



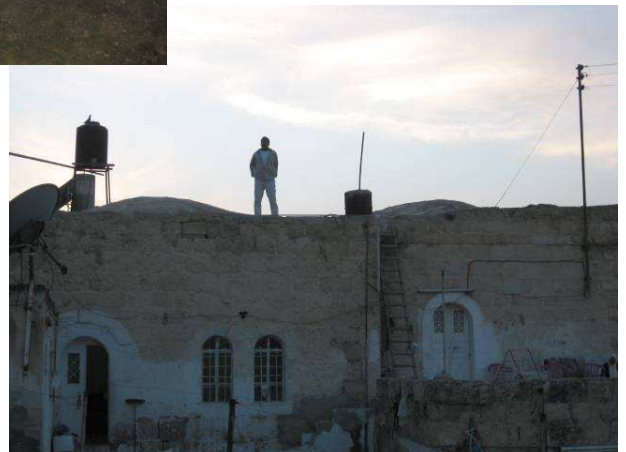
Making Cheese A Palestinian Tradition

Written by Fatheah

On Thursday 24th April my teacher, Ross, and I, Fatheah, visited a family in Abu Dis who live in a more traditional Palestinian way. The names of the family members are: Abu-Billal (Father), Am-Billal (Mother) and they have four sons and two daughters. The four sons live at home working on their little farm as does one of their daughters. One of their daughters is married and so no longer lives with the family.



They make all their own food by hand, for example: cheese, lambneh, yoghurt, zeet, zatter, bread and zatoon. They have sheep, goats, chickens, a horse and a donkey, and they live in an old house with many beautiful antiques as you can see in the pictures.



We arrived at 4 o'clock, exactly at the time they wanted to milk the sheep. They milk the sheep twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon and on this day they showed us how to make cheese.



They tied the sheep together with rope because they wanted to milk the sheep. They went from one sheep to another very quickly. The Mother took one row of sheep while the Father took the other.



After they had all of the milk in the bucket, they poured it into another bucket through a filter to clean it.



They put a small, special material called ‘massah’ to turn the milk into a jelly. This can take 40 to 60 minutes, so while we waited we went and enjoyed lots of traditional food.



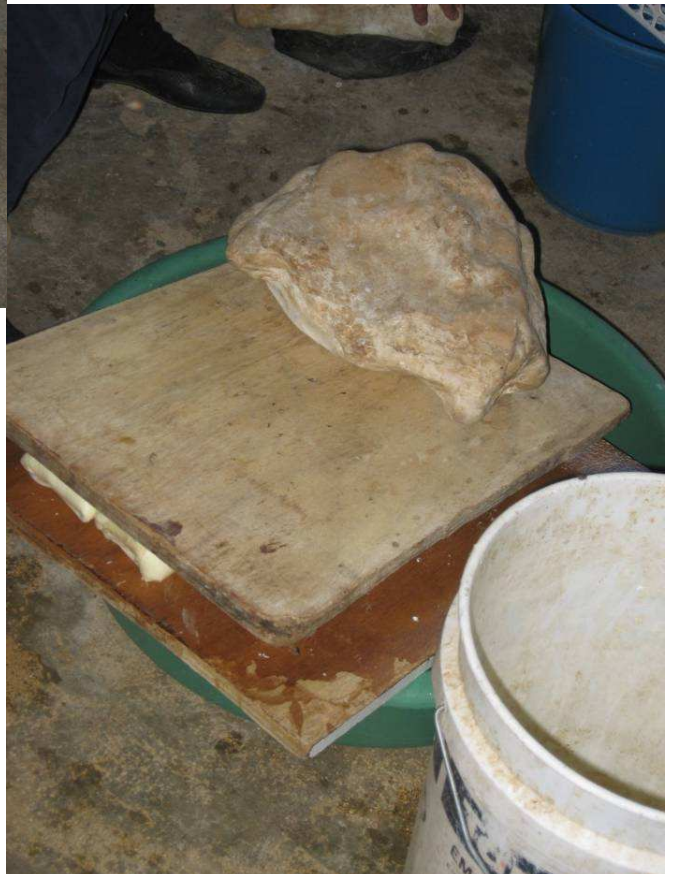
Everything was simple. Am-Billal sat on the ground with the bucket, a plank of wood and some damp cloth. She took one damp cloth, opened it up so that it was a small square and she took a scoop of the 'jelly-milk' and she put it on the cloth. She then folded each of the corners so that it was all wrapped up. She then put it on a container with holes so that the water could drain away. She did this until the bucket was empty.



She then opened each of the squares of cheese, squeezed the cheese and the water out, and then re-wrapped the blocks of cheese. She did this two more times with all of the cheese.



After the last time she placed another plank on top of the wrapped blocks of cheese, with two heavy rocks on top to squeeze out the rest of the water. She then left it for half an hour.



She then took the cheese from the cloth and placed it in another container. She then dipped each of the blocks of cheese in salt on both sides to help them dry. The salt took the water so that the cheese would stay in a block.



She then left it in the fridge. It is now ready to eat and to sell it to people.

We can keep the cheese until the winter time by putting a lot salt on the cheese and leaving it for ten days (not in the fridge) until it becomes very dry. Then we boil water with salt, mehlabb and mesk (special spices) and after it has boiled we cut the cheese into two or three pieces.

We put some of the cheese into the water and leave it for five minutes. We then take the cheese out and put more cheese in until we finish all of the cheese we have.

We then leave it until the cheese is cold and then we put it in a bottle and we put the boiled, but now cold, water in too. We then close the bottle very tight and keep it to eat at anytime that we want. Another thing we can do is that after the cheese has been put in the boiling water and cooled, is to wrap it in a nylon pocket and put it in the freezer.



After we had learned about making cheese, we had a good time sitting on their terrace overlooking the valley, Bethany, the Mount of Olives and eating some dllal cookies and drinking Arabic coffee.

We hope that this subject showed you how to make cheese and also how some people in Abu Dis live. As you can see in the pictures they lead a very simple life and they are a kind and hospitable people.

We forgot to mention that when Am-Billal was making the cheese she changed into her traditional dress, the thob, and she was happy having her picture taken!

