

PRODUCER STORIES:

Abu 'Asim

CANAAN FAIR TRADE OLIVE OIL PRODUCER FROM 'ASIRA AL SHAMALIYA



FROM SOIL TO SOUL

According to Abu 'Asim from the village of 'Asira al Shamaliya, “the life of a farmer is all about patience. If you are looking for fast gains you will not work in the land.” His personal philosophy is that farmers understand best the circle of life because with each season they are reminded of the ever-changing nature of things. Patience, endurance, and continuity are the three pillars every farmer must learn early on. As Abu 'Asim likes to put it, “a person from the city may watch me pick olives and think it is an impossible job but I do it every year and every year I pick thousands of olive fruits one by one.”

But the challenges Abu 'Asim faced in years past are the same ones most farmers in his village have to deal

with, which is the cost of land maintenance. Maintaining a land requires financial investment in manure, water, tractors, animals, and most importantly time and labor. “If you want good olive oil you have to provide a lot of time and resources.” With the new Fair Trade practices, Abu 'Asim finds himself able to maintain his land while investing not just in its soil but also in his own future. “I feel more mobile since I became a member of our local fair trade coop. I have opportunities to travel to other villages to meet other farmers and I am paid fairly which allows me to invest in myself. Before I used to feel that going to Jenin was so far. Now, my perspective has expanded. This mobility offers me new opportunities and a sense that I can learn new things and make something of my life.”



FAIR TRADE DELICACIES FROM PALESTINE, THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

CanaanFairTrade.com info@canaanfairtrade.com



Abu ‘Asim is not the only one – in his village coop most farmers who could not afford to build a house or send their kids to school are now able to do so. He himself could not afford to send all his kids to college before but today his two sons have graduated from college, one with a degree in Chemistry and the other in Communication Technology and his youngest daughter is about to finish ninth grade. He is very pleased that “now it is possible for me to offer my children education so they can start their own lives.”

Abu ‘Asim’s orchards are famous in the village of ‘Asira as the olives that are always abundant or as they say in Arabic, *Izzaytoun el Hammal (olive trees always bear fruit)*. When asked about his secret, he says, “I serve my trees with great dedication. In good seasons my land would produce about 100 tanks of oil on its own but that same season if I serve my trees well during the year I can produce up to 500 tanks from the same piece of land. I serve the trees regardless of whether it is a good or a bad year. Some farmers give up on their trees in seasons when the yield is low. I never do.”

MUTUAL COMMITMENT

That kind of commitment is the same commitment he expects of Canaan Fair Trade and that is exactly why he won’t sell his oil to anyone else. “Other people like to buy my oil but I am committed to Canaan because my relationship with them is sustainable. I can count on them every year to come and buy from me. I make it a point to work with people I trust because I know I do my part and when you trust someone you give them your best.” When asked how he feels about being looked up to as a role model for other Palestinian organic farmers, Abu ‘Asim responds with no uncertain terms, “I don’t want people to buy my oil because it is Palestinian. I want them to buy it because it is the best.”



FAIR TRADE DELICACIES FROM PALESTINE, THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY
CanaanFairTrade.com info@canaanfairtrade.com

