

# FIJI PEARLS

## J.HUNTER PEARLS FIJI NEWSLETTER

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## Bula Friends,

### We have had a most interesting year!

Our last year was dominated by recovering from the effects of Cyclone Tomas that struck our islands in March 2010. We had some pretty significant damage to our farm infrastructure; losing some 200 spat collector lines, boats & barge's, our two seeding sheds at both farm sites and most damaging was the significant loss of post-implanted and young oysters..

2011 has really been about learning from this event and getting back on track, making ourselves better and stronger. The challenge we face this year is that it will be the first year in 8 years that we will not have pearls for export available. As you can imagine this is quite a financial challenge for us.

We have persevered with great support and encouragement from many of our customers and we are well on our way to getting back on track. The demand for our Fiji pearls fortifies our resolve to bring these truly exceptional pearls back to our customers.

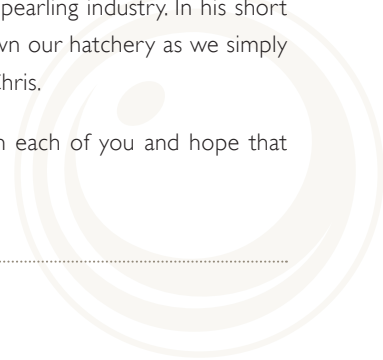
While our immediate supply is limited the future of our pearl production is looking very bright. Over the course of the last year we have more than doubled our grow-out capacity, increasing our number of water leases and forming stronger relationships with the traditional fishing right owners. We now have twice the grow-out capacity we had just one year ago!



2010 saw us introduce a new pearl technician to the team, Mr. Hideki Deguchi. It is interesting to point out that Mr. Deguchi had no previous experience implanting black-lip shells. He has, however, worked for more than 25 years in Australia and South East Asia with the Pinctada maxima. We continue to invest in new ways of farming, trying to find techniques that will work best for us here in Fiji.

We have also hired Mr. Chris O'keefe who had recently worked as a hatchery manager in the Australian pearling industry. In his short time with us we have had to shut down our hatchery as we simply have too many oysters – Well done Chris.

We look forward to catching up with each of you and hope that this finds you well.





## 2010 Fiji Pearl Auction

Our fourth auction took us to bustling Hong Kong in September 2010. The devastation that Cyclone Tomas brought to our farms was evident in this small auction held over two days. On auction were nine and a half thousand pearls sorted by colour, shape and grade into twenty four different lots. Lots 1 and 2 contained the best fifty round pearls collected over two harvests ranging in size from 9 – 16mm. These pearls displayed strong luster and held vibrant colours of copper, chocolate, burgundy, pistachio and gold. In the cooler palette J Hunter also featured for the first time a limited number of “ink-blue” pearls. Worth mentioning was the “nugget” of the harvest, the 18mm gold circle pearl (pictured left). The size and weight of this pearl is quite breath taking. To add to its brilliant gold body colour are chocolate coloured rings that run around the surface of the pearl. A truly unique Fiji Pearl.

J. Hunter extends a sincere thank you to the dedicated companies who continue to promote Fiji Pearls as we nurture our current crops and await with hopeful anticipation our next gathering in 2012.



## Hatchery Babies.

The first week of April 2011 proved to be an exciting and proud week for the J Hunter team with the successful movement of over 2.5 million hatchery produced spat. A hatchery record! Over four long days the oysters were cautiously moved from their holding tanks in the J Hunter hatchery to the Savusavu and Kioa pearl farms using loading trucks, barges and farm boats.

Hatchery produced spat spend the first twenty days of

their life in large 4,000 litre holding tanks where they are fed and closely monitored in controlled conditions to ensure good survival rates and healthy growth. After day twenty of their infant life the oyster develops a “foot” which can only be observed under a microscope.

The foot signals the oyster is now mature enough to attach itself to a surface and settle. At this stage spat are moved to setting tanks lined with special collector ropes. After a week the spat collector ropes with newly attached spat are ready to be moved to their future home in the calm waters of the bay for grow out on the farms.

*“We are still at a very critical junction with regards to growing these spat into healthy pearl producing adult oysters”, says Justin Hunter. “ These shells will be a better part of two years old before they can be implanted so for now the focus is on their grow-out which is key to not only producing healthy adult pearl oysters but eventually producing exceptional Fiji pearls.”*

## New Addition

Australian Chris O'Keefe joined the J. Hunter Pearls team as our new Pearl Oyster Hatchery Manager earlier this year, bringing with him some 30 years of experience in the aquaculture industry. Prior to joining us, Chris managed a silver-lip oyster hatchery for Morgan Pearls in Western Australia for four years. He got his start in the highly-specialised field with Blue Water Barramundi, Australia's first tropical fish farm and hatchery located off the coast of Queensland, later establishing a similar set-up in Papua New Guinea so he's no stranger to the tropics. As part of his new role with J. Hunter Pearls, Chris has been busy working to improve the health of our oysters for a greater yield of quality pearls. In addition, the hatchery has been expanded to produce other species such as beche-de-mer and giant clam.

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Fijian shell carvers Peter and Andreas Frey reside in the coastal township of Lami, near the Fijian capital Suva. The father and son duo are well known for their unique, wearable art pieces made from shells and in particular the mother of pearl shell. Pacific flora and cultural symbols such as tattoo feature heavily in their work.

Originally from Bavaria in Germany, Peter came to Fiji on a yacht in 1969 and decided to drop anchor for good. Influenced by the wood carvers in the Bavarian mountains, he first took to carving black coral and later moved to shells when its sale was banned. Son Andreas has followed in his footsteps, learning the ins and outs of shell carving from a tender age. Together, the Freys work to capture the essence of the Pacific in their work, making each piece painstakingly by hand.

