

Choosing the Right Engagement Ring For Valentines Day

By: *Jamie Snodgrass*

Engagement rings are a symbol of a promise and a commitment for the future. They are highly romanticized and something that girls fantasize about, probably starting about the time they first notice boys. They will most likely change their mind more than several times, both about the boy they envision giving them the ring and about what the ring that symbolizes their engagement will look like.

Engagement fantasies are just that - fantasies; I can assure you that they are not thinking along the lines of what a discount ring, or even an affordable ring will look like. As they get older, their character and values will determine whether their fantasies are more towards marrying for love, or for status. It is a horrifying thought to know that the majority of marriages are somewhat of a business decision. I guess that would apply as well then, to the engagement.

Inexpensive engagement ring ideas may come to mind for the pure of heart who only fantasize about that the man of their dreams be wonderful and kind, and not necessarily worldly and successful. One of the main arguments that create conflict in a marriage is finances. If the man of your choice doesn't have unlimited financial resources at the time of his proposal, you may want to choose an affordable engagement ring.

Jewelers offer beautiful rings in all qualities, sizes and price range. It should not be difficult to find a ring to suit your taste and budget but if you are creative and can't find the ring of your dreams, another option would be to design your own ring and have it custom made.

One thing to ask the jeweler before choosing a ring is the grade of the diamond. Diamonds are graded and priced according to what is referred to as the four Cs for color, cut, clarity and carat weight.

How To Care For Your Diamond Engagement Ring

By: *Lee Dobbins*

Your engagement ring is a precious symbol of your eternal love. Something you wear every day no matter what you are doing. And because of this, your engagement ring can be subjected to harsh chemicals and activities. While it's true that diamonds are the hardest gem, they can become damaged if you are not careful. Learning how to properly care for your diamond ring can ensure that it really will last for eternity.

Through your everyday activities, your engagement ring can get smudged and soiled. Even if you take them off when you do housecleaning and shower, they can collect dust. Soaps, lotions, and our natural skin oils, can cause film and grime which can dull the brilliance of your diamond engagement ring .

In order to keep your diamond looking sparkly and new you should clean it regularly. Regular cleaning will insure that the maximum amount of light can refract the stones fiery brilliance. To clean your diamond, you can use a small brush - an eyebrow brush is perfect. You don't really need any special chemicals, just make a bowl of sudsy water with soap or mild detergent and put your engagement ring in the water to soak. After a few minutes (or longer if it is really caked with dirt and grime) take the soft bristled brush and scrub the diamond in the suds.

Rinse the engagement ring thoroughly to remove all the soapy suds. Don't simply hold it in your fingers under the water or you might find yourself taking the drain apart to search for your ring! You can put the ring in a small strainer and run the water through that to make sure all the soap gets washed off. Finally, take a lint free jewelers cloth and pat the ring dry.

If your diamonds are really dirty, you may need something a bit stronger than soap and water.

In this case, try a mixture of half water and half ammonia. Let the diamond ring soak for 30 minutes. Then gently brush them with a soft brush. Rinse and dry as recommended above.

You can also buy jewelry cleaning kits in almost any department store. These kits have everything you need - the solution and brush and are quite convenient as you can store them away and use them over and over again. Read the label to see if the kit is OK to use on your diamond engagement ring.

If you really want a super clean diamond you can try an ultrasonic cleaning machine. These machines use high-frequency to generate a cleaning motion. Every machine is not the same though, so read the instructions before using.

Caring for your engagement ring is not just about cleaning, there is a certain amount of maintenance you should provide. Be sure to take your diamond ring to a jeweler once a year. Have them check the mountings and prongs and make any needed repairs. This can prevent your diamond from coming out of its setting and getting lost.

When you are not wearing your engagement ring or if stones have become loose you should be stored it in a fabric lined jewel case, or jewelers box where it can be kept separate from your other jewelry. Ideally, every piece should have its own compartment. This will keep the diamonds in your engagement ring from getting scratched as well as keep your diamond from scratching your other jewelry.

