

Itaf Sadiq Omreyeh

CANAAN FAIR TRADE MEMBER OF WOMEN COOP FROM FAQU'A VILLAGE

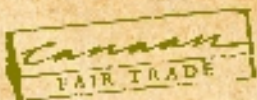


GETTING STARTED: THE BIG STEP

Forty-eight-year-old Itaf is already a happy grandmother of three wonderful grandkids. When she started making Maftoul in 2005 with the Faqua'a women coop she thought that producing one thousand kilos of these little wheat pebbles was an impossible task. But soon after her hands got used to the rolling movements and the precise measurements of flour and water she realized that the impossible could be possible when you take the first step. "We were four women who started rolling. I was thinking we would never be able to produce that much and before I knew it we were carrying the last bucket of Maftoul to the roof to be dried. It was an amazing feeling and it made me realize that I can do anything. All I have to

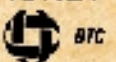
do is to simply get started. That year we produced over 1000 kilos of Maftoul!"

This year Itaf and the other women in Faqu'a decided to rent a small home to make sun-dried tomatoes. Selecting the perfect fruit, Itaf explains, "Making sun-dried tomatoes is very precise work. If one piece is damaged then your whole batch is ruined so one has to be very careful." The secret of the mouthwatering taste of these tomatoes is not only that they are organically grown by local farmers but that women like Itaf hand select each tomato before it is washed, cut, placed on mats to dry in natural sunlight, and sprinkled with sea salt that highlights its flavor. By the time these red delicacies are dried and placed in olive oil jars their taste becomes distinguishably enticing.



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

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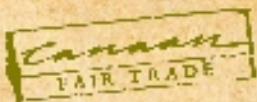


WORK IS GOOD FOR THE HEART

Like most women in the Faqu'a coop, Itaf enjoys the companionship of her colleagues but more than that she treasures the closeness that she found with her husband when she started working locally. "My husband is a day laborer, he works in agriculture, construction, anything...you name it. He never asked me to work but when I decided to join the coop he helped me a lot and his support was very meaningful to our relationship because it brought us closer together." Aside from her husband's support, Itaf's three grown daughters who are in college appreciate and back her work as well. "I feel blessed because my daughters have taken up the work at home, so unlike most women in my village I do not have the burden of working inside and outside the home." When asked what benefits she finds for her family she said, "other than the financial benefits, we receive many guests and that is wonderful especially for my daughters who are learning new things about the world through these cultural encounters. We enjoy having people all the time because we feel we can really know people and of course my daughters can improve their English." But for Itaf the most important part of her whole experience as a member of a local coop is what she calls her freedom from feeling imprisoned at home with nothing to do. "I used to feel imprisoned at home. Now I go out every day, I speak to people, and I feel a sense of purpose. When I am walking down the street people are always asking me about the tomatoes, the Maftoul, and what new projects I am working on. This makes me feel really good inside."



Itaf checking on her sun-dried tomatoes in the newly rented house for the Faqu'a women coop.



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