

# Choosing and Care of a Cultured Pearl Necklace

Contributed by Webmaster

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## A Brief History of Cultured Pearls

Prior to 1910, ornamental pearls were natural pearls. Since then, the cultured pearl has come to be used in jewelry. Pearls are formed from the reaction to an irritant (usually a grain of sand) deep within the shell of an oyster. Once it is deep enough, a protective coating called nacre begins to form to naturally create a pearl. Natural pearls are rare, as only one pearl may be found in a million shellfish. The idea of forming pearls through scientific means was thus born. Pearls formed in this manner are known as cultured pearls.

Kokichi Mikimoto first gave the world cultured pearls in 1910. Today almost 95% of all pearls are cultured. A cultured pearl necklace is the perfect choice for those who want to own a necklace that has good nacre, plenty of luster, and clarity.

A cultured pearl necklace made by Kokichi Mikimoto can be three to six times the cost of an American cultured pearl necklace with negligible difference in quality. Whereas Mikimoto sells rose overtone pearl necklaces, companies such as Tiffany sell silver overtone cultured pearl necklaces. According to the Gemological Institute of America, both types enhance the value of white pearls. While a rose overtone cultured pearl necklace will mostly suit a fair skinned user, darker skin is better offset by the silver overtone pearl necklaces.

Royalty have historically preferred to buy white pearls. Given their reflective nature, pearls tend to absorb the color from the surroundings. Therefore, one really cannot distinguish between rose overtone and silver overtone cultured pearl necklaces once they drape the recipients neck.

## Cultured Pearl Necklace Certification

When determining the quality of a cultured pearl necklace, it is important to review its certification if it is available. This will enable the buyer to evaluate its price with regard to the quality of the pearls. This certification, also known as the grading report, is essentially a gemologists description of the characteristics of the pearls.

Knowing how to take care of your cultured pearl necklace will help eliminate harmful acts that may shorten the life and reduce the luster of pearls. Keep the necklace away from household chemicals. Apply perfumes and hair sprays prior to fastening the pearls around your neck. There are harmful effects that these chemical-laden perfumes and sprays may have on the luster of the cultured pearl necklace. Wearing pearl necklaces as often as possible is also recommended, as body oils help maintain their luster.

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.