

FIRST OF THE MONTH

MONTHLY IN-DEPTH ESSAYS

FROM AMOS TRUST

A TASTE OF PALESTINE

Gemma Bell and Heather Masoud take us on a journey to the kitchens of Palestine.

amos  trust



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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### GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD

*“Entering the Old City is a wonderful induction into Palestinian food and markets. Women from the surrounding villages sell fresh produce on the steps, the aroma of cardamom-infused coffee from street vendors hangs in the air.”*

**Gemma Bell and Heather Masoud take us on a journey to the markets, restaurants and kitchens of Palestine.**  
Photography by Issy Croker.

#### **HEATHER WRITES...**

In 2016 Amos Trust and Zaytoun introduced the Taste of Palestine tour visiting farmers, restaurants, kitchens and markets as a delicious way to taste, connect and learn more from a rich culture.

Together we have run these trips during the olive harvest season. We hope we will be back in 2022 but for now, we'd like to share some stories and reflections from previous visits.

This time of year is one of joy in Palestine as extended families gather and pick by hand, the olives from their trees that characterise the hills of the West Bank. Ancient stone terraces outline the contours, people with ladders and generous picnics dress the landscape.



**“ WHAT I’VE ENJOYED MOST  
IS MEETING PEOPLE WHO HAVE  
A REAL INTEREST IN FOOD AND  
SHARING IDEAS WITH THEM.  
GOOD FOOD IS A GLOBAL THING  
AND I FIND THAT THERE IS ALWAYS  
SOMETHING NEW AND AMAZING  
TO LEARN.**

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**JAMIE OLIVER**

TV CHEF AND CAMPAIGNER



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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### GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD

It is also a time of fear that settlers will continue, with impunity, to attack Palestinian property and people.

This combination of joy and distress is what drove us to set up Zaytoun 17 years ago; to encourage people to join the harvest each year. A bottle of Palestinian olive oil is a potent symbol of livelihoods, connection and stewardship with the land, resistance to being uprooted and of wonderful culture and food.

### MUSAKSHAN

Musakhan is a celebration of the new olive oil season; roasted sumac chicken, caramelised onions, pine nuts and fresh taboon bread come together gloriously with the generous helping of olive oil fresh from the press. Best enjoyed al fresco.

(There's a wonderful vegetarian option of this dish in [Falastin](#), Sami Tamimi and Tara Wigley's Palestinian cookbook that was published in 2020.)

We have feasted on Musakhan with groups from the UK as part of the Jaru'a olive harvest festival hosted by Canaan Palestine at their site in Burqin — an event where hundreds of olive farmers and their families gather with international visitors, to dance dabke, eat together and mark the close of the harvest.



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD



FAIR TRADE  
Palestinian entrepreneur,  
Nasser Abufarha.

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Photograph: Issy Croker

Canaan and the Palestine Fair Trade Association were founded by Nasser Abufarha, an entrepreneur who returned to Palestine with a mission to support small-scale farmers through ethical trade. Both Canaan and PFTA now work with over 2000 artisan families with an ethos on transparency, long-term relations with fair prices and ecological sustainability.

Freshly pressed, unfiltered olive oil will be bottled for Zaytoun at Canaan's factory in November and should arrive into the UK in December. As testimony to the artisanship of the farmers, it has just been awarded a Great Taste Award. In the absence of visiting and enjoying the oil straight from the press this 'fresh juice' is as close as we can get to a taste of Palestine.



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD



### COMMUNITY

The Jaru'a Olive Harvest Festival hosted by Canaan Palestine at their site in Burqin.

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Photograph: Issy Croker

### KUNAFI

Heading towards Nablus, a Kunafa stop in the vibrant Khan Al-Tujjar market is obligatory. Kunafa is a traditional Middle Eastern dessert made with spun pastry called Kataifi, which is soaked in a sweet, sugar-based syrup and typically layered with cheese. On harvest tours we often follow our Kunafa stop with an overnight stay in the hilltop village of Sebastiya.

