

Rasmeyeh Gnaim-Um Mohammed

CANAAN FAIR TRADE MEMBER OF WOMEN COOP FROM BURQIN VILLAGE



THE ORIGINAL CONNOISSEUR

No one really knows how old Um Mohammed is. In her green identity card her date of birth is noted as 00-00-00. Her active life style can be confusing when trying to gauge her age but as far as she is concerned her age is just a number. “I have been a farmer all my life and when the olive harvest season comes God gives me energy and I become a young woman again.” Um Mohammed was indeed a young woman when her husband passed away. At that time she was pregnant with her youngest son, Nidal. “I raised my seven kids all by myself. I am very proud of that. They all want me to go live with them but I like my independence. I am not afraid of living alone.” With seven grown kids, and many grandchildren, Um

Mohammed is hardly alone. Everyone loves to be around her, especially younger women from the local coop who consider her the original Maftoul connoisseur. An honored member of the Burqin women coop, Um Mohammed works in her home. When her daughter, Nisreen, pesters her to rest and stop rolling, Um Mohammed gracefully says, “ I love making Maftoul and it helps me stay financially independent. Why would I ever stop doing something I love if I still have the health and energy to do it?”

When Um Mohammed is not rolling Maftoul or cooking something delicious such as her stuffed eggplant specialty she is out in the field. On her own she manages three different pieces of land filled with Rumi olive trees. Her favorite spot is *Ras El Mataleh*, an olive terrace looking over her village where Um



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Mohammed says she loves to rest in hot days with a cool carafe of water.

BREAD FOR THE POOR

Dressed in colorful traditional dress, Um Mohammed does not mind guests taking her picture. “I feel proud of my traditional costume. Many foreigners when they see me they immediately start taking pictures. I don’t mind it.” Beautiful dresses are not the only thing this true elder preserves. In her memory she carries history as well as recipes of foods people ate when times were tough. Beaming with delight as she kneads corn flour dough to make *Kardosh* bread, she explains, “Although they say, may you never remember el *Kardosh*, *Kardosh* is poor people’s treasure. Back in the day many people sold their lands so they could buy white corn flour because they were too poor to afford anything else.” Mixed with wild *Za’itman* (a kind of oregano) and onions, Um Mohammed says she has not made it in 53 years. To make it is to revive a history and to remember hard days and good old days when she would spend summers with her grandmother making and eating *Kardish*.



Um Mohammed Kneading Corn Flour To Make Kardosh, Also Known As Poor People’s Bread.

A WOMAN HAS GOT TO DO WHAT A WOMAN HAS GOT TO DO

Leaning on her cane as she bends to weed under her olive tree, Um Mohammed says that she is so happy that Canaan Fair Trade exists and even happier that the women in Burqin are organized and working together because according to her, “a woman has to know how to take care of herself at all times.” When asked what she thinks the new generation should learn from her, she says, “Use all things natural, especially for the soil because if you have good soil then everything that will come out of it will be perfectly healthy.”



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