To take best care of your diamond engagement ring, remove it when doing physical work. Although diamonds are a very hard stone, they can be chipped and scratched easily. Also don't let your diamond to come into contact with bleach household cleansers which can damage the settings and mountings. These cleaners can even change the color of your setting or the diamond itself!

Your engagement ring is one of your proudest possessions and it is essential to keep it brilliant and sparkling. The preferred cleaning method is up to you but between cleanings try not to touch the diamond with your fingers. This will help maintain its dazzling shine and brilliance for longer periods between cleanings.

Where Diamonds Come From

By: Lee Dobbins

It's hard to believe that that beautiful, brilliant stone in your ring was once sitting in the earth, isn't it? But it was and there's quite a few diamonds still there in fact about 120 million carats of diamonds are mined each year. There are currently two methods of mining diamonds: Alluvial Mining and Pipe Mining.

The Alluvial mining method is done on beaches and in riverbeds. When using this method, the water and sand on the bank are held back with man made walls, or a bulldozer is used to move the beach until the level of earth containing diamonds is reached. The diamonds are not sorted right there, instead the sand that has the diamonds in it is loaded into trucks and taken to screening plants.

With pipe mining, the diamonds are extracted from the earth through volcanic pipes. These pipes are natural - not man made. Shanks are put in the ground next to these pipes, and then tunnels are driven into the deepest parts of the pipe. Using this method, gigantic rocks that are full of diamonds are taken out of the mine and then moved to screening plants for sorting.

There are many diamond mines in operation around the world. Some of the major ones include:

The worlds largest diamond mine is Orapa which is located 240 Km west of Francistown. This

mine is owned by a partnership between the government of Botswana and DeBeers named "Debswana". The mine operates 7 days a week and is the oldest one owned by Debswana. It offers schools for its employee's children as well as a hospital and game park. Orapa began production in 1971.

The Argyle mine is located in the Kimberley region in Western Australia. Owned by Rio Tinto, this mine has the distinction of being the world's largest single producer of volume of diamonds. Unfortunately there is a low proportion of gem quality diamonds so it is not the value leader. It does, however, produce 90-95% of the world's supply of pink diamonds.

Diavik is another mine owned by Rio Tinto and located in Canada. It is on an island north of Yellowknife and south of the Arctic Circle. The island, connected by an ice road is an important part of the region's economy and employs more than 700 people. This mine produces more than 8 million carats annually.

Ekati diamond mine is located south of the Arctic Circle in the Northwest Territories of Canada and owned by BHP Billiton. The Ekati is Canada's first operational diamond mine and the diamonds are sold under the Aurifer trade name.

The Baken diamond mine is located in South Africa along the lower Orange River. It is owned and operated by Trans Hex. The average size stone for 2004 was 1.29 carats. In 2004, this mine produced a 78.9 carat D color flawless diamond that sold for more than 1.8 million dollars (US), as well as a 27.67 pink diamond that was sold for over 1 million US dollars.

The largest diamond ever was produced by the Premier mine in Cullinan, South Africa in 1905. Named The Cullinan Diamond it weighed a whopping 3,106.75 carats. This same mine also produced the Golden Jubilee diamond which weighed in at 545.67 carats. In 2003, this mine, owned by De Beers was renamed The Cullinan Diamond Mine.

Buying A Colored Diamond Engagement Ring

By: Lee Dobbins

The most famous diamonds in the world are colored diamonds so why shouldn't you have one in your engagement ring? You could get a yellow diamond like the Tiffany diamond or perhaps a blue like the Hope diamond. Another very popular color is pink. In fact, colored diamonds are becoming quite a trend among celebrities as well as everyday people.

Plus buying a colored diamond for your ring may be a better investment. Color diamonds have an amazing financial track record. In over 30 years, the value of colored diamonds has never decreased on wholesale level. In fact, the pink and blue diamonds have doubled every 5 years in a strong economy. If you have invested in a colored diamond you could make a killing, in fact a high quality blue diamond could go for \$50,000 in the 1970s and that same in the 1970's stone would be worth between 2 and 3 million today!