Supping fresh lemonade or a cold Taybeh beer in Sebastiya's plaza next to the Roman amphitheatre, as the setting sun bathes the olive trees in golden light is an experience we invite you to enjoy.



“ **THE BEST  
COMFORT FOOD WILL  
ALWAYS BE GREENS,  
CORNBREAD, AND  
FRIED CHICKEN.**

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MAYA ANGELOU

AMERICAN POET



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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### GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD

We also extend the invitation to sit with residents of, what should be, this idyllic village and hear of the frequent incursions of the Israeli army and the settlers.

Some of Israel's most ideological settlements are located in the hills around Nablus. We receive regular photos of groups of heavily armed settlers from the Yitzhar settlement entering the olive groves around Burin and chasing out farmers and their families who are harvesting.

Olive harvest is a time of coordination between community organisers with international and Israeli accompaniers who also pick olives and bear witness to the issues.

Esther, one of the volunteers, spoke about the harvest in Kufr Qadum.

*"We accompanied one family from As Sawiya, bordering the settlement of Rehalim, for three days, working flat out. Settlement security was irked by our presence and on one day they called the IDF to force a large Palestinian family from olive groves where in fact no permit was required.*

*Working alongside our hosts on the harvest allowed us to witness the oppression first-hand and use this to subsequently testify to others the meaning of the occupation.*



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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### GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD

*Conversely, the landscape, ancient olive groves, family meals under the trees, the talk, storytelling, songs, time off school and work made the harvest a Palestinian celebration of life, history and continued presence, shared with us and even with their families in the diaspora by ‘visits’ on mobile phones.”*

### GEO-DIVERSITY

One of the joys of travelling in the West Bank is the geo-diversity. Heading from Nablus down to Jericho can mean an increase in temperature of 10 degrees and a shift from tree-filled hills to desert palms. This year’s date harvest came to a close towards the end of September and the new harvest of Medjouns will soon be arriving in the UK.



#### HOT

Heading from Nablus down to Jericho can mean an increase in temperature of 10 degrees.

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Photograph: Issy Croker



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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### GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD

Illegal settlement agriculture and Palestinian production are growing quite literally side by side; a primary difference being the access to water. The date sector provides jobs in an area where unemployment is high and offers the opportunity for local workers to return home at the end of a working day.

Our friend Taysir Arbasi visited with date farmer Abu Talal during the harvest in September to catch up on news from this year's harvest. Abu said that being able to finish work and return home to spend time with his family meant local employment was key to him compared to the lengthy journeys endured by those who cross the checkpoints. He has been harvesting his dates with the help of his grandchildren this year.



KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY  
Date farmer Abu Talal and his grandchildren during the date harvest.

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Photograph: Issy Croker



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Taysir has been part of Zaytoun from the beginning; supporting visits to Palestine and accompanying Palestinian farmers to the UK each year during Fairtrade Fortnight.

These face-to-face visits are at the core of building connections and challenging injustice together. He has coordinated aspects of the Amos/Zaytoun Taste of Palestine tours each year.

*He said, “The tours held in the previous years have raised awareness. They have been a practical experience and a direct engagement with the cause of the farming community in Palestine.*

*For many participants, it has shifted their views and personal opinion; the tours have demonstrated to everyone the injustice that the Palestinian farmers are living with and the relevance of the work to support the producers through Fair trade.*

*They have also given space to people who wanted to explore the Palestinian wealth of traditions and food culture.”*



“ TO ME,  
FOOD IS AS MUCH ABOUT  
THE MOMENT, THE OCCASION,  
THE LOCATION AND  
THE COMPANY AS IT IS  
ABOUT THE TASTE.

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HESTON BLUMENTHAL

BRITISH CHEF AND WRITER



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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### GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD

#### DEAD SEA

The Dead Sea is yet another unique and sought-after gem in this land. The West Bank Salt Company is the only Palestinian business that has, with decades of focus, maintained rights to this mineral rich resource. Uthman Hallak, now in his late 80s, started salt production at their site in 1964 and his son, Husam, now runs the company.

