

PRODUCER STORIES SERIES:

Mahmoud & Ayman Nasser

CANAAN FAIR TRADE OLIVE OIL PRODUCER FROM SKAKA VILLAGE



THE HEALER OF ANIMALS

Grandfather Mahmoud has the wisdom of an elder who knows that the things that matter the most in life are the simple ones. Herding the sheep, milking the goats, and caring for a sick animal are activities he does with great attention. A natural born veterinarian, Mahmoud is known in his village of Skaka to be the healer of animals, *shafi el haywanat*. Along with taking care of hundreds of olive trees, he raises sheep, chickens, horses, and pigeons. But with Israeli settlements eating up half of his village from every direction, grazing land has shrunk significantly and accessing the lands that are left has become dangerous because of military monitoring that forced Mahmoud to sell all of 300 of his sheep.

However, at age 69, Mahmoud still finds hope in the future. When all of his sons have left the work in the village to find jobs in a more urban context, a new sprout of hope comes through his youngest grandson, Ayman who was born loving everything his grandfather does. Ayman, who is only 17 years old, is not caving in to the pressures of the new urban times. Despite what his friends think, he is taking on his grandfather as a mentor and is learning all the traditional ways he practices to cure sick animals and take care of ancient olive trees.

Ayman, Arabic for the man to the right, is truly his grandfather's right hand man. He knows that pursuing a degree in engineering or medicine would gain him higher social status but he is convinced that what he is learning with his grandfather is giving him a better



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

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life. “My brother and my sisters all finished college and received high degrees but they cannot find work. The land is the most important thing in the world to me. It is my passion and thanks to the sheep and the olives I will not have to suffer being an educated man working as a day laborer inside Israel.”



*Ayman
Petting his
Bird after
Taking Care
of the Other
Animals in
the Farm.*

While bandaging the broken leg of his newly born foal, Ayman says that his dream is to be able to stay in the land while going to veterinary school. “I will have a perfect life if I can learn new ways about curing animal diseases and combining that knowledge with the traditional methods my grandfather teaches me.” But Ayman is not only promising to be the savior of the old knowledge, he has already been the savior of the old trees. When in years past his grandfather, Mahmoud, was getting older and unable to take care of the family olive trees on his own, he almost succumbed to using herbicides when Ayman immediately stepped in and started taking the responsibility every year of removing all the weeds with his own hands with the help of his friends and his grandfather. When asked what keeps him motivated, Ayman stated, “I consider the land to be a gift. If something were to happen to our olive trees, my family would be devastated. I can’t let this happen.”

This is why to Ayman and Mahmoud the Palestine Fair Trade Association is not just another group they belong to. It is where they find support from other farmers like them who are insisting on life and dedicated to never giving up. As grandfather Mahmoud puts it, “Canaan Fair Trade and PFTA protect my rights and despite all the challenges we have to overcome in order to produce our olive oil, I feel safe. I trust that I am part of a movement that is working, like my grandson, by my side to make sure that like our trees we stay alive.”

