

The Story Behind the Stone: Decoding exotic pearls (/columnists/diana-jarrett/2581-the-story-behind-the-stone-decoding-exotic-pearls)

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Cultured pearls offer retailers an ongoing revenue stream because the lustrous orbs appeal to every age group, all tastes, and all budgets. That's a pretty good deal. They aren't white diamonds; when you've had one, you've had them all. Cultured pearls today are produced in myriad colors and shapes that no one dreamt about a decade or two back. So when you've sold one to your customer, you may actually be building in a taste for these gems rather than providing "one and done."



RARE AUBERGINE TAHITIAN CULTURED PEARL STRAND. COURTESY OF BAGGINS, INC.

Keeping your customer engaged during a presentation ramps up the conversion rate from "just browsing, thanks," to "I'll take it and wear it." Cultured pearls have abundant story telling opportunities that keep the customer with you long enough to help them develop an emotional attachment to these beauties. Here are a few bullets you'll want to fold into your presentations:

- Some mollusk varieties lend themselves to the likelihood of producing certain colors of pearl, like the black lipped oyster which gives us black pearls. Both natural and cultured pearls can be produced in a wide array of hues, but saltwater pearls produce the most extensive range of colors available.

- Akoya pearls, which are also from saltwater, have had a steady fan base for years. They produce black, and a range of white to cream, plus pastel pinks and blues. For many collectors, that's their go-to pearl favorite.
- South Sea pearls appear in a range of whites with creamy, pink or yellowish undertones. Tahitian pearls are synonymous with striking almost metallic colors. Peacock, blues or greens for instance are dramatic pearl colors that modern collectors love. But so are the greys and black range, and most recently eggplant, or aubergine. These head turners are so dramatic that a single strand is all a woman needs to wear for a stylish look.

We may know much about a pearl's background, but your customer doesn't. Explaining origin, the types of water in which the mollusk grows, and the very mollusk itself, all contribute to the distinctive quality of the pearl. Reminding your customer that these are organic gems and much of their color and characteristics are developed deep within the shell underwater is still a fascinating story and reinforces the value of these iridescent jewels.

Award winning trade journalist and gemologist Diana Jarrett is a Registered Master Valuer Appraiser and a member of the Association of Independent Jewellery Valuers (AIJV). She's a popular speaker at conferences and trade shows. Jarrett writes for trade and consumer publications, online outlets, her blog: Color-n-Ice, and www.jewelrywebsitedesigners.com (<http://www.jewelrywebsitedesigners.com>). Contact her at info@dianajarrett.com (<mailto:info@dianajarrett.com>), visit her website at www.dianajarrett.com (<http://www.dianajarrett.com>), and follow her on Facebook and Twitter (Loupey).