While natural colored diamonds are quite expensive, gemologists have developed new ways to create versions that are affordable for the average person. They do this by treating the less desirable diamonds with irradiation followed by intense heat. This amazing process turns brown and yellowish diamonds into beautifully colored diamonds that you can afford. It can also produce stunning greens, blues, yellows, reds, purples and other colors. Although these colors are considered permanent, there is a possibility they could change during repairs if a high heat is used.

If you are shopping for an engagement ring with a colored diamond stone, you should probably assume that anything remotely affordable has been treated. If you are not sure ask about the stone's origin and request to view a lab certificate to verify authenticity.

Another type of colored diamond that is affordable is a synthetic colored diamond. These are real diamonds that are grown in a lab. As they are grown, the natural coloring and process of diamond formation is simulated. Natural fancy color diamonds get their coloring from different trace elements like nitrogen and other minerals that are present in the stones. Lab created

diamonds can be colored by exposure to radiation during its creation. An example of a diamond affected by radiation is a Green diamond.

Another way that a natural colored diamond gets color is by its inclusions. Interestingly enough, inclusions are regarded as flaws in a colorless diamond and are very undesirable, but in a colored diamond the inclusions give unique tones and brilliant flashes of color and are desirable.

When shopping for your engagement ring, remember that natural fancy colored diamonds are extremely expensive, and any colored diamond which is labeled to be sold as a natural colored diamond should be accompanied by a certificate from a respected grading lab verifying it as such.

Buying Diamonds For Cut, Carat And Clarity

By: Lee Dobbins

We've all heard that cut, carat and clarity are important considerations when buying a diamond, but most of us have no idea what that really means. In this article, we will give you a little explanation of each so that you can be armed with a bit of knowledge the next time you buy a diamond.

Carat

Diamonds are measured in what is called carat weight which stems from an old form of measurement involving carob beans. At one time, if a diamond weighed the same as a carob bean, it was considered one carob or one carat. Today, the measurements are a bit more precise and one carat is 200 milligrams.

You may also hear a diamonds weight referred to as grains which stems from another ancient form of measurement. In the far east, rice was used to measure the weight of a diamond. If the weight equaled 4 grains or rice it was called four grains - or one carat as we know it to be now.

You have to be leery when buying diamonds that are already set or mounted. If there is more than one diamond in the piece then the tag will show the CTW or Carat Total Weight which is the combined weight of all stones. It will not tell you the weight of each stone in the piece, therefore you must ask the jeweler for the total carat weight of the largest diamond in order to really know what you are buying.

Clarity

There are basically two things to think about when evaluating the clarity of a diamond - inclusions and blemishes. Inclusions are flaws inside the diamond and blemishes are those on the surface. Diamonds are graded by the amount of inclusions and blemishes and whether or not they can be seen by the naked eye.

Many diamond buyers mistakenly think that diamond clarity refers to how clear it is but this is not the case.

Clarity actually refers to the external as well as internal imperfections in the stone. The best diamonds, of course get a grade of FL or IF - Flawless or Internally Flawless - meaning that it is perfect. A grade of I-1, I-2 or I-3 means that the diamond is imperfect, with a grade of I-3 being the worst.

Cut

Contrary to what most people think, cut does not refer to the shape of the stone, but to the facets that are cut into each stone. These facets are critical as they are what causes the stone to reflect light and what gives it, it's brilliance. Even the most wonderful diamond can be ruined if it is not cut properly.

Jewelers follow a mathematical formula to insure that a diamond is cut to show the maximum brilliance of the stone. As with anything cut affects price and there are several grades of cut to consider when buying a diamond.

The best cut is called "Ideal Cut" and it is perfectly per portioned to maximize the brilliance of the stone. The next best cut is called "Premium" which is also very desirable and is less expensive than the ideal cut. A "Very Good" cut is one step down from the premium but still reflects most of the light from the stone.

