

Halimeh Nafi' Yasin

CANAAN FAIR TRADE MEMBER OF WOMEN COOP FROM 'ANIN VILLAGE

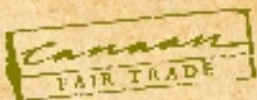


FROM WOMAN TO WOMAN

In Arabic people often make reference to a saying from the Qur'an that says; paradise is at the feet of the mother, *Aljana tahta aqdam el umahat*. This is also the saying that 35-year-old Nafi' uses to describe his mother Halimeh. "My mother is patient. She teaches us how to work. We do not know how to survive without her. If it weren't for her our family would have collapsed and our land would suffer." With only the basics of elementary grade education, Halimeh, whose age she refused to reveal, says that she learned everything she knows from her mother-in-law. "I was a young woman when I married my husband but his mother was an amazing woman. She taught me so much about food, cooking, and agriculture. She

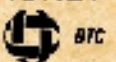
taught me that a woman who serves and harvests her land would always have what she needs. I followed her teachings and I am grateful for that."

As the other women in the coop tease her about being discreet about her age she laughs. "They all think I am older than I really am because I always spend time with people who are older than me. Since childhood I have spent much time with older women and imitated them and their work." This is exactly how Haliemh learned how to make Maftoul. Following the hand movements of her mother-in-law, she was able to pick up the techniques of making this delicious delicacy and producing it for international consumption through Canaan Fair Trade. Four years ago, my neighbor came and asked me to make a sample of Maftoul. I made a batch, spiced it, and gave it to him.



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

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I thought it was a gift for someone but when he shared it with Canaan Fair Trade they were so impressed and approached me to start working in the women coop.”

WORK AS WORSHIP

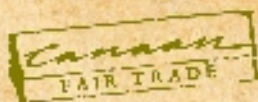
Today, Halimeh is an active member of the 'Anin village women coop and a member of the Palestine Fair Trade Association. While her village lies on top of one of the most beautiful hills in Palestine the view from her house is overshadowed by the grim image of the segregation wall that has taken up much of her village land. When asked how the construction of the wall has impacted her life she said, “Before this wall was built women here were happier. We felt safer and more secure because men had access to cities where they could work. Today, we carry the double burden of working inside the home and outside because men cannot find work.”



Halimeh Feeding her Animals in 'Anin Village

However, since she started working with the Palestine Fair Trade Association, Haliemh says things got a bit better for her. “A child always comes to his mother when he or she needs something. This is why my work with the coop is so important to me. I can give my children a dignified life and I may not be able to give them everything they need but I have more resources than I did before.”

Indeed, Haliemh cannot give her children everything they need. With one son suffering from a neurological illness, another disabled by an injury incurred during the last Israeli invasion, and a husband who cannot find work, Halimeh carries more than double the burden in her family. One may want to feel pity for Halimeh but a few minutes spent with this iron woman one would learn a few things about perseverance, and loving patience. If you happen to ask her if she gets tired while working she will gracefully tell you, “work is a form of worship. My body may tire but my spirit is at peace.”



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