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shell  
BY J HUNTER PEARLS FIJI

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## Community Outreach.



Vunikura, a remote village some 80km from Savusavu Town, got a helping hand from J. Hunter Pearls in May, when the company assisted with the purchase of a village generator, bringing electricity to its 32 households for the very first time. Since 2010, we have worked with the women of Vunikura Village, who harvest spat collectors for J. Hunter Pearls on a seasonal basis. Since there are few economic opportunities in the isolated area, our partnership has brought much needed income and development to the villagers, who otherwise rely on subsistence agriculture and fishing for a living.

*"The installation of electricity has been a great relief to the people,"* says village chief Silivitere Vakaseta. *"Women are now able to perform household activities in lesser time compared to previous years. For example, the washing of clothes would take them half the day in the creek and this created health risks. Our children now have proper lights for school work in the evening."* J. Hunter staff led by operations manager Junior Masirewa attended a Fijian ceremony of welcome that included traditional song and dance to mark the opening of the village generator. Helping better the lives of local communities where J. Hunter operates is central to our ethos.



## Fiji Experience



It's a long way from Pinache, Germany to Savusavu, Fiji but that's how far J. Hunter Pearls auction client Jörg Gellner travelled in June to get a better appreciation of our pearls. And he did

not make the trek alone. The CEO of Gellner, one of largest pearl companies in Germany, Jörg brought 18 of his VIP customers and five Gellner executives from the company's Swiss, German and American operations along for the Southern Seas trip.

It was the first time to Fiji for the group of 24, who immersed themselves in the pearling operations of the two J Hunter farms in Northern Fiji while taking in the local environment, the Fijian people and their culture.

"The purpose of the trip was to share with our top customers the direct emotional experience of pearl culturing and to share the philosophy of the pearl farmer we work with. This helps them understand what a special jewel the cultured pearl is and how much work and care lies behind it. We wanted our VIP customers to come to Fiji as the Fiji pearls are our new big love!" says Gellner COO Eveline Müller."



Having gotten a deeper appreciation of the social and environmental responsibility that form J. Hunter Pearls' corporate philosophy, the trip will help Gellner and its jewellery company clients better promote Fiji pearls to their international clients. Gellner is one of only a dozen select business partners around the world that are invited to participate in the exclusive auctions of Fiji pearls, since the volume of a full year's harvests is limited.

In 2009, Gellner launched "You Rock", a line of men's jewellery by Swedish supermodel Marcus Schenkenberg featuring J. Hunter pearls.

A limited selection of the "You Rock" line is now available in Fiji.

For more information on Gellner, visit [www.gellner.com](http://www.gellner.com)



## Pearls on Film

J. Hunter Pearls features in *The Pearl Chronicles*, a new documentary about pearl farming that's slated for release during the Northern Hemisphere fall season. When Josh Bazar, a third generation pearler from the United States, set off on a month-long tour of the world's pearling regions in February, he took a camera crew along.

Looking to raise the profile of cultured pearls in the United States (where they account for some 4% of jewellery sales) through the documentary, Bazar delved into all aspects of pearl farming in established pearling locales such as the Philippines, Japan and Tahiti. He visited the relatively newer J. Hunter farms in Fiji to look at new developments in cultured pearls.

"The fact that these pearls are being cultured in Fiji is something totally new for the broad audience and for pearl people," says Bazar. "The fact that their operation is so well organized utilizing hatchery technology and skilled pearl technicians is great too. The fact that their pearls are some of the most beautiful in the world was a huge tipping point for us as well," he adds.

The documentary has been produced with funding from the Cultured Pearl Association of America, Inc, a non-profit group comprised of the finest manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, dealers and suppliers of cultured pearls in the United States.

Elizabeth Strack, world renowned pearl expert and author of "Pearls" the most in-depth and respected book on the subject is featured in the film. When asked by Bazar about the future of the pearl industry, Strack paints a positive picture while giving J. Hunter Pearls a special mention, saying "Fiji is a very good example of a new locality with high quality."

The documentary will be used to educate a niche industry audience of pearl buyers and sellers in the United States. Bazar hopes it will also have wide appeal. "Each pearl type has an interesting story behind it and most of the people farming these pearls are wonderful. We want to personalize these pearls so that when people are buying or selling they don't just see a sphere that came out of an oyster. We want people to look at the pearl and see a product of some of the most beautiful places on earth, the result of years of dedicated effort and overcoming odds."

*For more information, visit [www.cpaa.org](http://www.cpaa.org).*





*phenomenal gems*

“The inspiration for this piece was very simple, I just loved all these Fiji gem quality pearls and their colours! We complimented the pearls with natural fancy diamonds trying to grasp some of the colours of the pearls in the colours of the diamonds. By separating the pearls with the diamonds we gave each pearl the space to show its own glamour!” - Jorg Gellner, Gellner - The Spirit of Pearls.

## In Good Company

In Fiji, the birthplace of J. Hunter Pearls, we've had an exclusive retail partnership with duty-free chain Prouds since 2004. Arguably Fiji's finest, Prouds stores are home to some of the world's best known luxury brands. Here, you will find J. Hunter Pearls holds its own among the likes of Chanel, Rolex and Christian Dior. Like J. Hunter Pearls, Prouds is a Fijian success story. Its parent company, the Motibhai Group, started with a single grocery store in the 1930s. Today, it runs the upscale Prouds stores in Fiji's main towns, hotels and resorts with two flagship stores in Suva and Nadi. In addition, there are two duty-free stores at the departure and arrival lounges of Nadi International Airport, the former being the recipient of many international awards.

For more on Prouds, visit [www.motibhai.com](http://www.motibhai.com)