

PRODUCER STORIES:

Rawdha Qader

CANAAN FAIR TRADE OLIVE OIL PRODUCER FROM NUS IJBAIL



LIVING BY THE SEASONS

Rawdha, also known as Um Hamza, is popular in her village of Nus Ijbail in the Nablus district. Her day begins at six in the morning with a cup of coffee, the morning news, and then feeding her chickens. Set on a beautiful hilltop, Um Hamza's house is surrounded by ancient terraces of olive trees, almonds, and an abundant amount of tumrac bushes that she plants

each year. A fully sustainable farm, Um Hamza knows each season and what it entails. She plants beans amidst her trees and saves some of their seeds for planting the next year.

When walking in her well kept terraces one can indulge in the fresh taste of her produce that she loves to offer to her guests. Fava beans, wild oregano,



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olives, onions, garlic, lentils, wheat, tumrac, lettuce, cauliflower, and turnip greens are just some examples of the things she will make sure you try because she knows that her produce “has flavor”.

ORGANIC ON PRINCIPLE

While Um Hamza still has to buy basics such as sugar from the market she is adamant that eating should be about enjoying and not just getting full. Her big blue eyes sparkle as she explains the benefits of eating vegetables in season. “Aside from the health benefits, there is the added appetite that comes from a year of joyful anticipation for your favorite fruit or vegetable.”

An artist at heart, Um Hamza loves literature and she is no stranger to the world of academia. She earned a degree in Islamic Law and went on to study Public Law before she returned to their village of Nus Ijbail. That is when she started raising chickens as a way to survive. But today, Um Hamza’s re-found love for the land is not just about survival, it is a way of life that Um Hamza and her farmer coop in Nus Ijbail are engaged in. The only woman farmer in her coop, Um Hamza leads the other farmers in her village with vision and commitment to organic agriculture. When she thinks of people using pesticides or herbicide she feels outrage because she says “we endure occupation and political hardship, the only friend to us is the land so how can we poison it with chemicals?” While Um Hamza lives alone with her only son Hamza, 13 years old, she also opens her home to other kids from the family who come to eat and study in her house.

SCHOLARSHIPS OFFER HOPE

When asked how Canaan Fair Trade impacted her life, her smile widens as she speaks with gratitude. “I am a survivor and I will do what it takes to make ends meet but with the situation being so hard I almost lost hope in ever being able to market my olive oil. When Canaan Fair Trade approached me, I asked my brother to help me buy more land and I planted two acres of olive trees. Now I feel at ease, I know that every year someone will come and buy all my crops and that gives me so much emotional and economic stability.” Her son Hamza who loves drawing and architectural engineering is very excited about

Canaan because he knows that doing well in school could qualify him for a scholarship from Canaan that would pay for his engineering career. His drawings that include tractor designs, schools, and farmland fill the heart with so much hope because it says that the new generation that once felt despair is finding encouragement through their parents work and their heritage. Unlike most young boys who aspire to move to the city and never come back to their village, Hamza is determined to further his education to better the lives of his farming community. The son of a tenacious woman, Hamza is very proud of his mother whom he says, “works harder than any man I know.” He loves Canaan Fair Trade because since it started he began meeting more people from the outside world who come to visit his village and is proud to know that people in the U.S. and Europe love the olives his mother grows.

While Um Hamza appreciates much of modern technology she feels that it is a two edged sword “because even though technology has given us comfort it has taken away from people the appetite of eating.” This is why she wants everyone to try her delicious olive oil because she is certain that once you taste her olive oil you will find your body reconnecting with your natural appetite for healthy foods!



Um Hamza Collecting Tumrac



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