In some cases, the cutters vary the proportions of the cut to result in a larger diamond. The "Good" cut is an economical grade - lower than the "Very Good" but quite popular with most people buying diamonds as it still shows the stone off quite well. "Fair" and "Poor" cuts should be avoided as they do not result in a sparkly brilliant diamond. These diamonds are cut to specifically maximize size but they sacrifice brilliance in the process.

Canadian Diamonds - Why You Should Buy Them Now

By: Kay Reimer

The last Northern gold rush occurred in the late-19th century in the Yukon when tens of thousands of prospectors made their way to Dawson City to find their fortunes. Since then, miners and oil workers have continued to seek wealth in the North. In the past decade, history has repeated itself with the discovery of diamonds in Canada's North.

Diamond exploration in Canada began in the 1960s, but major discoveries of diamond-bearing kimberlite ore did not occur until the 1990s. With the discovery of diamonds in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut in 1991, Canada has risen to become one of the top three diamond producers in the world in terms of value, behind Botswana and Russia. Currently, Canada produces 15% of the world's diamonds. According to Statistics Canada, 13.8 million carats of diamonds worth approximately \$2.8 billion have been mined in Canada between 1998 and 2002. To put it in perspective, each day Canada produces one 1.5 kilogram bag of diamonds worth \$1.5 million. It is hoped that the diamond mines will provide income for decades to come.

In 1991, the first diamonds were found at Point Lake near Lac de Gras in the Northwest Territories, some 300 kilometers northeast of Yellowknife. Soon after the initial find, two diamond mines were opened in this region, the Ekati and Diavik mines. Diavik is approximately 100 kilometres southeast of Ekati. A third diamond mine, Jericho-3, began production in 2005, in Nunavut. A fourth diamond mine, Snap Lake-4 in the Northwest Territories, should begin production in 2007.

The Jericho-3 mine is located near the north end of Contwoyto Lake in West Kitikmeot, Nunavut Territory (NT). It is operated by the Tahera Diamond Corporation, which has been exploring for diamonds in Nunavut for the past seven years. Operations will commence with an open pit mine, and despite the harsh climate, it is planned to operate year-round. It is currently projected that the mine and processing plant will have an 8-year life and employ a total of approximately 125 to 175 employees and contractors.

The majority of shares in the Ekati mine (80%) are owned by the Australian mining conglomerate BHP Billiton. The remaining 20% are owned by prospectors Charles Fipke and Stewart Blusson. The Ekati Diamond Mine is the only diamond mine owned by BHP Billiton and produces nearly four per cent of current world diamond production by weight and six per cent by value. The mine is expected to be viable for 20 years.

The Diavik mine, located about 300 km (180 miles) north of Yellowknife, is owned by Britain's Rio Tinto PLC (60 per cent) and Toronto-based Aber Diamond Corp. (40 per cent). It employs 700 workers and produces 8,000,000 carats annually for total sales of \$100,000,000 Cdn. The area was first surveyed in 1992, construction began in 2001, and diamond production started in 2003. It provides approximately 5% of world diamond production. The mine is also expected to remain in operation for 20 years.

The Snap Lake mine, owned by DeBeers and operated by DeBeers and AMEC consultants, is starting this year and is expected to remain in production for 20 more years. This mine is located under a lake and will be the first entirely underground diamond mine in Canada. DeBeers also owns the Victor mine, an open-pit diamond mine in a remote area in the James Bay Lowlands of Northern Ontario, approximately 90 km west of the coastal community of Attawapiskat.

Canada's diamond industry has a world reputation for both quality and integrity. In recent years, there have been ethical problems with African diamonds, which can originate in unstable countries such as Sierra Leone and Angola where diamond sales fund terrorism, war and weapons sales. Canadian diamonds are traceable, as each one is etched on the girdle with a serial number as well as a microscopic Canadian logo such as a maple leaf or a polar bear as a trademark. The pictorial logos vary with the companies selling the diamonds.

