



Status update The U.N. voted to upgrade the Palestinian Territories' status to "non-member observer." Nine nations opposed the motion, with 138 supporting it. In response, Israel seized \$120 million in tax revenues it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority.

Building the Palestinian brand

How Nadim Khoury made Taybeh Beer the best (and only) brewery in the Palestinian Territories

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Not far from where Jesus is said to have turned water into wine, a less celebrated individual is accomplishing a contemporary alcohol-infused feat.

Just 12 miles and several military checkpoints northeast of Jerusalem in the little town of Taybeh sits a long room packed with giant slick steel barrels, twisting pipes, empty cases and thick brown bottles. Boiling vats shoot thick plumes of steam into the air. Tiny Palestinian flags are draped across the ceiling, and the slippery floors emit the sweet rich smell of malted hops. Here, at the Taybeh Brewing Company, Nadim Khoury masterfully mixes hops, malt and barley to turn the immaculate water from the Ein Samia springs into an improbable brew: Taybeh Beer, the pride of Palestinian beer drinkers. Crafted with 100 percent natural ingredients, Taybeh has a unique body and flavor, with a crisp taste.

Taybeh Beer, established in 1995, is arguably the Middle East's boldest beer company. Against all odds, this little brewery has survived social, political, religious and military conflicts to retain its title as the only brewery in the Palestinian Territories and the first microbrewery ever in the Middle East.

The brewery is named after its home village, Taybeh, which fittingly means "delicious" in Arabic, and sits on a hill top ringed by magnificent olive trees. Riding a wave of optimism that followed the Oslo peace accords of the mid-1990s, which brought temporary stability to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Khoury, Taybeh's founder and brew master, returned to the West Bank in 1994 after living much of his life in the U.S. He dreamed of turning his passion for home brewing into a symbol of Palestinian identity and unity. "I wanted to make something for my homeland, for Palestine," he says. "We believe this is how the state of Palestine can be built—through the people, Palestinian brands and products."

Together with his family, part of a shrinking minority of Christian Palestinians, Khoury pulled together \$1.2 million to open the brewery in their ancestral home. "Everyone thought I was out of my mind to open a brewery in a Muslim country," he recalls.

Although the religion of Islam prohibits drinking alcohol, Palestinians tend to be slightly more liberal in their interpretation. The one percent of Christians left in the West Bank can't consume the million bottles of beer that the brewer sells each year, Khoury says with a wry smile. The larger challenge though, he says, has been the occupation. "It's the most difficult obstacle we're facing; we have no borders," he says.

Everything made in the Palestinian Territories must



pass through heavily regulated checkpoints and be exported through Israel. Though Taybeh is just a few minutes drive from Jerusalem, for security reasons the beer must pass through a checkpoint nearly two hours away. Uprisings and protests can seal borders in an instant, making deliveries complicated. Once, during the Second Intifada from 2000 to 2005, the situation was so dire the company ended up delivering beer to Jerusalem by donkey caravan, the fastest way to cross the checkpoints.

Taybeh faces another problem. The springs of Ein Samia, the source of the water, are dropping lower each year, and nearby settlements are now using most of it. "Beer is water," Khoury says; without it, he will be finished.

Despite the difficulties, Taybeh Beer has chugged on for more than 15 years. It shows no signs of slowing down. Most of its customers are in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Israel, but a handful of international consumers have developed an appreciation for the product. Japan and Norway are both large markets.

Since 2005, Taybeh has held the only "Occupied Oktoberfest" in the West Bank, uniting thousands of lederhosen-clad, keffiyeh-wearing, beer-drinking tourists, curious Palestinians and brave Israelis for two days of music, dancing, and drinking each year. Politics are put on hold while glasses are raised. Next year, Khoury also plans to open a boutique winery in the basement of an 80-room resort hotel he is building in Taybeh. Locals laugh and claim there are no tourists, that the ongoing occupation and military conflict will make it impossible to host a winery in the West Bank. Khoury simply shrugs his shoulders and points to the success of the brewery. "The tourists will come. Things will get better," he says, hopeful. "Inshallah." ☞

DATA POINTS

★ The Occupied Territories' economy depends on aid as trade restrictions imposed by Israel have largely destroyed its export sector.

★ Agriculture accounts for a large part of the Palestinian economy but has been damaged by the construction of barriers and settlements.

★ A nascent IT industry is growing in the West Bank, with companies including Cisco and Google backing technology incubators.

Nadim Khoury returned to the West Bank in 1994 to start a brewery that has survived blockades and conflicts