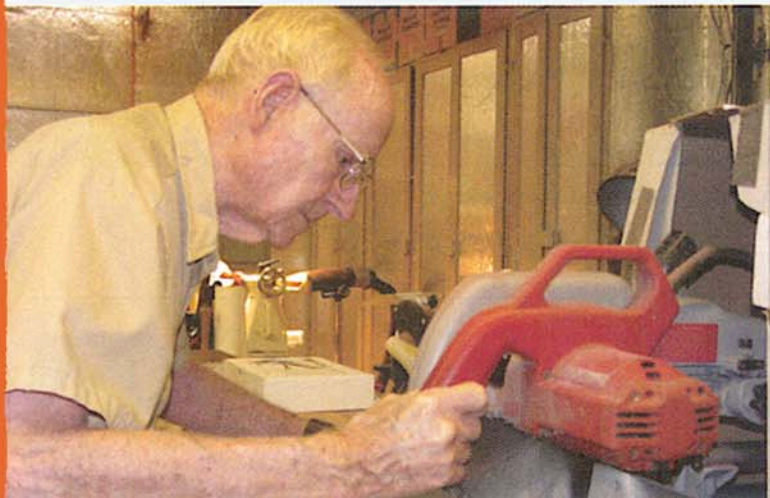


HOT PEPPER MILLS

How Pinky Martin Spiced Up His Retirement



After he thought he had successfully retired, Eugene "Pinky" Martin learned that TV exposure really is all it's cracked up to be.

From the quaint coastal town of Montrose, Alabama, an hour's drive east of Mobile, Martin got discovered on the set of Food Network star Sara Moulton's popular show *Sara's Secrets*. Since retiring, Martin had been working mostly in his woodshop behind the house. Some of his exotic-wood pepper mills eventually landed on Moulton's set, where they seasoned more widespread curiosity.

"When I met with Sara Moulton, she told me she constantly gets two questions from viewers. One is 'why does my cheesecake crack?' and the other is 'where did you get that pepper mill?'" Martin says.

In late 1999, Martin had a chance to meet Moulton at a cooking demonstration in Los Angeles. After telling Martin that her viewers constantly inquired about the peppermills, she tried to convince him that he had a potential goldmine on his hands.

Initially, Martin resisted the idea, but eventually he decided to give it a try. Moulton agreed to put his phone number on the air, a decision which immediately changed Martin's life.

"Within ten seconds of my phone number appearing on the screen, the phone began to ring. It rang like that for the next three days," Martin says.

Martin thought he had retired from being an oil refinery manager to a more quiet life on the Gulf Coast. He spent his days in his woodshop and eventually his son Timothy, a collector of kitchen gadgets, convinced him to design a pepper mill.

"My son had been collecting pepper mills for several years and began harassing me to build one," Martin says. "So I finally told him 'I'll make a blasted pepper mill! That first one sure was a raunchy looking thing.'"

But he kept working on them and eventually perfected his mills, settling on exotic hard woods, such as Zebrawood, and Purpleheart, and at least 15 coats of varnish. The mills have a deep, rich sheen and swirls of color that have become known as the Pinky Martin style. He sold them at charity events and local fairs and on a lark sent Moulton, host of *Sara's Secrets*, a collection that she regularly used on her show.

In 2000, after Moulton broadcast his phone number, Martin began taking orders from people all across the nation and beyond. At the age of 82, he not only had a new career but a busy one. Two and half years later, Martin's story caught the attention of the producers of the Oprah Winfrey Show, who featured him on a broadcast in December 2002. After the Oprah show, Martin received roughly 700 e-mails, though not just for orders, many people expressed interest in partnering with Martin or buying him out completely.

He turned them all down, keeping his business a one-man operation close to home. Just getting on his waiting list is not easy anymore. Currently, Martin has a backlog of over 600 orders and several hundred more on standby. But if you want one, get

in line as early as possible, he's only producing about 200 a year.

"This is the darndest thing I've ever seen," Martin says with a chuckle. "I had no idea these pepper mills would turn into something like this."

-Lloyd McIntosh



once upon an oyster

twenty-four years ago, mr. thompson kissed his wife for the first time. he asked us to plan an evening that would show her he still remembers, going above and beyond. that's what we do. call 504-586-0300 or 800-SONESTA for an impeccable stay in the heart of the french quarter.

 **Royal Sonesta Hotel New Orleans**

A Grand Hotel in the French Quarter™

www.royalsonestano.com

the sonesta collection

boston • miami • new orleans • brazil • egypt • peru • tuscany