Canadian diamonds, especially those from the Ekati mine, are high quality and extremely white. They're also fashionable, which was demonstrated when the Canadian teen singer Avril Lavigne attended the 2003 MTV Awards in New York wearing Canadian diamonds worth \$50,000.

The mines provide high-income jobs with an average salary of \$63,000, many of them permanent, not just the temporary make-work projects for which the Aboriginal communities of the Canadian north are well known. Almost 40% of the jobs are done by aboriginals. For instance, one diamond-cutting operation in the Northwest Territories is majority-owned by the Yellowknife Dene First Nation.

Some of the more specialized jobs, such as diamond cutting, are done by professionals from Armenia, Israel, China and Vietnam who earn salaries of more than \$100,000. Many of the diamonds are cut and polished in facilities in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Matane, Quebec. Between 1998 and 2001, employment in the diamond mining industry in the North increased from 90 to 700 workers, with estimates of more than 2,000 jobs currently. Another 2,000 jobs are created in support industries for the mines and their workers. Diamond mining produces more than just diamond sales. It also funds many other activities such as construction, road-building, Arctic and sub-Arctic surveying and engineering projects.

Diamond fever in Canada's north shows no signs of abating, and an article in the Toronto Globe and Mail in February 2004 reported that prospecting companies have laid claim to more than 70 million acres in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. The newspaper said the most dramatic increase in diamond prospecting is in Nunavut, where the number of prospecting permits grew to 1,518 in 2004 from just 190 in 2003.

Starting on Dec. 1, 2003, companies were given one month to apply for prospecting permits, resulting in long, round-the-clock lines at offices in Yellowknife and Iqaluit. There is a charge of 10 cents an acre to register a claim, \$1.50 to \$2 an acre to stake a claim. With 70 million acres involved, the cost of these claims is expected to generate up to \$140,000,000 in government revenue even before the mines open. Prospectors desperate to finish filing their claims have even been known to drop claim stakes from helicopters in poorly-accessible areas.

An economic boom is occurring in the north as tradesmen move into the area to fill jobs in the mines. This has raised the cost of living in the north, which was high to begin with due to the cost of transporting food and other necessities to isolated northern communities. In such places as Yellowknife, a basement apartment can rent for as high as \$1,500 a month.

In 1998, Yellowknife Mayor Dave Lowell said that the diamond rush might have saved his town from economic decline. "Quite simply, it is our future," Lowell said. "We'd be going into quite a recession if it wasn't for the diamond mine."

Information You Should Know When Looking to Buy Jewelry

By: Peter Roberts

For the average person looking at jewellery can be exciting, but confusing. What do all these terms mean?

Jewellery terms, especially relating to actual Gem stones, are very important because the price of the final item is dictated by the stone quality and cut. Following are some of the terms you'll come across.

Blemish: Imperfections found on the surface of a Diamond.

Brilliance: describes how well a diamond reflects white light.

Carat: is a unit of weight measurement used for weighing diamonds. For more information see [The 4 Cs of Diamonds](#)

Clarity: How "clear" the diamond is. For more information see [The 4 Cs of Diamonds](#)

Cloud: Most diamond defects are dark. This however is a milky colour, and a lot less noticable as a result.

Colour: The tint of the diamond. For more information see [The 4 Cs of Diamonds](#)

Crown: The upper surface of a cut diamond.

CT or CTS: Carat Total Weight of a diamond.

CTW: Carat Total Weight of a diamonds on piece of jewelry.

Cut: The shape of a finished diamond. For more information see [The 4 Cs of Diamonds](#)

Eye Clean: Diamond looks clear to the naked eye. For more information see [The 4 Cs of Diamonds](#)

Facets: The number of angles cut into a diamond. The more facets the shinier the diamonds appearance.

Finish: As you may expect, this is the quality of the diamond's workmanship.

Make: The cut and proportion of a diamond.

Polish: How well buffed the facets of the diamond are.

Symmetry: Good diamonds have been cut symmetrical.

Table:Top surface of a cut diamond. Flat like a table top.

I trust this will help you when next looking to spend some of your hard earned money.