

Pearl Oyster Industry

Products of the pearl industry

The main products from pearl oysters are pearls (mostly cultured), shell (mother of pearl) and meat.

To seed a pearl oyster, a skilled technician places a bead of shell (nucleus) in a pocket of oyster mantle that they insert into the oyster. If the mantle heals well it will secrete nacre around the nucleus and form a pearl. Not all pearls are round and there is a wide variety of shapes and sizes. An oyster may be re-seeded every two years or so, up to three or rarely four times. However, not every seeding operation is successful. Keshi pearls are produced when the nucleus is rejected but the oyster still produces a pearl in the pocket of mantle. Keshi pearls have a variety of shapes and are used in innovative and unique jewellery. Australian South Sea pearls are renowned for their quality and size.

Pearl meat is harvested from shells. It looks similar to a scallop without roe. It is a gourmet product sold for over \$100 per kilogram. It can be sourced from both wild harvested shell or from farmed pearl oysters, and is harvested to ensure optimum quality and food safety.

Pearl shell is used for multiple purposes. High end uses are for jewellery, buttons, and watch faces, some is used for inlays (e.g.in furniture and musical instruments), and some is processed for use in cosmetics or special paints.