

Brand Spotlight: Chuao Chocolatier • Tapping into the Preteen Market • Top-Selling Soups and Crackers

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What You Can Learn
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**HOW EFFECTIVE—and
Evolved—LEADERS ACT**

GIVING BACK

**Five Companies
that Are Making
a Difference**

Ajiri Tea works with
Kenyan women to
make its handcrafted
packaging—and effect
lasting change



GIVING BACK:

Five Companies Making a Difference

From fighting a broken international food system and creating jobs in Kenya to supporting Native American causes and promoting historic preservation here at home, these companies develop products with purpose.

BY EVA MESZAROS

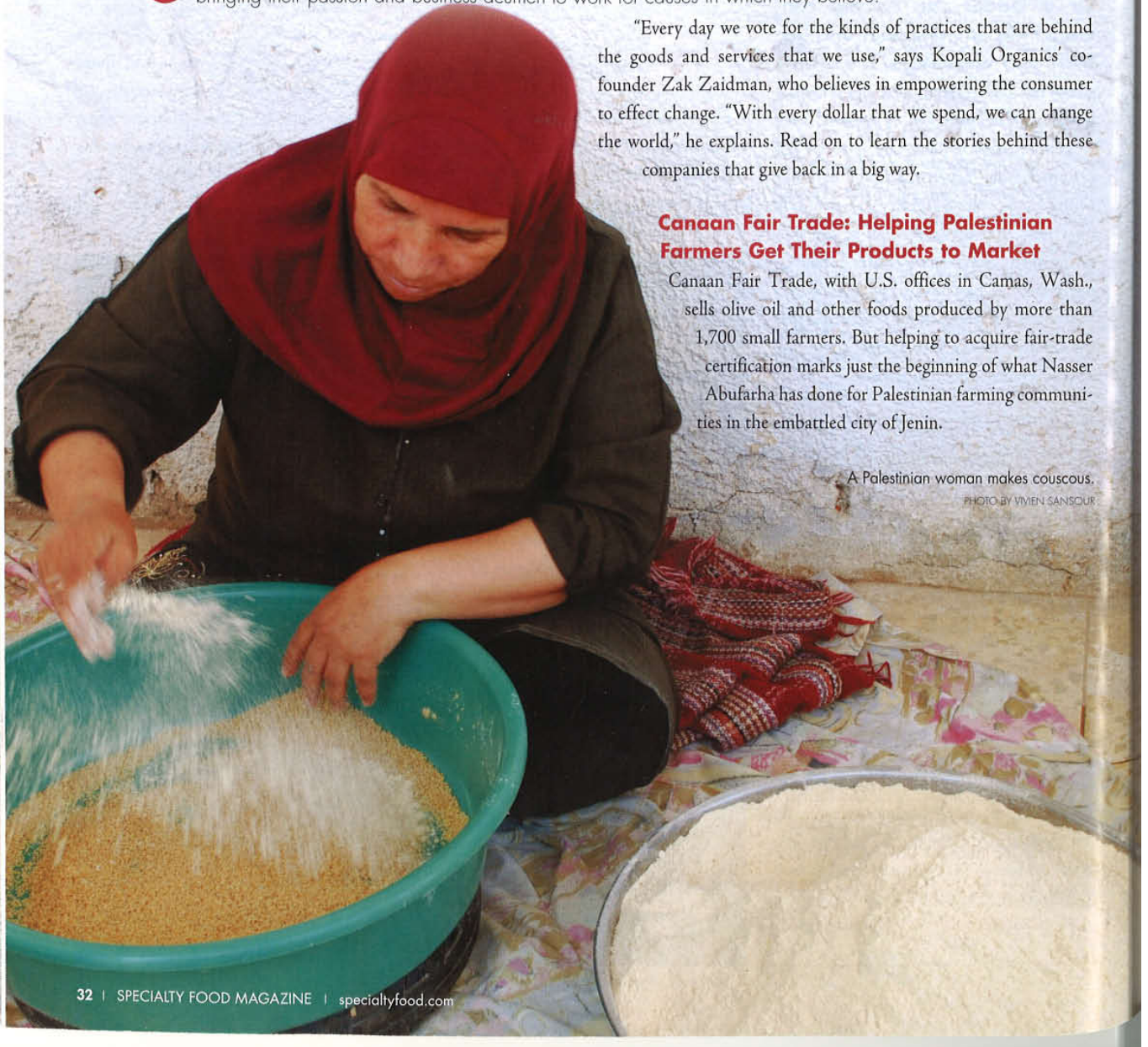
Specialty food companies tend to be generous with their products and their profits—often contributing to important initiatives both at home and abroad. But these five companies have made their contributions truly personal by bringing their passion and business acumen to work for causes in which they believe.

