

# 'Know-How' Is Needed When Selecting Pearls

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Ever wonder just how good your pearl necklace is?

The only sure way, unromantic as it sounds, is x-ray.

New processes have made artificial pearls look almost like the real thing. And although probably everybody could tell the difference between a \$100,000 strand of simulated string, some of the in-between varieties are tricky.

Even if you take your necklace to a jeweler for a quick appraisal, you might not find out.

If the jeweler looks down a pearl's drill hole and sees a mother of pearl bead, you have only a cultured pearl. If he can't see anything but thinks you have a fine natural necklace, you could send it to a laboratory that has pearl x-ray machines.

You can do a pretty good detective job on your own, however. If you know the kinds of pearls, how man or the oyster makes them, and what to look for in a good pearl.

Pearls of greatest value are perfectly round, with a pinkish cast and a brilliant flawless skin without cracks, dents, scratches or blemishes. Size is a factor, of course, although a small perfect pearl is costlier than a large, irregular one.

Pearls, the only jewels produced by animal action, come in several shapes and shades. Besides round, they can be pear-shaped, for pendants; button, for rings; irregular, called baroque and used in various ornaments, and seed, which are very small pearls.

How does an oyster produce a pearl?

## A Product of Irritation

It is a product of irritation. When a grain of sand or tiny parasite accidentally enters the body of an oyster, the oyster protects himself for herself — some oysters change sex several times a year) by depositing layers of a pearly substance called nacre around the irritant. The thinner the layers, the most lustrous the pearl. Pearls produced in this way are called natural or Oriental.

When man puts the irritant — usually a mother of pearl pellet — inside the oyster, the resulting gem is called a cultured pearl.

The third variety has never been near an oyster. Artificial or simulated pearls are made from glass or plastic beads dipped in fish scale essence and then polished. The newest development is a kind of plastic bead that remarkably resembles a fine pearl. But its lighter weight will quickly show the difference.

Prices extend from a low of perhaps 50 cents for simulated pearls to hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Orientals. A good pearl cultured necklace can range from \$50 to thousands.

Dealers make no bones about the influx of cultured pearls depressing the natural pearl market. A good Oriental necklace can be bought today for from \$800 to \$1,000. A million dollar necklace before 1929 is available now for a mere \$150,000. If you're in the high-price market, it's a good idea to shop around. Prices vary, sometimes considerably, from store to store.

As for the cultured variety, a price increase up to 20 per cent can be expected because of recent

typhoons and floods in Japan, says the Imperial Pearl Syndicate, largest importers of cultured pearls in the United States. The pearls that weren't ruined are of poor quality, and that means good pre-war and pre-flood pearls will be placed on the market, but at higher prices.

## The Favorite Jewel

The pearl is the American woman's favorite jewel, but some women can't, or shouldn't, wear pearls. Those whose perspiration has more than normal acidity can reduce their pearls to half-size in 10 years.

Other useful things to know:

Pearls are rather soft and scratch easily. Their hardness is from 2½ to 4½ on a scale on which the diamond, the hardest jewel, is 10.

Never put perfume on them. The alcohol content is harmful. Keep them away from excessive heat; never get lipstick or fingernail polish remover on them. Remove your pearls while having a hairdo because the chemicals used are harmful.

Most good natural pearls come from the Persian Gulf, where for centuries thousands of men have depended on pearl diving for a living.

Although this remarkable gem was known to ancient man, the cultured pearl industry as we know it today is only about 40 years old. Its story is one of ingenuity and courage — the courage, perhaps appropriately, being exercised by women.

Early in the 20th Century, a poor Japanese macaroni peddler named Kokichi Mikimoto perfected, after years of experimenting, a process conceived by the Chinese centuries before: inserting an irritant directly into the oyster's body to make it produce a pearl.

Now very old and very rich, Mikimoto still runs his own company and stands on his head 10 minutes each day to prove his vigor.

Japanese pearl farms use women divers because they have greater lung capacity and can stay under water longer. These women, called Amas, hunt the oyster for small wages. But it is an honored and glamorous profession, frequently handed down from mother to daughter.

## Women Are Divers

The Ama begins her work at 16 and by her late 20's she is considered too old for its dangers.

In searching for the big Ayoki oyster, the Ama wears a white costume and headdress she hopes will scare away sharks. Carrying only a knife that is both tool and weapon, the Ama dives through the murky water as far down as 30 feet, finds a group of Ayoki, snatches one before they all burrow to safety and quickly surfaces.

In the underseas world lurk the giant clam, octopus, the sea star bristling with hundreds of poisonous spines, the hungry shark. The

# Mrs. Ayers Entertains

Mrs. Harry M. Ayers was hostess yesterday afternoon at a delightful luncheon honoring her guest, Mrs. Oliver C. Carmichael of Tuscaloosa.

The affair took place at the Aniston Country Club where the luncheon table featured centerpieces of yellow daffodils artistically arranged with baby breath and white peach blossoms, and guests found their places marked with cards decorated by daffodils.

Guests present on this occasion included: Mrs. Thomas E. Kilby, Mrs. William S. Stoney, Mrs. Roland Sims, Mrs. Leslie M. Edwards, Mrs. Arthur Wellborn, Mrs. William R. Owen, Mrs. Gerald I. King, Mrs. William P. Acker, Mrs. Leslie M. Edwards, Jr., Mrs. Philip A. Sanguinetti, Mrs. Gilbert Porter of Lake Forest, Ill., Mrs. E. Stanley Bobbitt, Mrs. S. L. Galbraith, Mrs. Robert Alston, Mrs. Edward C. Landham, Jr., Mrs. Eugene L. Turner, Jr., Miss Kate Mims Smith, and Mrs. Raymond P. Wheeler.

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## Algonquin Study Club To Meet Tomorrow

The regular meeting of the Algonquin Study Club will be held tomorrow afternoon, at 3 o'clock at the home of Mrs. Joseph T. Raspery at 1100 Glenwood Terrace, with Mrs. Rodney W. Clarke as hostess.

Mrs. Robert L. Lucas will conduct the meeting, and Mrs. Charles E. Tucker will present the program, her subject to be "Great Women Poets."

Ama risks her life with each descent, and sometimes loses it.

The oyster is closed, placed in a wire cage with other oysters and lowered into a quiet lagoon to build layers of pearl around the irritant for from three to eight years. Several times a year he is hauled up to see if he is healthy or needs a diet change.

The anesthetic, a recent development, has reduced the mortality rate among inoculated oysters from 60 to 10 per cent.

After the oysters are removed from the sea for the last time, they are opened and the pearls are carefully removed from the pearl sac. The gems are then sorted for color, size, perfection and brilliance.

Cheaper grades of cultured pearls result from larger irritants and less time in the ocean. You can see how a jeweler could easily tell a cheap cultured pearl by looking down the drill hole: the large mother of pearl bead would be covered by only thin veneer of pearl.

Be thrifty! Use the leftover syrup from canned fruits in gelatin salads, on cereal, in a dessert sauce or for basting ham.

