

**What Murano glass IS and what it is NOT -
Facts, myths and deceitful tricks that you need to know about
IF you are planning a purchase outside of Murano-Lite store!**

There are many dishonest salespeople out there who will try to persuade you that what they are offering is Murano glass, when the truth is FAR from it (it can even be as far as China).

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF FROM THIS KIND OF FRAUD?

**You are absolutely safe when shopping at Murano-Lite.
But our professional and honest approach dictates going even further.
This is why we created this free guide for you.**

1. What is Murano?

Murano is a small Italian town located entirely on a small group of islands, similarly – and indeed very close to – Venice. It takes only 17 minutes by waterbus from Venice to Murano.



Just like Venice, Murano is set on a cluster of small islands



Murano on Google's map

2. What is Murano glass?

In the stricter sense this term refers exclusively to hand-made glass products manufactured on the island of Murano. These may include anything from small figurines to the famous chandeliers.

In the broader sense the term “Murano glass” is often used merely descriptively and only indicating the type or style of glassblowing, the kind of design, ornamentation and coloration of the glass which are typical for Murano’s art rather than the origin being Murano itself.

The second definition is subject to indefinite stretching and thus - fraud. Glass from China is being sold as “Murano glass”! Lead crystal is being sold as “Murano glass”! Even industrial production is being sold as “Murano glass”! This is why – when purchasing a product which is supposed to be from Murano – it is important to ask: “Is it made ON Murano OR on mainland?” rather than: “Is it Murano glass?”

However, even then you are still merely relying on somebody's trustworthiness and hoping that the nuance of your question is not going to be lost in translation...



Murano glass products include among others: figurines, tableware, vases and the famous chandeliers

3. So how do I know if a particular chandelier was made on Murano?

There is a certificate which can be given only by registered manufacturers from Murano: ***Vetro Artistico di Murano***. It takes the form of a small sticker, affixed to the product, which cannot be removed (thus transferred) without breaking it. It is a conclusive proof of origin and many Muranese factories subscribe to this trademark. However, many more do not. If you rely exclusively on the existence of this certificate, you are unnecessarily reducing your choice. You might never see or consider hundreds of fabulous chandeliers which were in fact made on Murano but do not come with the certificate.



Naturally, you can always make the trip to Murano and personally do the shopping there. In this way you will be certain about the authenticity of the products but – again - you will never see ALL of them! As a matter of fact, you will see just the tip of the iceberg because most manufacturers:

1. do not keep stock of even a quarter of their products,
2. do not have shops, only showrooms for corporate partners and...
3. ...they do not sell directly to customers anyway.

We are so dedicated to fairness and professional service that we explicitly describe each of our products as falling into one of the following three categories:

1. **“Made in Murano”**
- in the strictest sense!
2. **“Murano glass”**
- only when the factory:
 - a) has indeed roots in Murano but has recently relocated to the nearby mainland
 - b) uses the traditional Murano glass-blowing technique and art of mixing colours *en fuoco* (in fire – as opposed to sprayed-on)
3. **“Highest quality glass”**
products which have only those two things in common with Murano:
 - a) they are of highest quality
 - b) they are made in Italy

We are the only store on this planet to offer you this much transparency!

4. How is Murano glass made?

The process is very complex and requires absolute accuracy. The glass is made of silica with various additions. It is heated up in special furnaces until red hot and completely liquid. As it cools down and slowly passes back to a solid state, the master glass blowers have a brief moment when it can be shaped.



Liquid glass lends itself for shaping only for a brief moment



Streaks of solidified glass nearby a furnace

This can be done by blowing air into the glass through a long tube and/ or by shaping it by hand into particular shapes. It has to be said that “by hand” in these circumstances means using iron tools, as the glass is still glowingly hot!



Mouth-blown and then opened at one end with iron scissors



The shaping of an ornamental flower

5. What is so special about Murano glass?

Murano glass products are world famous for their exquisite quality, fabulous colours and unsurpassed craftsmanship. All those features can be easily observed with naked eye with some training (later on in this document).



Close-ups of Murano chandeliers reveal superb clarity of glass and spectacular craftsmanship

Secondly, there is Murano's unbelievable historic heritage. The glassmaking industry started to develop in the Venetian lagoon as early as 9th century and was forced to move to the nearby Murano in 1291 for fear of fires, which were a major threat to the city's mostly wooden buildings. However, it has been plausibly suggested that the move was in fact made in order to isolate the master glassblowers and prevent them from sharing their valuable glassmaking knowhow with foreigners.

