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DIAMONDS

Got Bro



ASK A DIAMOND DEALER IF THEY have chocolate or champagne diamonds, and you might just hear, “Oh, brownies? Sure, we have a few around.” Once hard-to-sell members of the diamond family, that notion has all but disappeared from customers and retailers who are drawn in by brown diamonds’ sultry allure. Today’s consumers call out names like chocolate, cognac, coffee or champagne when on the trail for distinctive diamonds. But it wasn’t always that way. Formerly viewed as lower grade, natural brown diamonds are enjoying new found adulation, riding the wave of a preference for all things earth-toned.

Public familiarity with brown diamonds might stem from televised celebrity events, where brunette toned diamonds are favored by young fashionistas. 2007 Academy Award winner Jennifer Hudson donned Fred Leighton’s brown diamond right hand ring. Earlier, stargazers glimpsed Cameron Diaz’ 20 carat cognac-colored diamond ring, only to be trumped by E! reporter Maria Menounos, who wowed the crowd in her champagne colored diamond dress; 3,000 carats— \$2.5 million dollars worth of serious glam.

“Brownies” slow rise to fame has taken eons to bask in their current limelight. Brown diamonds have been found since the earliest

mining efforts. 1st to 3rd century Roman rings were set with brown diamonds, but they never enjoyed the public’s preference for bright, colorless diamonds. Prior to the massive campaigning from Argyle mines in the 1980s, most people never heard of them. They are recovered in Africa, Siberia, and elsewhere, including the U.S. But Western Australia’s Argyle mine’s enormous ratio of brown and pink diamonds produced there made them the world’s largest supplier of these toast colored goods. So, Argyle mines developed a seven level scale to communicate the range of hues found in their brown diamond production. C1, the lightest on

ownies?

BY DIANA JARRETT



Photos courtesy of Hans D. Krieger Fine Jewellery.

this scale, is also called champagne. C7 represents the darkest brown, or cognac diamond on Argyle's scale.

The world's largest faceted diamond, the Golden Jubilee, happens to be naturally brown. This "fancy yellow-brown" 545.67 carat gem was presented to the King of Thailand in 1997, commemorating his 50th anniversary on the throne. Renowned cutter Gabi Tolkowsky designed the mammoth gem, which outweighs the famed Cullinan I diamond by over 15 carats. Another brown diamond, The Incomparable, holds a close second, weighing 890 carats when discovered in the Congo in the 1980s.

The largest of several stones cut from this internally flawless "fancy brownish-yellow" stone yielded a 407.78 carat brown gem shaped like the bowl of a spoon.

Most naturally colored diamonds exhibit more than one spectral hue. The predominant color is accompanied by modifiers; one or more additional colors that contribute to its overall impression. The endless combination of modifying colors lending to a brown diamond's final appearance factor heavily into that diamond's final per-carat price. Seasoned dealer Joseph Murawski of Joden World Resources, Grove City, PA, sells antique

estate and modern jewelry, and recalls an incident involving the purchase of a suite of brown diamonds in a range of colors, which made some stones quite valuable. Pink, red, or purple modifiers for example, can cause the per-carat price of natural brown diamonds to soar due to their rarity. Without respect to the variance in the brown stones, each was offered at the identical per-carat price. As a more informed diamond dealer, Murawski points out, they should have been sold at the sorted price with regard to their worth. "One should sell by market value, not by the purchase price," he underscores.



Photos courtesy of Hans D. Krieger Fine Jewellery.

The phrase “chocolate diamonds” has become such a part of the modern jewelry lover’s lexicon; one can almost forget where it originated. Eddie LeVian, of LeVian coined the term “Chocolate Diamonds”™ years ago and markets jewelry and timepieces with his proprietary brown stones to specialty retailers, and numerous channels of distribution. Le Vian went on to coin other terms, “Sweet Chocolate”™, “Chunky Chocolate Diamonds”™ and “Chocolate Truffle”™. He selects brown diamonds that are eye clean or better, and focuses on various shades of chocolate

colors rather than using pinkish browns or yellowish or orangish browns that actually command a higher price on the market.

Australian Diamond Supply, Ltd. has been synonymous with fine natural color diamonds and finished colored diamond goods for nearly 20 years. Customers go to them for the myriad of delicate brown tones found only in nature. “We sell all these variations in natural brown color diamonds on a constant basis,” reports company founder Lajb Blatman. “The top brown sellers and the most popular price level we sell seem to start at \$2,600 US per carat.”

Veteran Honolulu retailer Brenda Reichel of Karats and Carats Fine Jewelry thinks some of her customer’s enthusiasm for brown diamonds springs from her own enthusiasm for “brownies”. “I have always been interested in the fancy colors. The shades of brown with secondary hues are even more interesting.” Reichel adds, “Years ago I started buying brown diamonds, adding different colored diamonds around a round brilliant brownish-red orange diamond centerpiece. It’s a conversation starter and a big stepping stone for my customers to discover the world of colored diamonds.”

One of the best methods to chart broad public demand for a gemstone is to observe the increased call for enhanced or created gems that mirror the look of that natural jewel. The stepped-up demand for brown diamonds resonates with Briza Color Diamonds, Ltd. producer of enhanced color diamonds, which meets the exacting expectations of imitating nature. Utilizing industrial electronic beams under conditions of high pressure, Briza produces opulently saturated enhanced Cognac Diamonds. “With colored diamonds, you have the best of both worlds,” offers Briza president Amnon Barak. “The life reflected from (other) colored gemstones is seen more clearly under strong lights. Diamonds (and especially colored diamonds) reflect their brilliance even under a low source of light.”

Diana Jarrett (www.DianaJarrett.com) is a frequent lecturer on gem and jewelry subjects throughout the U.S. Most recently she earned the designation of Registered Master Valuer after successfully completing jewelry appraisal certification in the Master Value Program. Brown diamond Photos Courtesy of Hans D. Krieger Fine Jewellery.

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