

February 6, 2014

## MUSHMINA'S HANDMADE FASHIONS TAKE OFF AT THE FLYING CAMEL

## Mushmina's handmade fashions prepare to take off at The Flying Camel

Handmade in Morocco by Mushmina took on a new meaning in January 2014 as workshop manager Kenza Jbilou and the ladies of Oued Zem completed the final steps in the formation of the Flying Camel Training Center and cooperative.

There is a festive mood in the air as the women of the co-op prepare to receive the guest of honor Madam Miriam from the Ministry of Cooperative in Settat who is visiting to explain to the women how to finalize the process of becoming a co-op.

Mushmina co-founder and production manager Heather O'Neill and the 20 ladies, who have gathered, including representatives from Boujad and Khouribga, do a final inspection of the workshop whose walls they have decorated with beautiful examples of their handmade accessories. The customary milk and delicious, sweet dates that mark Moroccan ceremonies and events are passed around for everyone to savor and enjoy.

Once Madam Miriam arrives, the action moves to Kenza's home where a traditional celebratory lunch is to be served. A local woman has been hired to whip up a feast and is set up on the roof with large pots and a small burner where she spends the next few hours preparing a three-course banquet.

Handmade accessories are the backbone of Mushmina and Madam Miriam is there to

show the artisans how the cooperative can take their business of handcrafted custom

products to the next level. She fills the workers in on the benefits of being a

cooperative and offers advice on best practices, including how to open a bank account and sharing expenses, to ensure that the co-op is a success.

Madam Miriam concludes her presentation and lunch is served! The meal kicks off with mouthwatering prunes and goat meat, a dish usually reserved for Moroccan weddings and is followed by Sfia (one of Heather's favorites), a steamed pasta dish

that is garnished with cinnamon and powdered sugar. For dessert there are heaping

plates of fruit to top off the enticing meal.

The ladies take Madam Miriam on a full tour of the workshop and training center and pose for pictures with her before Heather drops her off at the taxi station to head back to Settat. It's been a productive day that leaves a strong impression on Madam Miriam who has seen firsthand how hard the women have worked and how focused they are on making the cooperative a success.

The day isn't over yet though. Now it's time to put on a full celebration and Heather returns to find a party atmosphere in the streets where neighbors have gathered to sing and dance outside the workshop. The Abidat Rma drummers, traditional storytellers and poets who dress in colorful costumes and perform at events throughout Morocco lead the exciting and happy occasion as more milk and dates are passed around for all to enjoy. The festivities are a total surprise to Heather who is surrounded by the crowd of neighbors. Kenza is behind the opening party and confides in Heather, "After all the paperwork and running we have been doing, I wanted to throw a real opening party!"

The industrious ladies of Oued Zem waste no time. A week after the exuberant opening of the workshop, they have already hired a teacher to start training students three afternoons a week. The cost of the lessons is 100 Moroccan Dirhams (MAD) per month, the equivalent of \$12 dollars and the fees will be split between the teacher and the ladies of the co-op. The earnings generated by student fees will go toward defraying some of the costs of running the center. The Flying Camel Center is off to a great start!



Fatima Zohra, Hanan, Malika, Zohra (and herestmaining begins. Pattern-making, sewing, and Youseff), and Moi from Errachidia literacy.



Sadia the teacher and Kenza the co-op pres**ide**linta even came from Boujad to meet Lalla

Miriam who came from the cooperative



Naema, Khadiga and our little mascot Hiba

administration in Settat

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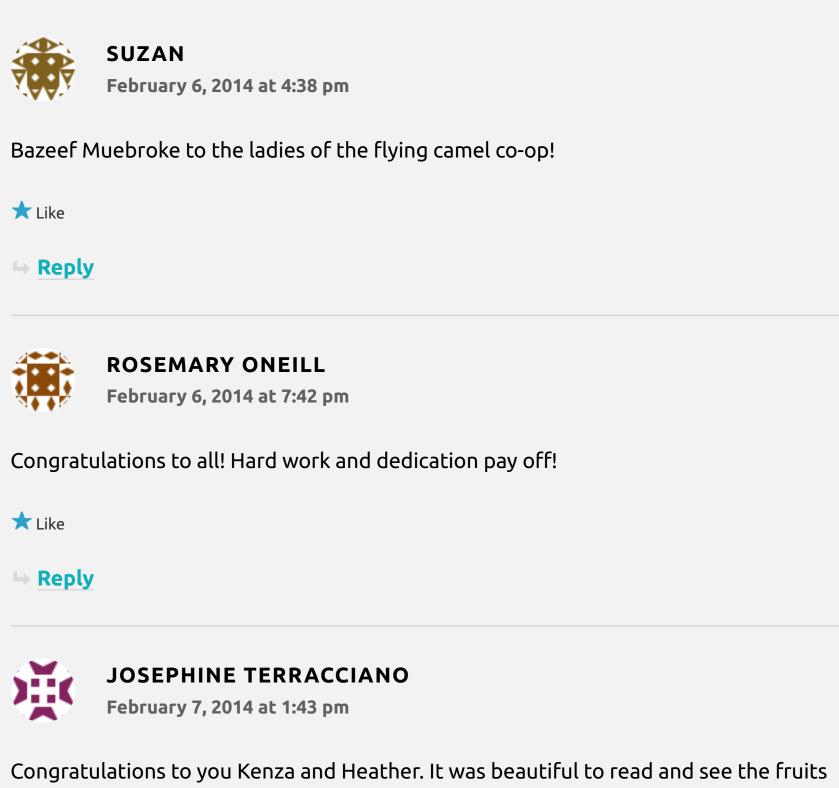
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of your labor blossoming. Hugs and Kisses, Josephine

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