

# Recycled into Miniatures

By Dena Hamlin, Shoreline, Washington

These ideas are intended for those working in 1" scale.

## • Nuts •

About three decades ago, I accidentally discovered a miniature product. I had acquired some red raspberries which I decided to make into a milkshake. I put the berries, milk, yogurt and ice cream into the blender and turned it on until it looked like a nice thick smoothie. When I poured out the mixture I thought I saw something a bit darker in the bottom. After careful inspection, I was flabbergasted to see a little heap of raspberry seeds, every one having come from one of the tiny globes in each berry. I put some paper towel in the bottom of a sieve and rinsed them carefully, out onto another towel and let them dry for a couple of days. And I could swear they looked just like little miniature nuts!

## • Dirt •

I visited a mini club once. A kind lady was handing out little baggies of "dirt". I asked what she had used. Would you believe that she had dried out ordinary used tea bags for a few days, torn them apart and it looked like dirt with a hint of old beauty bark? Yup, just ordinary tea bags. It could also be used around a plant in a pot.

## • Hardwood Floor •

Twice now, I have made a very small "room" that needed a rustic "hardwood" floor. I called my daughter who worked at a restaurant and asked her where to get coffee stir sticks. She suggested a Restaurant Supply store. Lo and behold, I found an entire box of 1000 square-ended stir sticks for \$3.69! But one of the boxes had ripped open so they took off \$1! They are easy to cut with a good scissors. I used them for the floor of an 8" cube I turned into an attic. I left them unstained because, after all, it was an attic! I cut about 4 various lengths of pieces for each line of board to make it look like a real floor. Round-edged stir sticks, I think, are a bit thicker and need to be cut with a saw, not a scissors.

My only mistake was that I started gluing the wood at the back and it came out a bit crooked in the front. I should have started laying my "hardwood" floor from the front on to the back. That way if it wouldn't turn out exactly even, it would be less likely to be noticed, having furnished the room with many delightful minis to gaze at. These are for more rustic floors, not for a fine dining room.

(Floorboard molding covers a multitude of mistakes".)

An interesting "finish" for a floor, is to rub it with a cloth dipped in Old English Scratch Cover. It gives a more worn look, I think, than thinned paint. It remains "greasy" so I put on a coat of ordinary floor wax and it dried right away. In absence of floor wax, it could be sprayed with a non-gloss acrylic spray.

## • Glue •

I have used a water-based Super Glue to fasten "perfume bottles" to a tray. When it dries, the glue is ever so slightly pliable and the beads don't tend to bump off as easily. And it dries clear so if, Heaven forbid, a bit of glue should show, it's clear. The brand I found was Crafter's Pick - THE ULTIMATE. I purchased it at an annual miniature show.

I found some wallpaper paste at Home Depot for \$19.99 a gallon. I thought that was ridiculous. But then I discovered the YES thick, sticky glue in a little jar for dollhouse wallpaper is also about \$19.99. So maybe it's time to get a gallon, put it in pint Mason jars and share it with your club members!

## • Dog Dish •

I found a couple of old buttons that looked like dog dishes, to me, anyway. I took one actual piece of kibble and smashed it a little. Then I "poured" it into the bowl. I got some clear fingernail polish and dribbled it over the kibble and let it dry. Then I added a few more applications of the clear polish, careful not to let any slide over the edge. I swear, it looks like wet food, right out of the can!

When people ask what I used for kibble, I say, "Kibble." The nail polish keeps it from molding. Do NOT use real wet - anything!

## • Baking Dishes •

I suppose everyone has already thought of this, but I usually save the little mirrors from eye shadow or blush cases. They weren't cut for mini purposes and sometimes there's a little nick in the gray backing. If so, try putting a picture frame (molding) around it. Be extremely careful with pliers, trying to remove the plastic around the mirror. If you can break off one side, usually a knife inserted under the mirror will pry it out. Also, many eye shadows are pressed down into little rectangular "baking dishes" ...or even round ones.

## • Earrings •

Do you ever hunt for beads at thrift stores or garage sales? If lucky, you may find an old pair of earrings with a screw-in backing. If the screw ends are flat, you can snip them off and glue them into the bottom of a bead to create a "stand" for a mini bottle. Also, if a little fake pearl is removed from the earring, it may have been indented to accommodate the roundness of the pearl. If you have removed the stem and straightened the entire rounded wire out (that went under the ear lobe), it looks like an old spoon, or if bent, a ladle with a hole in the handle for hanging.

If the screw end is rounded, try gluing it into the top of a plastic "pony bead", a little smaller than the ones used for hair braids, and make a cold-cream jar. Anyone remember Noxema in the dark blue jar with a turquoise lid? Use paint, make a label and you've got it made.

## • Flower Pots •

Are we really through with toothpaste caps? I knew a woman who made gorgeous poinsettias in a toothpaste cap and then covered the bottom of it with a square of colored tin foil and a wee ribbon and bow around it.

## • Wastepaper Basket •

You can use the inside caps of some hairspray containers to make wastepaper baskets in 1" scale. Paint or wallpaper can add a bit of color. I also inspect the inside of the myriad of envelopes I receive each month in the mail. From bank statements to junk mail. Many have tiny designs on the inside. Not enough to paper a wall, but how about shelf paper? Or to cover a book?

## • Containers •

I may never get to build my miniature dream house. It's in my head and gets heavier every day! For now, I guess a room box here and there is all I can do. But what I've really enjoyed over 40 years is seeing something in miniature made in a real life "container". Like a hat shop in a hat box, a post office in a mail box, a kitchen in a bread box, a basket shop in a basket (or in my case, a wicker cat-carrying case), a purse shop built into the side of a purse, a malt shop in a COKE crate, lunch on the table in a lunch box, a picnic in a picnic basket, a potting shed in a flower pot, etc. Let your imagination run wild! Miniaturists are the ultimate recyclers!

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