Their fortitude allows high quality Palestinian salt to reach domestic and international markets. Beyond the employment of their 25 staff, they provide financial support for their employees' children to attend college. Zaytoun aims to be offering their bath and culinary salt to you in 2022.”



A SOUGHT-AFTER GEM  
Husam Hallak from the Dead  
Sea Salt Company.

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Photograph: Issy Croker



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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**GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD**

### **BETHLEHEM**

Gemma Bell, an Amos trustee and great friend of Zaytoun, was on the first Taste of Palestine tour. In 2019, she took a group of journalists, chefs and photographers to Palestine which resulted in Palestinian food-inspired stories reaching a new audience here in the UK. She shares some memories.

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Bethlehem is a tour highlight. Just saying ‘Bethlehem’ conjures up nostalgic thoughts of the ‘Little Town’ from children’s nativity plays. This town, despite its 8-metre high ‘security’ wall and its occupants living under occupation, is vibrant and full of life.

On entering, young IDF soldiers check documents and big red signs warn visitors not to enter. Check Point 300 (where Bethlehemites leave and enter the town), is oppressive and tells of the daily difficulties men, women and children face just to visit family, go to work, or go to school.

Fadi Kattan owns the beautiful guest house ‘Hosh Al Syrian’, which is just off Star Street and which we hope will re-open soon along with his acclaimed restaurant Fawda.



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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### GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD

Fadi is Franco-Palestinian and knows just about everyone in town! [His amazing Qalayet Bandora recipe on page 24.](#)



#### BETHLEHEM

**TOP:** Franco-Palestinian chef and guest house owner, Fadi Kattan. **BOTTOM:** One the bedrooms at the Hosh al-Syrian guest house in Bethlehem.

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Photograph: Issy Croker





## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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### GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD

On his ‘tour’ of his favourite places, we start at the fruit and veg market and meet Um Nabil at the entrance who sells the freshest most seasonal herbs and greens. On a visit in June we stumble across small green berries and realise they are fresh chickpeas.

Market stalls with boxes of fresh produce are piled high as we wander through the meat section and greet the butchers, who are, of course, selling lots of lamb.

This town, despite its 8-metre high ‘security’ wall, and its occupants living under occupation, is vibrant and full of life.

Continuing through the winding streets, we enter a pickle and spice haven — Samer Daoubi, where we try halva and balls of labneh coated in varying dried herbs and spices.

We are wowed at Shweki Bakery by the skills of the young bakers and stop at the spice shop for strong, cardamom-infused coffee before buying as many packets of nuts, herbs and spices as our suitcases will carry.



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD



MARKET-STALLS AND SHOPS

**TOP:** A Palestinian women selling fresh chickpeas at a Bethlehem market. **BOTTOM:** Samer Daoubi's pickle and dairy shop in Bethlehem.

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Photograph: Issy Croker





**“ I REALISED VERY EARLY  
THE POWER OF FOOD TO EVOKE  
MEMORY, TO BRING PEOPLE  
TOGETHER, TO TRANSPORT  
YOU TO OTHER PLACES,  
AND I WANTED TO BE  
A PART OF THAT.**

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**JOSÉ ANDRÉS PUERTA**

SPANISH CHEF



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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### GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD

For me, you cannot go to Bethlehem without a visit to Afteem's Restaurant just off Manger Square. This institution makes the very best falafel, fowl and hummus, Arabic salad and more.

Food is the soul of Palestine. Sharing and eating dishes that haven't changed in centuries brings a connection to the history of the people living under an unjust occupation; some of these same dishes have been appropriated by the occupiers and claimed as their own.