“Every day we vote for the kinds of practices that are behind the goods and services that we use,” says Kopali Organics’ co-founder Zak Zaidman, who believes in empowering the consumer to effect change. “With every dollar that we spend, we can change the world,” he explains. Read on to learn the stories behind these companies that give back in a big way.

Canaan Fair Trade: Helping Palestinian Farmers Get Their Products to Market

Canaan Fair Trade, with U.S. offices in Camas, Wash., sells olive oil and other foods produced by more than 1,700 small farmers. But helping to acquire fair-trade certification marks just the beginning of what Nasser Abufarha has done for Palestinian farming communities in the embattled city of Jenin.

A Palestinian woman makes couscous.
PHOTO BY VIVIEN SANISOUR



American causes the products help support, came from a good friend of the founder.

The beginning. When gourmet retailer Guy Bashore created his own cracker to serve during wine tastings at his Berlin, Md., store, he saw a response he'd never expected. The handmade flatbread, made with extra-virgin olive oil and real Parmesan cheese and heavily seasoned with salt and pepper, quickly flew off the shelves even before having a name. "People were coming in and buying them—a bag here, a bag there, three bags at a time," Bashore recalls.

He soon realized it was time to name the runaway success and take it beyond his shop. A long-time friend and colleague by the name of Raggatha Calentine helped every step of the way—even inspiring the product name.

Calentine is a storyteller by trade, renowned and deeply involved in Native American communities across the country. "She's an incredible person," Bashore professes, adding, "she never made much money because she donates her time and does it for the good of a lot of people." Upon blurting out one afternoon that he would name the crackers for Calentine's nickname, Little Ragghi, her initial response was hesitation.

"In the Native American community, your name is very, very important," Bashore explains. This sparked a conversation, and ultimately the plan, to share not only her name with the product, but also her story and her values.

The cause. "I thought that if she was going to agree that I name these after her, I should pick an organization that was impor-



PHOTO COURTESY OF AJIRI TEA COMPANY

A womens group member makes banana-bark twine for Ajiri's tea bags.

tant to her," and give back some of the profits, he says. Calentine, a board member for the Native American International Caucus Leadership Academy (NAIC), chose the Native American Family Camp, an annual event that brings together communities in support of the challenges faced by modern-day Native Americans, through education, religion (the NAIC is partnered with the United

Methodist Church) and youth-focused activities.

The need. Bashore quickly became determined to help the program, which has lost much of its funding in recent years. "I think that's what makes me so resolute, because this organization is one [in which] a little bit of money goes a long way," he stresses.

Calentine and Bashore have worked closely on the cracker venture to reach its success today. Now appearing in Dean & DeLuca and Williams-Sonoma stores, among other gourmet outlets, Little Ragghi's Crackers is well on its way to honoring its namesake.

Ajiri Tea Company: Creating Jobs in Kenya

A desire to create long-term solutions to poverty inspired this company that not only employs women in Western Kenya, but provides an education and a sense of family for the village's orphans—and produces an award-winning tea.

The beginning. Fresh out of Bowdoin College in 2008 with a bachelor's degree in history and environmental studies, Sara Holby dedicated her first year out of school to volunteering for a nonprofit in Kenya that provided food and medicine to HIV and AIDS patients. But as the U.S. economy entered a violent downturn, the grant- and donation-funded program suffered. "So the idea behind Ajiri Tea was to do something different from that," Holby says.

The need. Holby spoke at length with her colleagues and the local women supported by the health program, and learned about Kenya's unemployment rate, which in 2008, according to the CIA World Factbook, was at 40 percent.

"We started with the goal of doing something to employ women," the young entrepreneur explains. Kenya's major crops—black tea and bananas—inspired the key components of the product. Holby and colleagues connected with a tea-factory cooperative owned by 10,000 small-scale farmers in the region, and then turned to local women for the labeling. Starting with one employee designing a label using the vastly available banana-tree bark, Holby's label-crafting team has grown to 63 women. In fact, *ajiri* means "to employ" in Swahili.

Helping today. Employees have bought cows, land, crops, electricity and furniture for their homes and funded their children to attend good schools. Further profits go to sending local orphans to school—19 are currently supported—who are personally selected by the women and the cooperative manager.

Holby hopes Ajiri's recent awards—Best Black Tea from the World Tea Expo and a 2011 sofi™ Gold Award for Outstanding Innovation in Packaging or Design Function—will mean a boon for business and employment. "The more tea we sell, the more profits we'll make—and the more kids we'll be able to send to school." |SFM|

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