

# Ask Bergio's

... but first go to [www.theknot.com](http://www.theknot.com)

BY LORRAINE DePASQUE, EDITOR IN CHIEF



AS A CULTURE, WE EMBRACE THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION AS A VITAL KEY to success. Come this February, Berge Abajian, owner of luxury bridal and fashion jewelry company, Bergio, takes that concept to a new level. He'll provide an on-line fine jewelry advice column for consumers, called "Ask Bergio," as a link on The Knot, a leading web site for all things bridal.

Last year, Abajian, who started his manufacturing firm in 1988, took a dive into the direct-to-consumer waters by launching the novel marketing approach of "Ask Bergio" in print format for *Town & Country* magazine. Abajian's question and answer column ran quarterly in the national consumer publication and, by all accounts, was quite successful because it was filling their readers' need for extended education on fine jewelry.

Michael Miller, owner of M.J. Miller & Co., a jewelry retailer in Barrington, Illinois, recalls: "I've gotten calls from people telling me that they read 'Ask Bergio' in *Town & Country* and they had some other questions they hoped I could answer." Miller, who has car-



Wedding rings in diamonds and platinum from Bergio



Jewelry from the "Smalto" collection by Bergio

ried Bergio's bridal and fashion jewelry for ten years, says the column opened dialogue between him and some customers. "What Berge did, and what he's going to do with The Knot, is a very smart, important thing—something others should do. Any upscale consumer, who buys the product that we sell, wants education. We are merchants in an industry that requires a lot of education. Here is where the upscale commercial jeweler can really shine in this age." Miller says, this year, he'll be adding this "direct to the consumer" question and answer feature on his own store's web site.

To some degree, what prompted Abajian to take the idea to The Knot were the types of inquiries he got in his *Town & Country* column. He says,

"Originally, I thought I'd answer questions on the technicality of jewelry but instead I got many concern questions. For example: Should I buy platinum jewelry? Is there a way to judge workmanship on jewelry in the same way that I judge workmanship on a dress or a coat that I'm purchasing?"

Mark Mazzaresse of Mazzaresse Jewelry in Leawood, Kansas, says that, in the last five to ten years, things like workmanship and attention to detail became very important for his luxury customers.

"Our industry is full of mysteries to the outside world," he says. "And today, more people are more educated in everything—for example, electronics—than most of the salespeople actually selling the product! So, when it comes to jewelry, it's up to us to educate and dispel the myths."

Abajian agrees, saying that he's seen the curiosity about fine jewelry increase steadily over the past two decades. His venture with The Knot is for three years, and he hopes to answer questions on [www.theknot.com](http://www.theknot.com) on a daily basis. "If I get 500 to 1,000 questions a month, that will be successful." He speculates that most inquiries will come from 18- to 30-year-old consumers, who will be buying engagement rings. Abajian says, "I see this as a way of educating the younger consumer to become a lifetime quality buyer."

Mazzaresse, who has carried Bergio's bridal and fashion jewelry collections for five years, particularly notes the quality of Bergio jewelry: "Of course, I like the styling, but it's also consistent in quality, and that's very important."

The Bergio bridal collection is manufactured at the company's factory in New Jersey, while the fashion jewelry is made in Italy. This month, at the Centurion Jewelry Show in Tucson, Arizona, Bergio will launch two dozen new women's bridal styles (many with pavé) to its 18k gold and platinum wedding ring collection, which Abajian describes as "classical with a twist of modern."

At that show, he'll also introduce "Smalto," a colorful enamel 30-piece collection of rings, bracelets, lariats, necklaces, and earrings, mostly in 18k white gold, with an *en tremblant* effect for movement. Like the idea of "Ask Bergio," this collection takes risks. It is not run of the mill. But then, neither is Berge Abajian.