

# Um Hikmat Khaled

CANAAN FAIR TRADE MEMBER OF WOMEN COOP FROM DEIR BALLOUT



## OUTDOING THE MACHINE!

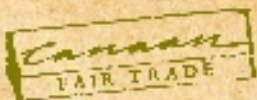
If you ever visit Um Hikmat in her village of Deir Ballout south of Jenin prepare yourself for a feast of a lip smacking Maftoul dish. Made with traditional Palestinian *Kamdeh*, which consists of cumin, olive oil, onions, salt, and black pepper, Um Hikmat will confidently serve you what she calls *the best Maftoul in Palestine!* Made from organic wheat and rolled with her own hands she says, “We may not have technological advancements in our village but we can do things with our hands that are superior to anything made by machines. No machine can make this kind of Maftoul. It does not work.”

Maftoul is just one thing Um Hikmat makes, a beekeeper and a baker, her backyard, although small, is abundant with natural produce ranging from

Kumquat to wild sage and figs. Across from her *Taboun* oven, which is made from clay, she has a few beehives that make enough honey for her to sell to the whole village. “People reserve honey jars from me before I even collect the honey. They know my honey is good and that I do not feed my bees any sugar.” In her view, “one spoon of honey a day will protect you from diseases and memory loss.” One can tell that at least her memory is intact as she likes to tell stories from her childhood that she heard from village elders about the history of Deir Ballout.

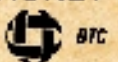
## A BIG VISION FOR A SMALL GROUP

Working with several women in her coop to improve their economical condition, Um Hikmat holds a bigger vision for the work that they are doing. She



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puts aside any personal differences to keep pressing forward with the hope that one day the work her coop does will speak to the world's ears and break down what she refers to as *cultural misunderstandings*. "We want our work to communicate to people around the world that we are beautiful and strong women contrary to how we are often portrayed."



*Um Hikmat's Maftoul with chickpeas and chicken.*

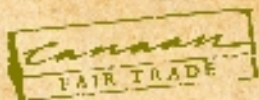
## A ROLE MODEL

Strong and determined are indeed the first two words that come to mind when meeting this powerful woman. As she manages operational details with her colleague Sara, Um Hikmat serves as a role model for many young women in her village. Challenging conventional limitations she divorced her husband and moved into her family home where she runs her independent venture as a farmer and a member of Canaan Fair Trade Deir Ballout women's coop. After running for elections this year in the Palestine Fair Trade Association, Um Hikmat has been becoming more and more involved in connecting women from different villages together in order to learn from each other ways to improve their lives. While many women find themselves in a position where their husbands cannot find work due to closures and a challenging economy, Um Hikmat says, "We have to find ways to support ourselves creatively. This is why we are now expanding our work to include more handcrafts and artwork. It is important to show young girls that they are not prisoners to their circumstances and that with hard work and determination, they may not be able to change the whole situation, but they can become more in control of their lives."

But mere survival is not Um Hikmat's goal. This is why she is excited about the role Fair Trade has played in their coop. "Since we started making Maftoul for Canaan Fair Trade we have been enjoying the company of each other more. We love life. We want to enjoy it to the fullest; this is why we don't work alone. Maftoul is a great excuse to get together, cook together, and work together. We roll, we chat, and we feel good when we are finished that we accomplished something as a group. These are the beautiful things in life."



*Um Hikmat's Bees.*



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