By the 14th century Murano glass was such a coveted commodity and such a huge commercial success that the glassmakers became the city's most prominent citizens. They were allowed to wear swords and even enjoyed immunity from prosecution by the Venetian state. Their daughters were allowed to marry into Venetian blue-blooded families. However this came at a high price. The city wanted to keep the secrets of this extremely profitable trade to itself and forbade the glass masters to ever leave the small island. The glassblowers became virtual prisoners on Murano and there are rumours of assassins being hired by the state to chase any who dared to escape.



Venice, Rialto bridge as painted by J.M.W. Turner in 1820-1821

Ancient vase by Salviati dott. Antonio, 1885

Murano held a monopoly on quality glassmaking for many centuries, developing and refining many glass working technologies. Today, the artisans of Murano are still employing these century-old techniques, crafting everything from glass figurines and tableware to the famous Murano glass chandeliers. The extremely wide range of pure colours that they are able to create is still looked at with admiration and envy by glassmakers from all around the world.

6. How is coloured glass created in Murano?

Coloured glass is achieved by adding selected chemical compounds to the silica before or during melting. This requires incredible accuracy when it comes to proportions and timing. Many of the particular colour shades are still secrets held by some factories and not shared with others, even within Murano! We know, for example, that aquamarine is created by the use of copper and cobalt compounds whereas ruby red requires a gold solution as a colouring agent. This is the reason why red and ruby chandeliers are always more expensive than the same models in other colours.



Large colourful chandeliers, especially those in the Rezzonico style, require a large number of colours to create them, each mixed and molten separately. Since each furnace will work with only one colour at a time, in a big *vetreria* (glassmaking factory) there may be many furnaces blasting away all at the same time on account of one chandelier! In a small one, with only one furnace, this chandelier will take much longer to make...

No parts of Murano chandeliers are ever painted! Even the most intricate ornamental flowers displaying many different colours are made by skilfully pressing together separate bits of semi-liquid glass in each colour, and then shaping them by hand into flowers in this very brief window of opportunity before glass hardens and loses its plasticity. Should the window of opportunity close before the flower is ready, the unsuccessful parts are thrown away and the process begins anew – because Murano products have to be absolutely perfect.



7. How to recognize Murano quality glass?

Highest quality glass is absolutely clear, free of air bubbles, smudges or impurities. If you see a glass product that looks like it is dusty, try wiping the “dust” off. If it appears impossible, it means that the impurities are **INSIDE**. A chandelier made of this glass will never have the glamorous sparkle of a real Murano glass chandelier! It will always appear... well... dusty. However, an **OCCASSIONAL** air bubble is considered a positive attribute enhancing the product’s uniqueness.

Transparent glass of Murano quality is also absolutely, superbly crystal clear, e.g. without any unwanted discolouration (typically green or grey). When Murano masters developed the technology to achieve this degree of perfect transparency in 1450, the whole world was awestruck. It was acclaimed as *cristallo*, because it was clear like a crystal. However, it is important to emphasize, it is **NOT** crystal. Until this day the term ‘crystal’ is used to describe clear Murano glass and this creates many misunderstandings!



Crystal-clear but never crystal: unsurpassed clarity of Murano glass

.8 What does “crystal” actually mean?

There are four meanings of the word “crystal”. To navigate easily in the world of jewellery and chandeliers you should understand the differences:

1. The first and original meaning is the rock crystal (quartz), a natural crystalline mineral found in the Earth’s crust. Some varieties of rock crystal are semi precious stones, and can be cut to imitate diamonds. They used to be popular in Europe and the Middle East for making jewellery. The photos show only transparent quartz, although many other colours occur naturally, the most famous being amethyst and rose quartz.



Natural rock crystal (quartz)



Rock crystal beads



Carved rock crystal vase

2. Second, there is lead crystal which is achieved by adding lead oxide (PbO) to the glass. This addition increases the glass’s light breaking index, which means it can break light like a prism. The higher percentage of PbO in the crystal composition, the more vibrant the colours reflected and refracted from it. To be advertised as crystal the European Union standards dictate that there must be a minimum of 24% lead contained within the product (it is called full-led crystal in America). In contrast, American standards recognize any glass that is perfectly clear as crystal regardless of the lead content. To compare; Swarovski crystal contains 32% lead oxide.



Traditional tableware



Swarovski figurine



Modern trophy

3. Thirdly, there are rhinestones (strass). A rhinestone is a diamond imitation achieved by cutting lead-enriched glass and coating its lower sides with metal powder to enhance the brilliance. This method was developed by an Alsatian jeweller Georg Friedrich Strass and his surname became the name for rhinestone in many European languages. There are many possible uses for them ranging from jewellery, through fashion and interior design, to application on apparel and costumes (especially popular in ballroom dancing and amongst pop artists).



