

# All natural with peştemals!

The Kızılay couple's 'Pesh Collection' design allows people to use peştemals not only in their bathrooms, but also at pools, beaches and during sports activities. It's a very multipurpose creation

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As years pass people tend to depart from old customs and traditions, becoming trapped in a cycle of trying to adapt to a new life with technology changing around them. The Peştemal is a good example of this. It's a towel that you wrap around your body, a large fringed garment made of cotton which is usually striped or checked. It's commonly used in traditional Turkish baths, or hamams. In Ottoman times, there were also peştemals available in silk. Today, the peştemal is still used in hamams in Turkey, but not retaining the same value, as it's seen as an ordinary piece of cloth.

Many people nowadays tend to seek more natural products, soaps, herbal teas etc. Many shops sell these products. In order to revive the culturally important peştemal while adding another product that's purely natural, a young entrepreneurial couple, Bige and Ercüment Kızılay, have designed bathrobes from peştemal fabric harking back to the 15th century.

The peştemal fabric was produced by women in hand-woven looms, with the dyes



Pesh Collection designers Ercüment (L) and Bige (R) Kızılay.

for the threads obtained from various plants.

The Kızılays' "Pesh Collection" design allows people to use peştemals not only in their bathrooms, but also at pools, beaches and during sports activities. It's a very multipurpose creation. They're not only light and easy to carry but also have highly absorbent qualities. They have an amazingly natural feel when you wear them. Now that spas are hugely popular throughout the world, this unique creation will add an indispensable character to spa culture.

In an interview with the designers of the Pesh Collection, the Kızılays talked about how they came to the idea of reviving a such a traditional fabric.

**TNA:** How did you come up with the idea of creating a pesh collection?

**BİGE KIZILAY:** Well it all started through our use of towels and bathrobes really. Living in humid weather in Istanbul we discovered that we needed something much lighter to wear after a shower, for example. We bought a peştemal from Kapalı Çarşı (the Covered Bazaar) in Istanbul, and found ourselves fighting over who was going to wear it. Ercüment had the idea that we should design a peştemal collection. The weaving process of a peştemal is very challenging, because normally peştemals are sold in one piece (1-1.70 meters). It's hard to find the suitable measures and colors needed to weave brand-new peştemals.

**TNA:** Can you talk about the colors of a classic peştemal?

**BİGE KIZILAY:** Red-checked ones are well known amongst the public. They're used both in hamams big with tourists and ones more for locals. We've also added the classic patterned peştemal fabric with a different design. When we first began producing our peştemals, we tended to use more natural colors, colors that aren't available on the market. We've since created a wide range of color options. Customers tend to ask for colors like blue and pink, blue for a man and pink for a woman. So we decided to limit the colors to pink, blue, green, red, and beige.

**TNA:** Can you talk about the models of Pesh Collection?

**BİGE KIZILAY:** We have two pesh models, one for women and a unisex model. We have peşkir (head towels) for men, special head towel for women, and flip-flops to complete the pesh.

**TNA:** Why peştemal?



A peştemal head towel with a special button to keep it firmly in place.

demand.

**TNA:** People tend to buy more natural things nowadays...

**BİGE KIZILAY:** Yes, that's right. We want to encourage this and create demand. Our products are very healthy. When you look back in history the peştemal is synonymous with Turkish hamams. They're either produced from 100 percent cotton or pure silk. All of them are hand-woven and plant dyes are used. In Turkish textiles most of the dyes are imported from Germany, which we find very sad. The core of the dye is the plant. We're a country of agriculture. We've thought of forming a plant dye workshop, but technically this isn't possible now. However, it's in our future plans.

**TNA:** What are the qualities of your peştemal collection?

**BİGE KIZILAY:** It's very light. It's a product to be used to wrap yourself up or to dry yourself. It's highly absorbent, and dries quickly.

The spa trend is currently highly popular worldwide. We discovered that there's no spa textile. Towels are used commonly in spas. In such humid atmospheres towels don't come in handy really. You need a much more lighter product. We believe that we can contribute to this sector with our products. A spa is like a ritual.

We've introduced our collection to Esse stores in Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir. They're now available in 17 stores all together.

We don't want to identify our products solely with hamams. Our products are multi-purpose and can be used at home, at the beach, or in sports.

**ERCÜMENT KIZILAY:** For our products we've invented a special folding technique and we include the folding instructions in all our pesh products. With this folding technique it can be carried easily, won't take up a lot of space in our sports or beach bag, and most of all when you open it you'll see that it doesn't hold wrinkles.

**TNA:** What's your most popular product?

**ERCÜMENT KIZILAY:** We've created a kimono model, adapting it using peştemal fabric. There's a great demand for our kimono models in the spas. It's one of my favorites ones.

Bige has now been working in the textile business for 17 years, and her husband who came up with the idea of producing peştemals in different forms is a civil engineer. They've combined their experience and created a great collection. If you're seeking a natural way of life, one of these pesh products is perfectly suited for you.

(Ankara Esse stores: Migros-Akköprü and Armada; Istanbul Esse Stores: Akmerkez, Nautilus, Papetland, Metro City; Izmir Esse Store: Konak Pier.)



A traditional silk Peşkir (top); a hand-woven loom (center); an example of traditional peştemals (bottom).



The Pesh Collection is available at Esse stores in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir.



**BİGE KIZILAY:** We had forgotten something that belongs to our culture. We're now using products that are a result of technology, that are far from their natural sources. We're using products that are really victims of technology. It's a simple matter of supply and