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JEWELRY

Moissanite vs. Diamond: An Honest Breakdown from a Jeweler

By Scott Tischler · July 28, 2026 · 8 min read

I design and build custom pieces, and years ago I sold diamonds on the floor at Kay. So I have had the moissanite-versus-diamond conversation from both sides of the counter — as the salesperson with a quota and, now, as the person a client trusts to tell them the truth. This is the truth version.

The first thing to understand: **moissanite and diamond are not two grades of the same stone.** They are three different products — natural diamond, lab-grown diamond, and moissanite — each with real trade-offs. The "best" one depends entirely on what you actually value. Let me break down the properties that matter, then tell you who each is right for.

What is moissanite, actually?

Moissanite is silicon carbide (SiC), a distinct mineral originally discovered in a meteorite crater by Henri Moissan. Natural moissanite is vanishingly rare, so essentially every stone you'll buy is **lab-created**. It is not a fake diamond, a cubic zirconia, or a "diamond simulant" in the cheap sense — it is its own gem with its own optical and physical properties.

That framing matters because a lot of people ask "is moissanite real?" It is a real gemstone. It is just not a diamond, and it does not pretend to be under a jeweler's loupe.

Is moissanite as hard and durable as a diamond?

Close, but not equal. On the **Mohs hardness scale**, diamond is a 10 — the hardest natural material known. **Moissanite is about 9.25 to 9.5**, which makes it the second-hardest gem commonly used in jewelry, harder than sapphire or ruby.

For daily wear, both are excellent. The practical difference is small: diamond resists scratching and abrasion slightly better over decades of hard wear. But **hardness is not toughness** — diamond can chip along a cleavage plane if struck at the wrong angle, and moissanite has no such cleavage, so it

resists chipping well. Either stone will comfortably survive an engagement ring worn every day for a lifetime.

Which sparkles more — brilliance and fire?

This is where they genuinely differ, and where personal taste decides the winner.

- **Brilliance** is white-light return. Diamond has a **refractive index around 2.42**; moissanite is higher, around **2.65**, so it returns more light.
- **Fire** is the rainbow flashes — dispersion. Moissanite's dispersion (~0.104) is more than double diamond's (~0.044).

In plain terms: **moissanite throws noticeably more colorful "fire" than a diamond**, especially in bright light and larger sizes. Some people love that disco-ball rainbow flash. Others find it looks less like a diamond and more like, well, moissanite. Under a few carats it is subtle; over two carats, a trained eye — and sometimes an untrained one — can spot it. Neither is "better." It is a look you either want or you don't.

How do they compare on color and clarity?

Modern moissanite is typically sold **colorless (D-E-F equivalent)** and eye-clean, because it's grown to spec. You are not hunting for a bargain grade the way you might with diamond.

Natural and lab-grown diamonds are graded on the standard **GIA color (D–Z) and clarity (FL–I) scales**. That grading is exactly why diamonds carry price variance — and where a knowledgeable buyer saves money by choosing a near-colorless, slightly-included stone that looks flawless to the naked eye.

One honest note: in very large sizes, some moissanite can show a faint warmth or a slightly different flash under certain lighting. Buy from a maker who lets you see the actual stone.

The comparison at a glance

Property	Natural Diamond	Lab-Grown Diamond	Moissanite
Material	Carbon	Carbon (identical to natural)	Silicon carbide
Mohs hardness	10	10	~9.25–9.5
Refractive index	2.42	2.42	~2.65
Fire (dispersion)	0.044	0.044	0.104

Property	Natural Diamond	Lab-Grown Diamond	Moissanite
Look	Classic white sparkle	Identical to natural	More rainbow fire
Price vs. natural	Baseline	~30–70% less	~90%+ less
Resale value	Modest but real	Low and falling	Minimal
Best for	Tradition, long-term value story	Diamond look, better budget	Max size and sparkle per dollar

What about price and resale — the honest part?

Here is the conversation most salespeople skip.

Moissanite costs a small fraction of a diamond — often 90 percent-plus less than a natural diamond of similar size. **Lab-grown diamonds are chemically and optically identical to natural diamonds** and now sell for meaningfully less than mined stones, with prices that have dropped sharply as production scaled.

Now resale, and I will be blunt: **jewelry is not an investment.** Almost no consumer sells a stone for anywhere near what they paid — retail markup, dealer margin, and market spread all work against you.

- **Natural diamonds** hold ***some*** resale value, but you typically recover only a fraction of retail.
- **Lab-grown diamond** resale is low and has been falling as new-stone prices drop.
- **Moissanite** has essentially no meaningful resale market.

If someone tells you a diamond is a great investment, they are selling, not advising. The only stone that reliably appreciates is a rare, high-grade natural in a size and quality most buyers never touch.

