

This month's birthstone is the shiny silky bead we know as the pearl. With their simplicity, soft understated sheen and look of low-key luxury, all of which gives them the beauty to make pearls a favourite with jewellery designers old and new.

Romancing the stone - Pearl

by Sally Thornton

Things to know about Pearls



9ct white gold round Akoya bracelet with ball clasp. £875.00

1. Pearls have been prized for centuries and are steeped in myths and legends. Queen Elizabeth I, for example, wore pearls in abundance as a symbol of purity, chastity and an assertion of the richness of her kingdom. Portraits of her wearing pearls were used as a form of propaganda to promote her image as the Virgin Queen.

3. Pearls come from a pearl oyster (Pinctada), and not the edible ones you find in the restaurant! Pearls are also found in other sea creatures such as the abalone snail and the Great Conch, although these are very rare.



Silver, Marcasite & Pearl Drop Earrings £64



9ct white gold round Akoya stud earrings £360.00

Silver, Marcasite & Pearl Floral Ring £77

4. Buying pearls can be confusing, but there are many important factors to consider. Are the pearls 'natural', in other words formed without the interception of man, or 'cultured' and created via the introduction by man of an irritant, such as piece of sand or girt, into the living mollusc to then encourage the pearl to form.



Claudia Bradby Silver & White Pearl Duo Earrings £84

5. Pearls can be either salt or freshwater. Freshwater pearls have become very popular as the mussel shell will produce up to fifty pearls at a time in comparison to the one or two grown in the saltwater oyster shell.

6. Just like diamonds, pearls also have criteria which affect the price. They are graded according to their size, shape, surface perfection, lustre and thickness of nacre.

As with all organic gemstones, pearls are delicate and need to be treated with care. Store separately and store in a soft bag or box. Avoid heat, perfume and cosmetics which will affect the longevity of the pearls and put your pearls on after your make up.

8. The industrial production of cultured pearls introduced by Kokichi Mikimoto in Japan at the beginning of the 20th century, revolutionised the pearl industry and made pearls a popular and affordable luxury.



Silver and black rhodium ring set with white topaz and pearl £60



Emma-Kate Francis Silver Calla Lily White Pear Ring £79

7. Most saltwater pearls are cultured and divided into three types, Akoya, South Sea and Tahitian. The Tahitian pearls produce black, grey or dark green whereas the Japanese Akoya is white and pinkish in colour.

9. We love re designing pearl necklaces and adding in gold or silver beads for example which gives the necklace a completely different look. Mary Berry, from the Bake Off, has a favourite pearl necklace which she often wears on screen and in her cook books. We frequently use this necklace as the starting point for design work as it works really well.

10. Many of our young designers who work in silver also love using freshwater pearls in their designs as they can create a fantastic look but without the price. This month we introduce a new designer who works with pearls - Claudia Bradby and also showcase some of the new designs from Jersey Pearl along with stunning marcasite and pearl jewellery

Claudia Bradby Silver & Pearl Pendant £138



Silver, Marcasite & Pearl Necklace £275



Silver and black rhodium stud earrings set with white topaz and pearl £65



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