

PRODUCER STORIES:

Abu Saleh Hasan Elwakid

CANAAN FAIR TRADE OLIVE OIL PRODUCER FROM AL 'ARAQA



DIGNITY THROUGH SELF-RELIANCE

“I am a candle burning for my children so they may have light” These are the words of Abu Saleh, a Canaan Fair Trade olive oil producer from the village of Al-‘Araqa. Abu Saleh, who worked as a construction worker in Israel up until 2001, says that he knows what humiliation is and this is why he is determined to give his children something precious, something they can hold on to and a land that can sustain them with dignity. He is not your typical farmer nor is he your average guy on the street. Underneath his cheerful personality is a thoughtful man who is defying social and political limitations by raising his kids, particularly his daughters, in a way that allows them to be self-reliant. This is why he says

he loves fair trade principles. “When I was a worker inside Israel I felt like a slave but today I am in charge of my own life. I work when I want to and I teach my children to be independent so they do not suffer like I did.”

INSISTING ON LIFE

In his life, Abu Saleh’s story represents the Canaan Fair Trade mantra of *Insisting on Life*. When he could no longer find work, Abu Saleh bought a couple of sheep and along with his wife, the family started making the freshest and best cheese in all of Al ‘Araqa. At the same time, they planted lentils, wheat, and olives allowing Abu Saleh and his family to live a life fully supported by their land. In his sustainable farm, he grows vegetables in season including



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

CanaanFairTrade.com info@canaanfairtrade.com



tomatoes, eggplants, and cucumbers but he is most famous for his reputation as the honest seedling grower. In his small house, Abu Saleh prepares tree saplings from the indigenous olive variety that is most resistant to diseases. He is proud that most of his saplings always succeed after planting.

AN AWAKE LIFE

Abu Saleh is energized by the increased local awareness of organic farming and is happy that internationals' interest in Palestinian olive oil and most importantly the Palestinian farmer is feeding his natural tendency to be an open person. "My work in olive oil has introduced me to so many people from around the world and I have learned new things. For example before a man from Germany visited me I did not know that growing potatoes close to my olive trees is not a good idea. Now I know a new fact and with each visitor I have a new idea." Looking at his daughters as he speaks, Abu Saleh says, "There is a difference between an awake person and a person who is closed. An awake person can learn from other people and other cultures and he can live in dignity because he can work and survive." But Abu Saleh's appreciation for openness and cultural exchange does not stop at the thrill of receiving guests. He hopes that one day he can visit others around the world the way people freely come to visit him because he recognizes that there are so many people like him around the world who are left unknown. "Before we started selling our olive oil I felt that the outside world used to think Palestine is a land without a people but now when they eat my oil they know that we are here."

CHOOSING BEAUTY

While the political and economic circumstances give him many reasons to see the world through a gloomy lens, Abu Saleh's resilience is in his ability to see beauty in everything, most importantly his daughters, his trees, and his hope that his work with Canaan Fair Trade can make a difference. We can all learn from Abu Saleh's insistence on life not just as a life to live but a life to be lived fully. As he likes to say, "we make the world beautiful or ugly depends on how we treat each other and the land we live in."



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

CanaanFairTrade.com info@canaanfairtrade.com