Rhinestone necklace and earrings



Swarovski handbag



Modern suspension

4. And finally, there is also optical crystal which is highest quality perfectly clear glass cut by extremely precise modern machines so as to enhance the light breaking index. This method is used increasingly for large suspensions, because glass without any lead additions is considerably lighter. Swarovski Spectra line is a good example of optical crystal.



Very large suspension



Optic crystal and rhinestones



3D laser-engraved souvenir

9. Is there any crystal made on Murano?

No. Neither of all the above kinds of crystal has ever been made on Murano. What is sometimes referred to as “**Italian crystal**” is glass which Italians call *cristallo*, meaning crystal-clear, e.g. perfectly transparent. Such glass appears very noble, elegant and light as a feather.

It has to be said at this point that it is indeed much lighter than lead crystal. Large chandeliers made of crystal glass have been known to lengthen because of the weight of the lead crystal stretching the metal clasps used to join the glass parts – a problem that is far less likely with Murano glass. Another advantage is that it does not bring about the health concerns associated with lead-enriched products.



10. What is the difference between Murano glass and Venice glass?

There is none. The whole glassmaking industry of Venice moved to Murano in 1291. Those terms are historically interwoven and synonymous.

The confusion comes from the fact that there is “Murano glass” and “Venetian chandeliers”.

“**Murano glass**” refers to the quality of handmade glass products from Murano. Both traditional as well as contemporary designs are used today on Murano.

However, the term “**Venetian chandeliers**” refers to the particular styles of chandeliers which were very popular among the rich citizens of Venice over the centuries. Of course, they were typically made in Murano.

11. What does a Venetian chandelier look like?

Venetian chandeliers were famous for the high quality glass, unsurpassed craftsmanship and fabulous colours, unachievable elsewhere in the world. The chandeliers were typically ornate with floral elements and rather colourful. The colours could be quite rich, but always semi-translucent, never opaque as it is fashionable today. Here are some examples of typical Venetian chandeliers popular in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries:



Popular Venetian designs from the 18th century



Popular Venetian designs from the 19th century



Popular Venetian designs from the 20th century

12. Are all Murano chandeliers traditional?

No. On today's Murano both traditional as well as modern chandeliers are being crafted. The historical archives provide designs from the past while the power of imagination coupled with a creative spirit provide new ones:



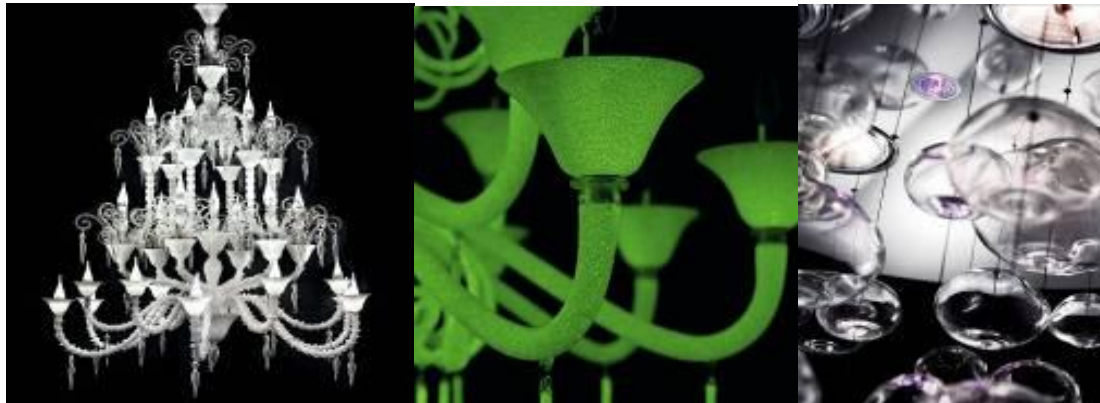
Modern Murano chandeliers: fusion, art deco, funky and even extravagant designs in absolutely highest quality

There is also a popular trend to use traditional designs with bold modern colours. A novelty is opaque glass, which is completely not see-through:



Modern colours and opaque glass make those traditional beauties appear fashionable and somewhat contemporary

Many time-honoured designs adapt gracefully to match our modern world. Technological advances made many innovations possible:



24 tiny and extremely environmentally friendly LEDs light this imposing chandelier

An addition of a fluorescent agent makes the chandelier glow even when switched off

A halogen lamp changes colours at a touch of a button on the remote control

Murano chandeliers are about the past, the present and the future. And most certainly a great investment in it!

We hope this report was informative and will help you make the right decisions. If you have further questions, do not hesitate to contact us.

We wish you a pleasant shopping experience!

With compliments,
Your

Murano-lite team.