

PRODUCER STORIES SERIES:

Mustafa and Shafaq Jarar

CANAAN FAIR TRADE OLIVE OIL PRODUCERS FROM BURQIN



AN INTERNATIONAL CENTER

Mustafa Jarar is an organic olive oil producer from the village of Burqin in Jenin District. He is known in his village as *Abu al Balad*, a term in Arabic that literally translates as *father of the town*. It is used to describe a community elder who can solve feuds and problems between people in the village. Taking after his father, Mustafa is indeed *Abu El Balad* and his counsel is sought after by almost everyone in Burqin. Since he started working with Canaan Fair Trade his home has become what his wife, Shafaq, calls an International Center.

When people from other countries who are interested in organic olive oil and fair trade initiatives come to

visit their village Mustafa and Shafaq offer their home. Over the past four years the Jarar family hosted people from over five countries and they say this makes them very happy because through these visits they feel connected to the world. “We are always surprised how little people around the world know about us. Often people come here and they have bad ideas about who we are. When they stay with us, share our food, and pick olives with our family they start to feel at home.”

Mustafa and Shafaq’s son Mahmoud is very grateful for the olive oil business but he says for him it has nothing to do with the economic progress. He is happy that since Canaan Fair Trade started buying his family’s oil he has been able to tell the story of his people to the outside world. He says, “Before I never



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

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imagined that internationals cared to know anything about us. I never thought I could communicate with them because I am limited to Palestine. But when they started coming I developed friendships that have changed my life.”

Mahmoud who is a freshman at the American University in Jenin says he would like more internationals to come to Palestine “because we cannot go visit them so it means a lot when they come to visit us and learn about our lives.” And Mahmoud is one of six children in the Jarar family who are constantly being impacted by the cultural exchange olive oil trading has created. As youngsters they are not only finding excitement in meeting the world in their home but they are inspired to create more opportunities for their village. Mahmoud is organizing a youth group in the village of Burqin that wants to invite people to sports activities and historic tours of the Melkite Church of Burqin that is considered one of the oldest churches in the world.

HIGH SPIRITS!

In that same life-force, Mustafa feels that Canaan Fair Trade came at a crucial time in the lives of young people who were depressed. As the Burqin coop representative, Mustafa says that hiring young people to work in presses and encouraging them to work in their land has had a major social impact. On a personal level he explains that before Canaan Fair Trade, his eldest son stopped wanting to go to the field and his whole family became disheartened and would only go pick enough olives for the family to eat and they would leave the rest of the crop to waste. His wife Shafaq sees the social impact of participating in the fair trade coop from a woman’s perspective. She says, “When Canaan Fair Trade started asking women if they want to work in making *maftoul* (hand rolled couscous) the women were hesitant. Some women even said no because they were afraid that it would be socially unacceptable for them to work. Today, all the women want to make *maftoul* and they wait for the *maftoul* season with great anticipation.”

The Jarar family olive oil is one of Canaan’s finest olive oils. Due to their proximity to the Canaan Fair Trade olive press and the uniqueness of their land their oil is bottled as the Estate Olive Oil and is enjoyed by hundreds of people around the world. According to Mustafa this makes him feel very proud because he now knows that he is part of a global culture of organic producers. And as Shafaq likes to say, “I exist through my olive oil and for my family it is a source of income and high spirits.”

