

# Food Wrapper Tote Bag

by Jane Haworth

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Host Susan Brubaker Knapp and quilt artist Jane Haworth

## Materials

- Makes 1 tote bag approximately 18" x 16"
- A collection of various sized dry goods, snack, and other food bags or wrappers (at least 10 and they must be a strong plastic material)
- ½ yard cotton flannel for foundation
- ¾ yard cotton for lining and handles
- 2 (2" x 18") strips of batting for handles
- Sewing machine with zigzag capability
- Cotton variegated thread 40wt

## Optional

- From retired denim jeans, 1 back pocket and the seam cut from the outside of 1 leg for embellishment

Over ten years ago, I started saving durable plastic bags that held snacks and coffee beans and pieced them together to make a kind of fabric. I layered it with a batting, quilted it, and then made a dress. I wore it for Halloween that year and it certainly got a lot of attention. "Trashion," my husband called it. More recently—as I saw people making tote bags from coffee bags—I again started saving my food, coffee, and dry goods bags. The material many of these are constructed of is almost indestructible. We hear how plastic doesn't break down and persists for years, so I'm doing my part by making environmentally friendly tote bags.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cut apart the saved food bags. I generally trim off the top especially if it has a zip-type closure. Then trim off the 2 sides and separate the back and front pieces along the bottom. Wash or wipe these pieces clean.
2. Cut 2 pieces of flannel 20" x 18". You can vary this depending on the size bag you wish to make. Place the flannel on the work surface and arrange the cut wrapper pieces, collage style. They need to overlap approximately ½".

**Tip:** Have fun cutting these food bags apart to include images or lettering.

3. When you are happy with the arrangement, attach them to the flannel using just a few pins. Use small pieces to patch any uncovered area. Make 2.
4. Using a zigzag stitch, sew along all of the places where the food bags overlap. I use a large stitch and set my sewing machine at 5 for width and 2 for length.

**Tip:** All of the pinning and stitching holes made in the plastic may weaken it so be cautious.

5. Sew 3 sides of the pieces right sides together using a 1/2" seam.
6. Cut 2 pieces of lining fabric the same size as the flannel foundation. If using, sew the jean pocket to 1 of the lining pieces, centered and approximately 5" down from the top edge. Sew the lining as in Step 5.



7. To flatten the bottom of the finished bag, stitch a box pleat on the lower corners of the bag and lining. To do this place your hand inside the bag and push out the bottom corner to form a triangle. You will be lining up the bottom seam onto the side seam. Now stitch across approximately 2" from the point of the triangle, making sure to backstitch. Trim off the extra fabric. Repeat to box the corners of the lining.
8. Carefully turn the bag right sides out. It is a little tricky as the plastic can be stiff. Then finger press the seams to help flatten them.

**Tip:** Do not use an iron to flatten. The plastic may melt and damage your iron.

9. Place the lining inside the bag and pin where the side seams line up. Fold to the inside the top edge of the bag and lining to form a neat finish around the top of the bag. Pin in place. Top stitch around this edge.
10. To make the handles, cut a strip of lining fabric 5" x 40". Cut this in half for 2 handles. Place the handles wrong side up on a work surface. Place a strip of batting, centered on the strip, and wrap the fabric around to cover the batting, overlapping by about 1".

**Note:** The batting is a shorter than the fabric to reduce bulk where the handles attach to the bag.

11. Place the denim seam strip on the handle to cover the fabric overlap. Stitch down both sides of the denim seam. Make 2.

12. Attach the handles to the inside of the bag by placing each end about 8" apart and 1" down. For strong handles stitch well, creating a square in this 1" overlap.

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