

PRODUCER STORIES SERIES:

# Ahmed Abu Salama

CANAAN FAIR TRADE OLIVE OIL PRODUCER FROM FAQU'A



## THE BEAUTY OF THE DEFAULT

To Ahmed Abu Salama being a farmer is about sensation and human interaction with the land. “I don’t treat the product from a business perspective. When I make things with my hands, I know they have defaults but people love it because they know it is unique. There is no other like it. Only the person making it knows what went into it.” An electrician, a farmer, and a social worker all at the same time, Ahmed lives with his wife and children in the village of Faqu’a and unassumingly he says, “I feel like I am not a typical farmer.” Although most Palestinian farmers have names for their lands and their trees, Ahmed takes this a step further as he

describes his deep relationship with the olive tree. “The tree reacts to me. It responds to what I do for it. If I speak to it and serve it right, it gives.” And according to Ahmed this requires faith, faith that “the tree is just like an alive human being that is part of the family, the village history, and the community.”

## ONE OLIVE AT A TIME

The land he farms today has been in the Salama family for generations but when his father considered selling it for lack of resources, Ahmed did one of the hardest things a man can do, he sold



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



his wife's wedding jewelry to save it. With only 120 olive trees, Ahmed is truly a small farmer. The amount of olive oil he produces does not compare to people who have a 1000 trees, but he says that his olives, although few, are very special. "I touch each and every olive that goes to the press with my hands. This has meaning. I appreciate this in my own work and I appreciate it for other farmers. I know what it feels to have a deep relationship with what you are producing. This is why I like to buy fish for example from a fisherman who treats his work in a sacred way. He lays his net and he waits and waits. It doesn't come easy just the way I have to pick each olive one by one, it is very unique."



*Ahmed Serving His Olive Tree*

## DEFYING LIMITATIONS

Aside from the pleasure of working in the land, Ahmed enjoys the social impact of being part of Canaan Fair Trade. The network of friends he has made through being involved in the coops is "bringing villages and people together in a time when the political realities are separating us by walls and checkpoints. The fact that we meet to talk about oil, exchange ideas, and organize events is making us challenge the limitations imposed on us through the work we are doing. The same land we are being kicked out of is the same land that is keeping us together." When asked what he thinks the secret of the success of the work the farmers are doing with Canaan Fair Trade he responded with one word, justice. "I feel I am treated fairly and most importantly, respectfully. We have transparency with Canaan Fair Trade even when internationals come to visit the project they speak to us directly and they ask us intelligent questions so we do not feel used, we feel that we are honored producers with something very distinctive to share."

