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### Contents:

- Following Stephen Bloom on his globetrotting journey, gathering information to write *Tears of Mermaids*
  - Jeremy Shepherd checks in on Stephen, and talks about his China travels and Chinese akoya
  - Adventures in Honggiao, Beijing's giant pearl market
  - The fabulous colors and sizes of Fijian pearls & the successful inaugural Fiji Pearl Auction in Japan
  - The incredible designs of NYC's Ella and Talila Gaffer
  - "Chocolate pearls": a passing fancy or a fancy pass?
- 



*T*he many hues of natural colored J. Hunter Fiji Pearls from the island of Vanua Levu of northern Fiji, where innovative farming techniques produce pearls of exceptional color and world-recognized size.

See page 10

# JUSTIN HUNTER & PEARLS FIJI

Justin Hunter had a big dream. Why not, he thought, grow pearls that looked nothing like the traditional black pearl. Why not produce pearls in beautifully distinctive hues that are also larger than what are traditionally grown.

So he came back home to Fiji from the United States to establish J. Hunter Pearls Fiji in 1999 where he implemented his bold new pearl farming techniques.

Now, he is reaping the rewards of his innovative thinking... and his pearls are highly sought after for their uniqueness and their untraditional colors.



Justin's dream did not end with growing the world's best pearls. His goal was to blend pearl farming with Fiji's natural environment and its indigenous people to create a working partnership.

Justin is intensely committed to keeping the marine environment of Savusavu Bay in its pristine condition and to improving the lives of the people of the community.

J. Hunter Pearls Fiji provides much needed jobs for local people, which gives them the resources to improve their villages and their lifestyles. Justin's commitment also includes providing school scholarships to deserving students and to be personally involved with the Savusavu community at large.

## CULTIVATION PERFECTION

Before Kokichi Mikimoto discovered the technique of culturing pearls in the early 1900's, natural pearls were so rare and expensive that they were reserved for only the noble and very rich. But the technology of pearl culturing changed all that.



These days, of course, most all pearls are cultured. That is to say, the hand of man enters into nature's realm to begin the process of making a pearl, then nature takes her course while the farmer continues aiding the process with specific oyster management.

Today, Justin Hunter and his team of farmers and technicians are perfecting the pearl culturing process. Every step of the operation is carefully managed, with years spent refining the methods toward the ultimate goal of growing the perfect pearl.

Everyone at J. Hunter Pearls Fiji is devoted to the creation of beautiful pearls, utilizing the uniquely colored oyster shells that grow naturally in Savusavu Bay, creating pearls that are exceptionally different from all others.



### HISTORY OF J. HUNTER

J. Hunter Pearls Fiji was established in 1999 when Justin Hunter returned home to Fiji after he earned his marine biology degree and gained his aquaculture experience with Taylor Shellfish Inc., of the U.S.

Justin had spent his childhood in the small township of Savusavu, and it was his goal to find a way to use his aquaculture expertise and live in his favorite place in the world: Fiji. Creating J. Hunter Pearls, along with his partners who are also his cousins

from Taylor Shellfish Inc., has been a dream come true.

### THE COMPANY

J. Hunter Pearls Fiji is situated in Savusavu Town on the island of Vanua Levu in the north of Fiji, an area that's still largely untouched.

This unspoiled location provides a truly unique location for aquaculture. The pearls are cultured in a natural environment that's largely free of impurities and pollution. The office and jewelry boutique is situated on Main Street in Savusavu Town, close to the wharf, while the pearl farm is just a short distance away on the bay.

The founder, Justin Hunter, is an active community citizen who strives to protect and maintain Savusavu Bay's healthy marine environment.

J. Hunter Pearls Fiji works closely with the traditional owners of the local fishing rights and provides much-needed jobs for the community, such as contracting work to women's groups to help the villagers improve their standard of living.

The company also sponsors village improvements and provides a school

scholarship annually for deserving students.

Justin is using his expertise in aquaculture toward innovative and carefully-managed pearl farming. His goal is to make J. Hunter Pearls known as the world's supplier of Fiji Pearls, beautiful pearls in colors not found anywhere else.

