



The compostable vases are made of milk and chalk | Photo source [Tessa Silva](#)

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COMPOSTABLE VASES MADE FROM WASTE MILK

 ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

The technique involves mixing chalk with proteins extracted from surplus milk to produce a material similar to polymer clay

Spotted: Royal College of Art graduate Tessa Silva-Dawson has developed a way to turn waste milk into compostable household goods. Her technique involves mixing chalk with proteins extracted from surplus milk, to produce a material similar to polymer clay.

Silva-Dawson is made with the excess skimmed milk created in the production of butter and cream. This is mixed with chalk from a quarry in Hampshire and then pressed into moulds made from deadstock fabric – another post-industrial waste product. The milk and chalk material can also be hand-thrown, to create pots and other objects.

While it sounds modern, the technique was adapted from one used to make flooring in Tudor times. The Tudors used sour milk mixed with chalk and poured the resulting material like concrete. Once dried, the finished material has a surface similar to that of stone or concrete, and it can also be easily composted and used as fertiliser once no longer needed.

Silva-Dawson is also interested in how her material fits into the controversies surrounding factory farming and milk consumption, [telling Dezeen.com](#): “...I do believe that we need to drastically re-evaluate our relationship with animals and food products. The project is very much anti-factory-farming – I am exploiting a current surplus in the industry, and as long as this surplus exists, so can the project.”

Silva-Dawson is not the only designer to use waste by-products to create new products. At Springwise, we have seen innovative designs in this space that include a [parking lot](#) paved with post-consumer plastics and biodegradable plastic wrap made from [fish waste](#).

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Email: info@tessasilva.com

Website: tessasilva.com

Takeaway:

There is increasing concern over the environmental impact of our "throwaway culture," where cheap objects end up in the landfill after a short period of use. Using compostable materials like surplus milk proteins to make household goods may help to reduce this mountain of waste, and save the energy needed to produce new materials. To encourage others, Silva-Dawson passes on her technique by giving public, after school public workshops.