



Dyann Smith has a growing appreciation of pearls

MOTHER OF PEARLS

When it comes to selling pearls, Dyann Smith is more likely to blind you with science than overwhelm you with marketing speak.

The savvy retailer has been known to X-ray and cut open her pearls to study their quality and she's happy to show customers the results.

The owner of Raw Pearls, at Hyde Park, comes from an academic background and was a lecturer in mathematics before opening the shop a year ago.

She wasn't looking for a career change or even thinking about a business when she first started looking at pearls.

On a quest to buy pearls for her mother's 70th birthday, she was disappointed with the options in Adelaide and eventually bought them overseas, surprising herself with the high quality of the purchase.

Excited by what she had learned along the way, she decided to open her own shop and try to educate customers about the quality of pearls.

"I come from an educational philosophy, so I have a different philosophy to many in retail," she says. "I've set this shop up as a consumer."

Since then Dyann has "immersed" herself in pearls and taken on any study in the area, including an intensive weekend course in Sydney and a Graduate Diploma in London.

"Lustre is the most important quality and you can feel that," she says.

In all there are seven factors determining the quality, value and beauty of pearls - size, shape, colour, lustre, surface quality, nacre quality and matching.

Raw Pearls has about 3000 pearls on the premises at any one time, and all have been carefully selected by Dyann. They include freshwater, Akoya and South Sea in various hues - the largest are just under 2cm.

The pearls are evaluated by Kym Hughes, president of the National Council of Jewellery Valuers, and the jewellery is made by Christopher Green.

In line with her education philosophy, Dyann is setting up her website to be a forum where people can ask questions about pearls. She has also been running wine, cheese and pearl appreciation evenings.

For more information, phone 8357-2550 or visit www.rawpearls.com.au