**BETHLEHEM RITUAL**  
A traditional Palestinian breakfast from Afteem's Restaurant.

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Photograph: Issy Croker



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD

### JERUSALEM

The journey from Bethlehem to Jerusalem can be a twenty-minute drive on settler roads, or it can take hours passing through checkpoints. For some Palestinians, it's a destination they have never reached because they have the wrong I.D. card.

Entering the Old City via the Damascus Gate is a wonderful induction into Palestinian food and markets. Women from the surrounding villages sell fresh produce on the steps, the aroma of cardamom-infused coffee from street vendors hangs in the air, carts of Ka'ak Al Quds (a type of Jerusalem bagel) are being sold on every corner and calls from the fruit and vegetable stalls all come before we reach the spice shops and bakery windows full of Baklawa, the beautiful layered pastry dessert.



DAMASCUS GATE  
A market in Jerusalem's  
Old City.

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Photograph: Issy Croker



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD



FLAT BREAD

Shwaki bakery in Bethlehem.

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Photograph: Issy Croker

Glance upwards and Israeli flags, armed soldiers and civilians on raised walkways are a reminder that occupation is never far away. Illegal settlement expansion continues apace and this combination of joy and fear is, again, part of what makes the impression of Jerusalem such an indelible one.

*“The Taste of Palestine tour was very well planned to give us a balance between the awful difficulties the Palestinians face and the wonderful history and culture of their land. Picking olives and the visit to Bassema’s house were real highlights, as was the visit to the Sebastiya olive press and eating at night on the terrace. For me it was just an amazing week.”*

Gillian, 2017 tour participant.



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD

### A FINAL THOUGHT FROM HEATHER AND GEMMA

#### UPROOTING...

Many other destinations which have been part of these tours, where tales and tastes abound, include Nazareth, Battir, the Galilee and Hebron but we'd like to close with thoughts of one woman during this harvest season — Khitam Ya'quob.

In early 2021, the Israeli military uprooted 3400 olive trees in her village, Deir Ballout. 750 of these trees belonged to Khitam which meant that her source of income was decimated. She, like many farmers, talked of caring for the trees as if they were family members. The trees are known and nurtured.

*“This season we don't have our own olive grove to harvest. Earlier this year we replanted olive trees from the ‘Trees for Life’ programme. We worked most of the summer time in the land and irrigated the young trees that are still not productive.*

*We joined the harvest with the wider family — the brothers of my husband's family, so we can get some olive oil for our own consumption.”*



## **A TASTE OF PALESTINE**

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### **GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD**

We wish all Palestinian farmers safety to bring home their harvest this year and our best wishes as they celebrate the season.

**Gemma Bell and Heather Masoud**

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## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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**GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD**

### **QALAYET BANDORA**

#### **FADI KATTAN'S RECIPE**

One of the tricky and yet diverse Palestinian dishes. Diverse by its recipes, as numerous as there are households in Palestine but also diverse in its pronunciation.

From the Galayet Bandora to the Qalayet Bandora to the Alayet Bandora, the sound travels from the shores of Gaza to the hilltops of olives and figs to the bustling cosmopolitan cities.

A perfect recipe for a snack, breakfast or as an accompaniment to a meat dish or part of a mezze. The green tomatoes bring an interesting acidity and texture while the red tomatoes round the dish with earthy depth.

Often, in traditional qalayet bandora, the skin is peeled off the tomatoes and yet I prefer leaving the tomatoes as is.



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD

**SERVES 4**

### INGREDIENTS

- 800 gr. small green tomatoes
- ½ kg. red ripe tomatoes
- 6 Garlic cloves
- 6 + 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tbsp. Tomato paste
- 1 tbsp. Pine nuts
- 1 tbsp. Almonds (peeled and slivered)
- ½ cup Parsley leaves
- 2 tsp. Chili infused olive oil or even better chili and zaatar infused olive oil

### METHOD

- Wash and pat dry well the tomatoes. Cut the green tomatoes in four and the red tomatoes into small wedges.
- Peel the garlic cloves and leave them whole.
- In a large pan, over medium high heat, heat the 6 tbsp. of oil the olive oil and gently fry the green tomatoes, tossing well so as to have an even cooking on all sides. Add the whole garlic cloves.