Who is each one right for?

This is the part that actually helps. Here is what I tell clients based on what they value:

- **Choose natural diamond if** tradition and the story of the stone matter to you, you want the strongest (if still modest) resale case, and the origin narrative is part of the meaning. You're paying a premium for rarity and heritage — that's legitimate if you value it.
- **Choose lab-grown diamond if** you want a real diamond — physically identical to mined — with the classic diamond look, and you'd rather put the savings toward a bigger or higher-quality stone, a better setting, or literally anything else. For most of my clients who want "a diamond," this is the smart-money pick.

- **Choose moissanite if** you want maximum size and sparkle per dollar, you're not attached to the word "diamond," and you like (or don't mind) the extra fire. It's also a great choice for a travel ring, a first ring you plan to upgrade, or anyone who'd rather not wear a large diamond's price on their hand.

My honest bottom line

There is no wrong answer here — only an informed one. **Moissanite is a real, durable, brilliant gem** that gives you enormous size and sparkle for the money, with a look that's slightly its own. **Lab-grown diamond** gives you a genuine diamond for far less than mined. **Natural diamond** gives you tradition and the strongest resale story, at a premium you should choose with eyes open.

What I tell every client is the same thing: decide what you're actually buying — the look, the material, the meaning, or the story — and buy that. Don't let anyone shame you into a bigger stone than you want, and don't let anyone tell you the cheaper stone is "fake." Buy the ring that fits your hand and your budget, from someone who'll show you the stone before you commit.

Key takeaways

- Moissanite, natural diamond, and lab-grown diamond are three distinct products, not three grades of one stone.
- Moissanite is silicon carbide at ~9.25–9.5 Mohs — extremely durable for daily wear, just slightly below diamond's 10.
- Moissanite throws more than double the "fire" (rainbow flash) of a diamond; it's a look you either want or you don't, noticeable mostly above ~2 carats.
- Lab-grown diamonds are chemically and optically identical to natural diamonds and cost meaningfully less.
- Jewelry is not an investment: resale recovers a fraction of retail for diamonds and almost nothing for moissanite.
- Pick natural for tradition and resale, lab-grown for a real diamond on a budget, and moissanite for maximum size and sparkle per dollar.

Frequently asked questions

Is moissanite a real gemstone or a fake diamond?

Moissanite is a real gemstone made of silicon carbide, not a fake diamond or cheap simulant like cubic zirconia. Nearly all moissanite sold is lab-created because natural moissanite is extremely rare. It is its own gem with its own properties, not an imitation diamond.

Is moissanite as durable as a diamond?

For everyday wear, yes, effectively. Moissanite rates about 9.25 to 9.5 on the Mohs scale versus diamond's 10, making it the second-hardest gem in common jewelry use. It resists scratching and chipping well and will comfortably survive a lifetime of daily wear in a ring.

Can people tell moissanite from a diamond?

In smaller sizes it's very hard to tell without magnification. Above roughly two carats, moissanite's extra fire — more than double a diamond's rainbow flash — becomes noticeable, and a trained eye can spot it. Whether that matters is purely personal taste.

What is the difference between lab-grown diamond and moissanite?

A lab-grown diamond is chemically and optically identical to a natural diamond — it is a real diamond, just grown in a lab. Moissanite is a different material (silicon carbide) with more fire and a lower price. If you specifically want a diamond look at a lower cost, lab-grown is the closer match.

Which is more expensive, moissanite or diamond?

Diamond is far more expensive. Moissanite often costs 90 percent or more less than a natural diamond of similar size. Lab-grown diamonds fall in between, priced well below mined diamonds but above moissanite.

Does moissanite or diamond hold resale value?

Neither is a good investment. Natural diamonds retain some resale value but you typically recover only a fraction of retail. Lab-grown diamond resale is low and falling, and moissanite has essentially no meaningful resale market. Buy jewelry for wear and meaning, not return.

Is a diamond a good investment?

For almost all buyers, no. Retail markup and dealer spread mean you rarely recover what you paid. Only rare, high-grade natural diamonds in sizes and qualities most people never buy reliably appreciate, so treat any "diamonds are an investment" pitch as a sales line.

Which should I choose for an engagement ring?

Choose natural diamond if tradition and resale matter most, lab-grown diamond if you want a genuine diamond look for less money, and moissanite if you want the most size and sparkle per dollar and don't mind extra fire. There's no wrong answer — buy the one whose trade-offs match what you value.

About the author. Scott Tischler is the Founder & Chairman of AIrecommend.ai and a practitioner-authority on AI search and Answer Engine Optimization. With 20+ years in marketing technology — including American Express, MetLife, and UBS — and executive study at Wharton, Harvard, Yale, and Oxford, he helps businesses become the ones AI recommends.

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