

PRODUCER STORIES SERIES:

# Abu Ra'fat Odeh al Qadi

CANAAN FAIR TRADE OLIVE OIL PRODUCER MAZARA' AL NOUBANI



## FINDING LIFE AGAIN

The village of Mazara' al Noubani got its name after its spiritual leader, Sheikh el Noubani, whose reputation as a great healer brought to the village people from across Palestine who wanted to be cured. Abu Rafat, who is a native of Mazara' is carrying on the Sheikh's legacy with a different kind of natural spirituality that is inviting people from across the globe to come to Mazara' al Noubani.

Stretched across several different terraces, Abu Rafat's land embodies the picture perfect of intercropping with almost every indigenous fruit tree carefully planted in his orchards and a line of tomato seedlings planted especially for the Ramadan season. The magnificent view from his terraces combined

with the cool breeze and the sound of tree leaves fluttering does indeed invoke a calming feeling that would give any troubled soul peace of mind.

## THE PROMISE

But not so far from this peaceful image is the political reality that restricts farmers like Abu Rafat. While the land provides for him a space to breathe and find life again, Abu Rafat remembers his days in Israeli prison, "As a young man I studied English literature and worked as a teacher until I was arrested for my political activism, when I came out of prison, I was broken and that is when I started working in the land." Today, nine members of his family benefit from working the land, including his two daughters and



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

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three sons whom, he says, are the promise, “If I build a future for my children then this will be the highest form of resistance I can offer right now.”

## CROSS CULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

Sitting under his pear tree he explains how joining a farmer coop is all about building lasting relationships. With vivid enthusiasm he describes one of his happiest moments as a Canaan Fair Trade farmer, “last year when we had our olive harvest festival, I met a woman from England who buys my olive oil. I could almost fly from joy! I felt so amazed and inspired, how a farmer like me can have a relationship with someone from so far away because of olive oil, something we have been producing in our homes for many years. I could have never imagined this in a million years. It was one of the greatest moments of my life.” The benefit of being a fair-trade farmer is “feeling like you are treated as a human being, not as an invisible machine that makes food for invisible people. Fair Trade makes me feel free and trusted to make something really good not just from my land but also for my life.”



*Abu Ra'fats Olive Trees*



*View from Abu Ra'fat's Land*