## A TASTE OF PALESTINE

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### GEMMA BELL & HEATHER MASOUD

- Once the green tomatoes have turned a deep golden green colour, add the chopped red tomatoes and reduce the heat.
- Once the green tomatoes have turned a deep golden green colour, add the chopped red tomatoes and reduce the heat.
- After 5 minutes, add the tomato paste and the water, stir well and leave to cook until the sauce thickens, around 10 to 12 minutes.
- In the meantime, heat the remaining olive oil in a pan and toast the almonds and pine nuts. Be careful to remove them just before they reach the golden colour and with a spoon slot them out onto absorbent kitchen paper. Add the oil onto the still simmering tomatoes.
- Serve in the pan or in a shallow bowl, sprinkle some of the chili olive oil and then the pine nuts, almonds and parsley.



## **TASTE OF PALESTINE**

**31 OCTOBER - 11 NOVEMBER 2022**

**REGISTER YOUR INTEREST NOW**

An amazing 11-day trip with our friends at Zaytoun based in the kitchens, restaurants, and markets of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Sebastia and Nazareth, where you can begin to understand the issues around the kitchen table.

With time picnicking by the Sea of Galilee, cooking with families, harvesting olives and standing in solidarity with the communities in the South Hebron Hills.

**TO FIND OUT MORE, PLEASE VISIT**  
**AMOSTRUST.ORG/TASTE-OF-PALESTINE-2022**  
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**FOR 2021**

Every year Amos Trust's Christmas Appeal raises money for grassroots projects in PALESTINE. Please show your support by buying our new 'WISHING ON THE STAR' Christmas cards. Proceeds from each pack sold go towards the appeal.

Please visit our online gift shop for more Christmas ideas for your friends and family.

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## WE DO HOPE

A PODCAST FROM **AMOS TRUST**

### **WE DO HOPE** **A PODCAST FROM AMOS TRUST** **WITH JESSIE McDONALD & TILLY REITH**

Join us each week as we take an entertaining, informative and sometimes irreverent look at the 'H-Word' with very special guests from around the world.

We'll be asking artists and chefs, priests and politicians, doctors and journalists — how do they 'do' hope and where can we get some?

**FULL DETAILS COMING SOON**  
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# FROM PALESTINE, *the home of Christmas*

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## ABOUT AMOS TRUST

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### A SMALL CREATIVE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATION

AMOS TRUST works to challenge injustice, restore rights and create hope. We work with grassroots partners, listening to their needs and acting on their concerns. We set out to build local, creative solutions to global issues.

Today, we're working in three areas where justice is threatened and rights are ignored. We are:

- transforming the lives of girls and young women on the streets, so they can live free from abuse,
- equipping local communities to develop sustainable responses to the impact of climate change,
- campaigning for a just peace and full equal rights for all who call Palestine and Israel home.

Our second book of creative writing and poetry, 'SEEDS OF HOPE: MORE THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS FROM AMOS TRUST', is also available. Please visit [amostrust.org/seeds-of-hope-book](https://amostrust.org/seeds-of-hope-book) for details.

It reflects our commitment to developing resources that equip and sustain us on the long road to justice. For further information, please visit [amostrust.org](https://amostrust.org)



## CREDITS

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### WORDS

Gemma Bell & Heather Masoud

### PHOTOGRAPHY

Issy Croker, Mark Kensett and  
Madeleine McGivern

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Amos Trust

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ORG**



**AMOS TRUST**

ST CLEMENT'S, 1 ST CLEMENT'S COURT, LONDON EC4N 7HB

TELEPHONE: +44 (0) 20 7588 2638 | EMAIL: [OFFICE@AMOSTRUST.ORG](mailto:OFFICE@AMOSTRUST.ORG)

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1164234

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