

Red Hot CHILI PEPPERS



Pippo Perez



Pippo Perez's "Pippo Chili Pepper" collection in Murano glass, available in 18k gold and titanium or in sterling silver

THE WORDS RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS INVOKE different images for different people. For followers of popular music, perhaps they arouse memories of a wild concert by the funk/punk/hip-hop band from California, Red Hot Chili Peppers. For food connoisseurs, the words may cause them to salivate over a blue-ribbon chili dish. For Trinidad's East Indian population, they're the answer to warding off *najar*, the evil eye.

But for jewelers attending the latest edition of the Vicenza Trade Fair (January 16-23), the words likely bring to mind one of the hottest new fine jewelry lines, "Pippo Chili Pepper." Thanks to Italian-based designer Pippo Perez, there's a complete collection of whimsical yet wearable bracelets, pendants, necklaces, earrings, rings, cuff links, and key chains, based on the basic chili pepper. The collection is available

in colorful Murano glass in 18k yellow gold and titanium from \$100 to \$750 retail, or in sterling silver from \$100 to \$500 retail.

The people of Trinidad aren't the only ones who see the chili pepper as a symbolic talisman for warding off hexes. Perez says, "In Europe, chili peppers—*peperoncini*—are good luck." Which might explain why every September there is a Peperoncino Festival in Calabria, Italy, celebrating peperoncini and spicy week, *Settimana Piccante*.

Perez didn't design the new chili pepper jewelry line for *Settimana Piccante*, however. He says, "Four years ago, I made the 'Horn' collection—the horn is also considered a good luck charm. Then, one night, I was looking in a very old Italian magazine and I read about the chili pepper and how it, too, is supposed to bring good fortune. It is also believed to be healing for problems with the head

and stomach. In Italy, some people buy artisanal peperoncino chocolate, which is medicinal for an upset stomach. Many Latin cultures, for example, Argentina and Paraguay, also believe in the power of the chili pepper."

Guatemala and Mexico are also among the believers, it seems. Research uncovered that chili peppers are often used by some people of those countries as a cleanser for *mal de ojo*—once again, that evil eye.

Well, there's nothing evil about this new jewelry line—the fact is, it's all about fun. And in a time when fine Italian jewelers seem to be immersed in thoroughly enjoying themselves by making charm jewelry in every classification, pieces with jingly jangly movement, and capricious themed items that bring a twinkle to the eye, "Pippo Chili Pepper" is right on-trend.

— Lorraine DePasque, Editor in Chief