when you

get tired of something, and you want to say that it is already repetitive. It comes from the Catholic bases of the "Our Father", and little by little it left that religious context and is used by anyone. For example, the political problems are "el pan nuestro de cada día".

Chivo que se devuelve se esnuca:

You are about to make a decision and decide not to. Goats are adept at climbing forward, but backwards they are very likely to fall and have a painful outcome. It is a saying that encourages you to make decisions once you have made up your mind.

Ponte las alpargatas que lo que viene es joropo:

This saying is especially Venezuelan. **Joropo** is a Venezuelan musical genre. **Alpargatas** are the footwear used in **El Llano** to dance joropo. The saying refers to the fact that difficult situations are going to come (because of the difficulty of dancing this genre) and you have to be prepared.

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Venezuelan Greetings

¡Épale!:

With this word we start everything, it is an equivalent of: "Hey!". You get the person's attention and also greet them.

¿Qué más?:

They are not asking you if you have anything extra (what else), but actually, it is a way of greeting you by asking if you have anything new to tell, like many greetings. You don't necessarily answer the question, you can respond with an "All good" or "Chévere, y tú?"; it's the equivalent of "What's up?".

Venezuelan Food

To learn what Venezuelans eat is to learn their culture. Let's take a look at the most typical Venezuelan dishes to make your mouth water.

Arepa:

The queen of breakfasts, lunches, and dinners, made of corn flour, circular and flattened. It can be eaten with a wide variety of fillings, but for breakfast with some kind of cheese. Probably the dish with more versions and one of the most disputed with Colombia, we have had the discussion about who owns this dish since Colombia and Venezuela still belonged to Spain and shared the same territory.

I will give you some of the names we give to the arepas and I challenge you to look them up and without seeing the ingredients guess the filling of each one: reina pepiada, pelua, dominó, sifrina, viuda, la catira, con perico, pabellón, rompecolchón, la gringa, and finally la maracucha.

Cachapa:

Also made from corn, but in this presentation, it is with the kernels of tender corn, with a touch of sweetness, and salty filling with: cheese, meat in stew type sauce or with a presentation of pork called pernil (pork leg). Crunchy on the inside and soft on the outside, it is one of the dishes you can get anywhere.

Empanadas:

Surprise, another dish made with corn flour! In fact, with the same dough as arepas. I know, it sounds like we eat everything with corn, but let's see, Latin American lands are full and fertile for corn, and it is also extremely versatile food. Flattened very thinly on a top, arepas-like fillings are placed, the edges of the dough are joined together and fried, delicious for any breakfast or dinner.

Tequeños:

In many countries, they are compared to cheese fingers, and let's say that they might

sound the same, but tequeños are a wheat flour dough wrapped with a strip of hard white cheese (Venezuelan specialty). The difference with cheese fingers? I would have to say that the seasoning, softness and flavor quality of the cheese make the tequeño distinguishable from all the other cheese fingers.

When are they eaten? Surely, you are expecting me to say breakfast or dinner, but no, tequeños are the star guest of all Venezuelan parties, they are the favorite pasapalo (Venezuelan word for appetizer) of weddings, quinceañeras and birthdays.

Plato playero:

Pescado frito, tostones y ensalada rallada. Just saying those words makes you want to be on the beach. Those are the ingredients of the typical dish that Venezuelans eat on the beach on vacations or weekends at any Venezuelan coast. The fried fish is a salty and crunchy delight, while the tostones are thin salted plantains, so thin that they serve as a base to top them with a shredded salad made out of carrot, cabbage, a touch of sugar, mustard and mayonnaise. ou have to try it!

Pabellón criollo:

Since we started talking about the main courses, nothing else for lunch than Venezuela's national dish. Caraotas negras (black beans), white rice, tajadas (fried ripe plantains), and carne mechada (stewed shredded beef), a unique mix of flavors that will make you not want to get up from your chair, ideal for lunch. Some hearty breakfasts are empanadas or arepas stuffed with pabellon (these options do not include rice).

Malta:

This is the favorite drink that accompanies any meal, a good Malta refreshes any day, based on barley, hops and water, many compare it to beer, but sweet and without alcohol, a Venezuelan phenomenon that you must try to feel the Venezuelan flavor.

Venezuelan's Christmas table:

Now, if we are talking about Christmas, here are the Christmas protagonists, which we eat even reheated in the morning of January 1st:

La hallaca, the central focus of the Christmas dish, comes from our colonial origins. The slaves used to gather all the leftovers from their masters' meals, put them on a thin corn dough, close the dough and tie it in a banana leaf wrapper that was then boiled. Today it is very similar, not with leftovers, but with many ingredients: onion, peppers, pork, chicken, bacon (in the east of the country with fish), olives and raisins.

Pan de jamón, crusty bread on the outside, toasted with papelón, and a soft dough on the inside wrapped with ham, olives and raisins. It is perfect.

Pernil, this one doesn't need much explanation, the pernil is the fresh pork leg. At Christmas, it is baked and marinated in a good wine and a sauce that any mother or grandmother would kill before sharing the recipe.

Ensalada de gallina, the perfect company to close the Christmas plate:a dense salad based on potatoes, carrots and hen (usually replaced with chicken) with a mayonnaise and mustard dressing.

What you need to know if you visit...

Maracaibo

The Zulianos speak fast and with a lot of swear words, one more original than the other. It is one of the few places in Venezuela that uses the "vosotros" when conjugating. Their typical word is perhaps molleja or mollejúo to express bewilderment or that something is too big.

The Andean region (Táchira, Mérida, Trujillo)

Andeans have the social code of addressing friends as "tú" backwards, as they show closeness by addressing them as "usted"; their accent is very similar to listening to a person from Colombia. Andean people are the best at pronouncing S's in Venezuela, where they tend to aspirate it. Their signature word is "Toche", it is a form of insult or simply a crutch for the word "fool".

Caracas

We reach the relaxed people of the country, or at least that's how the rest of Venezuelans see them. With a slower rhythm, they skip the D in words, they can say "cansao" instead

of “cansado”. When speaking, they are the ones who most aspirate the S, sounding like J, “buenos días” would sound like “buenoj díaj”. Their star words? “Pana”, synonym of friend; and “Burda” used to express “a lot” of whatever, as in “Hay **burda** de gente” (There are **a lot** of people).

Hey there. Welcome.

I'm Kéllyta Quijada - and I wrote this article.

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El Oriente (East Coast)

If they call you “Hijo er diablo” don’t be offended, it’s their way of saying “chamo” in an exalted way. With Orientals, you probably won’t understand at first what they say, they change the letters L for R and talk as if they were putting a x4 in a Whatsapp chat. Just in case, they are not shouting at you, they just speak very loudly.

If you want to know more phrases or learn Spanish, don’t hesitate to **“echarle pichón”**, that is, **to make an effort** to learn.

See you, cham@!