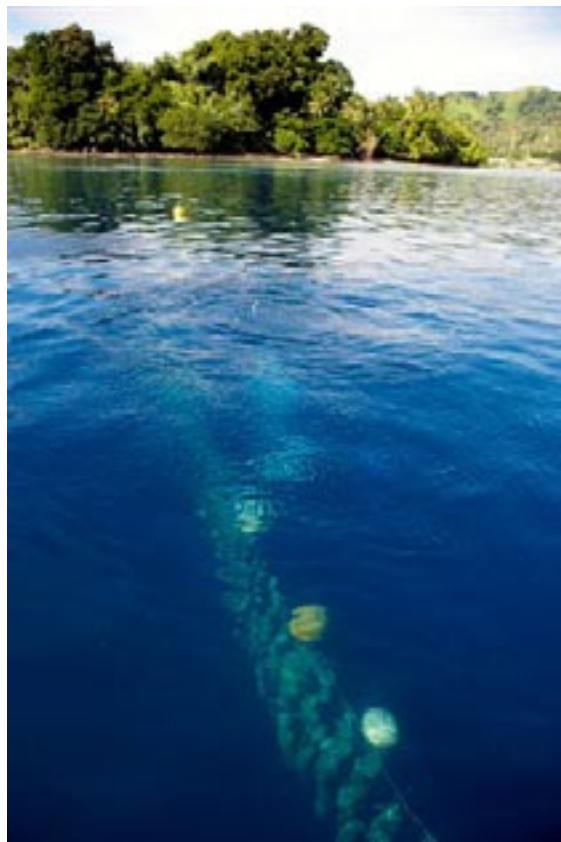
In 2005, J. Hunter Pearls won the Unique Exporter of Year Award presented by the Fiji Trades and Investment Bureau, in the coveted Exporter of the Year category.

### THE PEARLS

J. Hunter Pearls are a tribute to their unique environment, and the singular expertise of those who graft and nurture them.

As Justin himself told us: "I thought you might just like to look at what we are producing. We have some of the best multi-colored pearls being produced anywhere. The size of our pearls is also very good, averaging around 10.5 mm for the first seed. We are producing around 120 kilograms this year.

"As you can see, we are not trying to mass produce the same pearl over and over again in huge quantities (a la Tahiti). We are really trying to produce something different for which we will hopefully be able to eke out a small niche market. And we proudly guarantee these pearls



## “FJI” from page 11

to be totally natural – neither dyed, colored nor enhanced in any way. They are grown in the warm pristine waters of Savusavu Bay, on the island of Vanua Levu of northern Fiji, where the environment remains precisely as nature intended it.”

These nutrient-rich waters feed the oysters so well that Hunter pearls have a nacre thickness averaging 1.6mm, well above the established nacre thickness of other pearl growing countries.

“Most of our crop (around 65%) now fits into the lighter shade of pearls. We believe that the oyster we cultivate (produced from our own hatchery) is a subspecies of the oyster that survives in the atoll,” says Justin.



“Our oysters have distinctively colored shells and pearls,” continues Justin. “And, as you can see, the shells we have are striking and in return they produce pretty striking pearls that I am quite sure you have not seen the likes of, ever before”.

## OPERATIONS

According to Ben Ponia, Aquaculture Adviser of Secretariat of the Pacific Community: “The J. Hunter Pearl label is quickly becoming an exclusive high quality product line for Fijian pearls. The farm success is the result of attention to a number of critical factors such as good business acumen, attention to marketing and consultation with local communities.

“Under the managerial direction of Justin Hunter, the farm has approximately 500,000



oysters under cultivation and the pearl harvest grosses several million Fijian dollars per annum.

“Upon arrival I viewed several crops that had just been harvested. The pearls display the usual spectacular array of color which Fiji pearls are becoming renowned for.



“Amongst this crop some dark ‘chocolate’ colored pearls were pointed out.

“The quality of pearls is probably in part due to the expertise of Japanese technicians employed by the farm. These technicians also provide seeding services for other pearl farmers in the surrounding area. The J. Hunter operation is also expanding to another location.

“The pearl farm operates its



toring and carrying out basic pearl grow out experiments.

“The pearl farm provides direct benefits through avenues such as employment (of all genders and a range of ages) but also indirectly through the business that the high investment pearl farming enterprise generates.

