



## Trashmagination Podcast #15 – Flexible Food Packaging

Welcome to Trashmagination, a podcast about reimagining trash. I'm Carla Brown.

When I was growing up, most wet food was sold in cans or bottles. These days, wet food is increasingly sold in thick plastic packaging, like juice pouches. Likely this packaging is more popular because it's light & inexpensive for manufacturers. The problem is - I don't know of municipal or county recycling programs which recycle it, so it's all going in the trash. That's why I like to find creative reuse ideas for it.

### Tips on Sewing Flexible Food Packaging

- **You can sew it with a regular sewing machine** - needles for denim or leather, this material is a little harder to puncture & they last longer.
- **You can cut it into rounded shapes** – Regular scissors can cut & unlike fabric, it won't fray.
- **It can be challenging to hold pieces in the right position** - Put a small piece of masking tape instead of pins because it is hard on your hands to get pins through this material & it makes holes.
- **As the project comes together, it gets harder to fit in your sewing machine** - This packaging is stiff & it gets more difficult to shove under the sewing needle - helpful to baste pieces together, especially on curves.
- **Bigger packages means less sewing** - This packaging is not only for human food - Pet food & bird seed - Those are usually bigger bags, which reduces the amount of sewing to make a project.

### If you are not into sewing

- 1) Colorful duct tape – great summer camp craft <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kR1sNBr89gk> or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBtUiix0Dc>
- 2) Folding the packaging into strips & weaving it – this is the technique that people use to make items from candy wrappers as well - <http://www.grubgrade.com/homemade/shes-crafty-capri-sun-handbag>.

If you don't want to make items, send them to Terracycle (<http://www.terracycle.com/>). They make them into products. They pay for shipping labels & reward you with funds to donate to charity. This works best if you collect at a large workplace, school or religious community. Terracycle currently collects from:

- Earth's Best
- Ella's Kitchen
- GoGo Squeeze
- Gu Performance Nutrition

- Honest Tea
- Juicero
- Lemonkind
- North Coast

They make backpacks, messenger bags, shopping bags, pencil cases, cosmetic bags, lunch boxes & cell-phone cases - Even hydration backpacks for cyclists & hikers - <http://www.dwellsmart.com/?search=terracycle>

Projects I have sewn from this type of packaging:

1. **Rectangular bags** – Around 2003, I was shopping in Washington DC at a store called Go Mama Go. (closed in 2010) I purchased a bag made by a women’s collective in the Phillipines called Bazura Bags (<http://www.bazurabags.com/>) from juice pouches. Bazura Bags was started by women who wanted to clean up the trash in their neighborhood – grew to more than 500 women. They paid school children to collect. I made many rectangular bags - handles from cloth strapping from other projects or purchased new. Later a friend gave me tae kwon do belts to use as handles.
2. **Toy box** – In 2005, I sewed a whole bunch of juice pouches together into a big round basket shape for my nephew. It’s great because it’s very light for moving items around.
3. **Backpack** – In 2006, when my daughter was going into pre-school, I sewed her a backpack from juice pouches. I sewed a transparent ziplock bag on the front so she could slide in her latest artwork at any time.
4. **Cube organizers** – Simplified from the original rectangular bag concept – no handles & not so big - great as teacher gifts if you fill them with treats. - <http://trashmagination.com/collect-food-pouch-packaging-tae-kwon-do-belt/> - could be party favor bags at a birthday party. fluffy boa around the edge to make it look festive – could go in the trunk of your car to keep purchases from rolling around – could be a flower pot.
5. **Tote for carrying firewood** – For my dad. It was like a big rectangle with straps that went along the whole length. I sewed it all from prune bags as my little joke to him.
6. **Hat (fedora) & vests** –to wear when hosting Trashmagination tables. Seams are not soft. I needed a ribbon or a thin piece of fabric over the seams if they were going to be in contact with skin. <http://trashmagination.com/fedora-hat-from-lemonade-powder-packages/>
7. **A wreath** – In 2008, at work we had a wreath decorating contest. I made my wreath from green dried fruit packages & green plastic caps. I won the contest!
8. **A sit-upon** – a waterproof, padded square for sitting on the ground while keeping your backside dry & insulated from the ground - made when I was a Girl Guide - helpful for Scouts or students doing outdoor projects - roll up & attach to a backpack. Great project for the Scouts - <http://trashmagination.com/make-a-tree-friend/>.
9. **Flowers** – for teacher appreciation week, each student brings a flower for the bouquet – I sewed the petals from juice pouches, silver side out & used a needle & thread to attach them at the base – a leaf from felt & stem from pipe cleaner – silver side might be nice for weddings? in general - if you didn’t want to make items that showed the branding of the products, you can show the other side – silver or white color

Pinterest board <https://www.pinterest.com/Trashmagination/juice-pouches/> - headbands, belts, luggage tags, coin purses, visor, stocking & wallets - Also trash fashion designs – my podcast - <http://trashmagination.com/trash-fashion/>.

Some flexible packaging projects I would like to make:

- wipe-able placemats for kids eating at restaurants
- bow ties
- apron that would easily wipe clean
- organizers that hang on the back of the car seat to hold items for kids during car trips - <http://textiles4you.blogspot.com/2010/07/second-juice-pouch-car-bag.html>

- wine bottle tote – tall juice pouch bag as a hostess gift carry case – also a version that has four padded compartments so you can carry wine bottles home upright & without clinking.
- car shade - juice pouches have a shiny side which would reflect the sun out of the car.
- crown headband – shiny silver looks great as a crown that you could wear at birthday parties!
- umbrella – I have a few umbrellas that are not in the best condition that I could experiment with
- picnic blanket – builds on the sit-upon experiment - one layer waterproof against the ground, other side from soft padded fabrics – maybe denim? A stripe down the middle that is waterproof so it's easy to wipe.
- doggy rain coat

### How to clean juice pouches

- 1) Remove the straw, the straw sleeve & the sticky stuff that holds on the straw.
- 2) Take a small knife, such as an exacto knife or box cutter & cut a slit in the bottom part of the pouch. This is hidden inside once you make your project, so if the slit is messy, it won't show.
- 3) Use a scrubby brush to scrub out any juice.
- 4) Stand them up to dry on a towel, slightly open.

So here's a checklist of activities inspired by this podcast:

- **Gather this packaging at events** – If you don't purchase these products, collect at community events such as sports games or birthday parties. Put a box by the trash can.
- **Wash quickly** – If you leave the packages for more than a day, you risk having mold grow.
- **Get a bag dryer** – We have a wooden bag dryer, looks like a small upside down umbrella - <https://www.amazon.com/FloWorks-Design-BD-1-Plastic-Bottle/dp/B003ZE2ODO> - great way to reuse regular plastic freezer & sandwich bags as well as food packaging.

Wooden Bag Dryers on Etsy

- <https://www.etsy.com/listing/190579221/counter-top-bag-dryer-handmade-in>
- <https://www.etsy.com/listing/74262862/bag-dryer-for-reusing-plastic-baggies>
- <https://www.etsy.com/listing/106667286/the-bag-tree-multi-purpose-kitchen>
- <https://www.etsy.com/listing/210990063/ziplock-bag-drying-rack-wash-dry-and>

So until next time, may you see trash as just another source of personal organization systems!