

Beautiful Freshwater Pearl Jewelry

Contributed by Webmaster

By Michelle Yamamoto

Beautiful freshwater pearl jewelry can stop you in your tracks. Every piece of freshwater pearl jewelry takes time, effort, and imagination to create.

Each piece of freshwater pearl jewelry starts as a few grains of sand in a freshwater mussel. Like its salty cousin, the sea oyster, a freshwater mussel creates a pearl because an irritant has drifted into its shell. Since it can't actively spit it out, it builds a hard shell around the sand grain, creating a pearl that is valued worldwide.

One way to differentiate between cultured and natural freshwater pearl jewelry is that the shape of the individual pearls may be varied. Some will be round, some oblong, and others will even be shaped like small disks. Natural, or uncultured freshwater pearls are often not spherical in shape.

Freshwater pearls that are spherical in shape are most often cultured pearls. They still form in freshwater mussels; however, the irritant is introduced by humans, and is often in the form of a small, spherical bead. If the irritant is spherical in shape, the pearl will be as well.

Creation of the Jewelry

After the freshwater pearl is created within the mussel and grown to an acceptable size, it is carefully harvested. Prior to creating a piece of freshwater pearl jewelry, the pearls are gathered together, dried, polished, and treated either with diluted bleach or with ultraviolet light to give them that whiter than white coloring that is so popular.

Not all the freshwater pearls will react to the bleaching and polishing process in the same way. With hundreds of pearls in front of them, certain people have the daunting job of sorting them out into strands of similar color, intensity, and shape.

Once the pearls are sorted, small holes are carefully drilled through each one as a precursor to being strung into a strand. Most often this is machine driven, but there are smaller pearl farms that still do this by hand.

Finally, those freshwater pearls are strung together, placed in earring settings, or placed in waiting ring prongs to create a piece of freshwater pearl jewelry. The next time you see a piece of pearl jewelry you can better appreciate the effort involved in its creation.

Michelle Yamamoto has been writing articles for the family business on black pearls for 12 years. More information and articles can be found at the Pearl Center