“The farm also pays a

own hatchery and routine spawning operations were underway during my visit. The Fiji oysters appear to have a high fecundity and large sized eggs which could be related to the nutrient rich water quality environment of Savusavu bay.

“The pearl oyster egg sizes and spawn quantities seem larger than what are normally obtained in the Pacific region, quite likely a result of the nutrient rich waters, causing the oysters to have an unusually healthy gonadal condition.

“Whilst the hatchery is not



dividend from its profits to the local village. For example, it has provided funds for a community hall which also serves as emergency shelter in case of hurricanes.

“In addition, the farm sponsors an education scholarship for young students from the village. Those interested to know more about the farm operations can visit their website: <http://www.pearls-fiji.com>.

“Whilst at the farm we discussed the possibility of carrying out some mabe-pearl seeding trials. The Hunter

Pearl Farm has thousands of reject oysters which could be used for the experiments. It would be particularly interesting if the geographical scope for this experiment could be standardized and extended throughout the Pacific and other countries.”



large by commercial standards, it still has scope for expansion and could accommodate other species.

“The farm also employs a University of the South Pacific graduate as its biologist to carry out ecological baseline studies, particularly water quality moni-

## THE PRODUCT

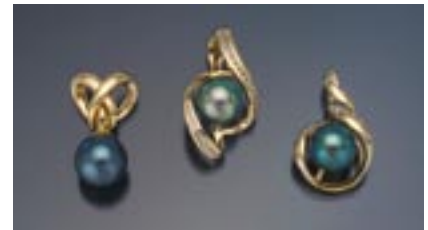
Justin is also proud of the finished product in which his pearls ultimately appear:

“When setting our pearls, we showcase the singular beauty and uniqueness of each pearl.



“Our ring and pendant collections are inspired by the individual characteristics of our high quality pearls.

“All diamonds in our pieces are supplied in the VS1 to SI clarity categories and are H-I in color.



“Our pearl necklaces and earrings are all hand-matched, with each piece being uniquely beautiful.”



“FIJI” from page 13



### FIJI PASTELS

“When we first took our pearls to Japan in 2003, we could not, for the life of us, get anyone to purchase our Pastel/Fiji light pearls.

“Now we get a premium price for our pastel pearls. Early on, though, most buyers that looked at our pearls initially said they were interesting but did not want to take the risk of supplying something completely new to the market... but we believed in both our product and with the concept of developing a new and exciting product, says Justin.

### THE AUCTION

J. Hunter’s Fiji Pearls Auction was held in Japan on June 15th, 2007. At this event were offered approximately 30,000 pearls in 89 lots with an average size of 11.5mm. The biggest round pearl was 18mm.

Participants numbered 18 from countries such as Germany, Italy, Hong Kong, Japan, and several other locales. Seven were from Europe.





The Fiji Pearls Auction was well attended, drew buyers from all over the world, and resulted in sales of some 80% of all the goods offered.



Those in attendance delivered the following comments:

“The world pearl market has been longing for something new like Fiji pearls.”

“We were amazed at the various colors of Fiji pearls, colors which we have never seen before.”

“The strong luster impressed me a great deal.”

“These were rare and larger pearls, compared with Tahitian pearls.”

“I appreciate J. Hunter’s farmer’s concept.”



Two of the J. Hunter Pearl strands that were offered at the Fiji Pearls Auction. Note the larger sizes and distinctive coloration. What cannot be readily seen is their thick nacre: these J. Hunter pearls average 1.6mm nacre thickness... considerably more than most other cultured pearls in today’s marketplace.

### JUSTIN’S COMMENTS

“Our unique marine environment and careful selection of oysters possessing rich color variation have produced these pearls that are in a class of their very own.

“Our vision is to continue the work we have started. We look to be champions of a new direction of pearl farming. We will look to challenge the current corporate style of systematic mass production of pearls and focus instead on producing high quality pearls.

“We will continue to work to provide truly unique pearls that represent Fiji.

“I have been very fortunate to have great people behind this venture that believed in what we were doing, and made this work.

“Our recent auction has given us the success we have been working so hard for.” ❖