**Flowers from Chilies & Fresh Peppers**

**INGREDIENTS:** Chili flowers: Bright yellow, orange or red chilies, 2 to 2 inches long and tapering to a sharp point. Pepper flowers: Small conical yellow, or red bell peppers.

**TOOLS & SUPPLIES:** Paring knife, rubber gloves (This design is HOT! It looks hot and feels hot! Wear those rubber gloves when you hold chilies.) and a pitcher of cold water for soaking chilies.

**TIPS & TIMING:** Cutting time per chili flower: 2 to 3 minutes. Pepper flower 5 minutes. Soaking times: 8 hours to 2 days. Chilies and peppers that are rec and have thin skin open faster. Flowers will continue to open a bit after they are removed from the water so don't over-soak them. These flowers are hardy and can be re-used 2 or 3 times.

**USES:** Because pepper flowers are large they may overwhelm a vegetable-flowers-in-a-vase arrangement. However, a small star cut from flower end of pepper works well in a standard arrangement, and you can attach a green onion daisy to its center for a lively effect. Generally, pepper flowers are displayed in the center of an hors d'oeuvre platter. The chili flowers can be used on platters and in vase arrangements, adding thematic support to Mexican and Oriental buffets, in particular.
CHILI FLOWER
1. Lay chili on cutting board; slice off stem but don't cut into actual chili. Insert tip of paring knife through skin about 1/2 inch in from stem end; don't cut into seed pod.
2. Now draw knife in a straight line out through tip of chili. Rotate chili slightly (less than a quarter-turn); repeat this cut. Continue making cuts at same distance from each other—a bit less than a quarter turn apart, making a total of 5 cuts, and consequently, 5 petals in your flower.
3. Insert your blade through 1 petal cut; carefully saw your way around inside of all petals cutting through ribs of pithy tissue that connect skin to seed pod.
4. One at a time, bend petals out and shave inside of each petal smooth. Insert tip of knife blade into base of chili and cut all around bottom of seed pod, making sure skin is well separated from seeds. Leave seed pod in place. Soak chili until it curls open.

PEPPER FLOWER
1. Trim stem off a firm, small red or yellow bell pepper. Lay pepper on its stem end. Cut out a 5-pointed star from the blossom end. The points should be 1-1/2 inches long with the center body a little bigger than length of 1 point. Twist off star. It doesn't need soaking; just use it as a colorful addition to your flower arrangement.
2. Treat the remaining large part of pepper just like a chili flower. Cut off the star left V-shaped openings down the sides of this larger piece. Cut down from bottom of these V's to stem end of pepper to create petals. Cut notches out from sides of petals, if you like. Cut off all connective tissue between skin and seeds. Soak for at least 1 day.