

Transforming Food Waste into Art

My work turns everyday food waste into sustainable artworks, uncovering the hidden beauty and value within what is often discarded. Through creative reuse and artistic expression, I open a dialogue about our relationship with food, nature, and consumption. Each piece is a space for reflection — an invitation to slow down and reshape our connection to nourishment and sustainability.

My artworks promote a creative and sustainable mindset, embracing imperfection to uncover the hidden value in discarded resources. They aim to inspire a transformative view of waste, encouraging creative thinking and repurposing, grounded in deep environmental responsibility and a commitment to ethical practices.

Scan the QR code to explore more of my work and follow this journey of transformation.



Fotini Chamalidou

Sustainable Visual Artist | Creative Sustainability Coach | Food Culture Explorer

"I turn food waste into sustainable artworks that reveal hidden beauty and value".



Title: Anastasis of Physis.

Food waste ingredients: Eggshells, vegetable peels, leaves, and cores, expired turmeric, squid ink, acacia thorns.

Story: I created this work in 2021, during the lockdown. I used eggshells from my parents' farm in Neos Skopos (Serres - Greece) and colors made from vegetable scraps left after cooking with produce from my father's land. The squid ink came from the local fish market, and the turmeric—long expired—was something I had kept since a cultural trip to Spain in 1992. The acacia thorns, which I found on broken branches during my daily walks in the village, became for me a symbol of resilience and renewal. Each of these materials carries a small story of time, place, and memory. By bringing them together in a cross-shaped composition, I tried to turn the fear and pressure of isolation into something creative and meaningful. The work shows that even what is usually thrown away can hold hidden beauty and value, reminding us of the importance of sustainability, imagination, and our connection to nature.



Title: Cosmic Chaos of Dionysus.

Food waste ingredients: Cuttlefish ink, dried egg, beetroot, cabbage & mandarin fibers.

Story: I created this work in Athens in 2018, while finishing my culinary studies and beginning to experiment with the idea of transforming food waste into art. I had dried

an egg to test new cooking methods, but the experiment failed. Everything happened in seconds—when I realized the failure, I made a few unconscious, spontaneous gestures, and this composition emerged. For me, it became a kind of ornament—fragile yet alive—that carried a breath of life into the growing problem of food waste I had just begun to recognize in all its dimensions. At that time, I felt the urgency to respond, to act, and to find a way to change the world, even in small steps, through creativity and transformation.



Title: Rosy Roots in Synthesis.

Food waste ingredients: Cuttlefish ink, dried egg, beetroot, cabbage & mandarin fibers.

Story: I created this work in Athens in 2018, while finishing my culinary studies and beginning to experiment with the idea of transforming food waste into art. I had dried an egg to test new cooking methods, but the experiment failed. Everything happened in seconds—when I realized the failure, I made a few unconscious, spontaneous gestures, and this composition emerged. For me, it became a kind of ornament—fragile yet alive—that carried a breath of life into the growing problem of food waste I had just begun to recognize in all its dimensions. At that time, I felt the urgency to respond, to act, and to find a way to change the world, even in small steps, through creativity and transformation.



Title: Kardia.

Food waste ingredients: Carrot, spinach, beetroot, cabbage, egg.

Story: This heart was born by accident. It came from a mix of chance, my inner struggle to show the world that waste is a destructive way of living, and the sadness I felt seeing food wasted in the professional world of gastronomy. I didn't want to be part of that system—I wanted to create something different, a space where I could experiment, improvise, and treat every material with respect.

I made this work in Athens in 2017, during my first organized attempt to transform food waste. The next day I was moving abroad to work in a professional kitchen, and I knew I would no longer have the space to collect or store waste—not even a balcony. For a year, I had carried the thought that I needed to do something with food scraps, and I told myself: now or never.

At that time, I was doing detoxes and had colorful juices stored in the fridge—orange from carrot, green from spinach, red from beetroot, blue from cabbage. As I was preparing to move, the juices had spoiled, and I decided to pour them over some old eggs. That afternoon, I created and photographed twenty different compositions.

The next day, as I looked through the photos on my camera, I felt deeply moved. I knew this was the beginning of something special—a calling and a mission that would grow out of food waste.



Title: Flowers Ideas.

Food waste ingredients: Carrot peels, parsley stems, beetroot, cabbage.

Story: This work was created in Athens (Greece) in 2017, from the simple act of preparing a salad. The carrot peels and parsley stems came from the trimming of vegetables, while the colors were made from leaves already used in cooking. Normally, I used to rush through cooking, but that day I slowed down. I let my imagination play with every leftover piece of my meal. The salad was healthy and nourishing, and the transformation of its waste into something beautiful felt like a gesture of gratitude—a tribute to the nourishment I had received. Through this piece, I wanted to reveal how something often seen as ugly or unnecessary can carry beauty, meaning, and value. It became a small act of honoring both food and nature, and of finding inspiration in what is usually overlooked.

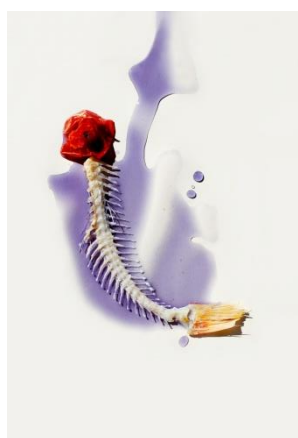


Title: Agros with Tomatoes.

Food waste ingredients: Tomato peels, celery, cabbage.

Story: The tomato peels and celery stems came from the preparation of a bean soup my mother cooked in Neos Skopos, Serres, in 2019. The colors were created from

vegetable leaves, grown on my father's farm, after they had already been used in cooking. I carefully selected the pieces after the cooking process, seeing them not as scraps, but as materials with their own story. It was late afternoon, close to sunset. My mother had begun cooking early in the morning, as tradition dictates. Watching her peel tomatoes with such care, fully devoted to preparing the bean soup—a simple but deeply loved Greek winter dish—I felt an intimate connection. Every gesture, every ritual movement, was filled with patience and devotion. Her way of caring for the family through food has always been an act of love I deeply admire. If you ask me about my strongest childhood memory, it is this: returning home from school, dropping my bag at the door, and being guided by my nose straight into the kitchen, where a warm, fragrant meal awaited every single day. Freshly cooked food was always there for me and my siblings—moments of comfort and nurture, filled with love and care. That daily ritual was more than eating; it was nourishment for both body and soul, a sacred space of belonging. The nose, in just seconds, recognizes the quality of fresh ingredients—but even more, it recognizes the hidden ingredient: the love and care behind them. This is the essence I try to honor in my art, transforming what seems insignificant into something that carries memory, warmth, and meaning.



Title: The Porphyria Siren.

Food waste ingredients: Tomato peels, fish bone, cabbage.

Story: The materials I use in my work come from everyday life. The tomato peels were collected from my mother Sophia's cooking in Neos Skopos (Serres - Greece 2018). The colors come from vegetable leaves from my father Konstantinos's farm, processed through cooking. The fish bones were collected by my sister Ioanna after a family meal. At first, creating art from these materials felt strange to my family. My mother would say, "Nobody cares about what happens to the Earth. You cannot change anything, you cannot save the world." I disagreed. I argued that it is important for each of us to care deeply for the Earth and take responsibility to leave a healthier planet for the next generation. Over time, my mother began to accept this unusual way of expressing my feelings and ideas. She started helping me collect materials, offering her opinions, and even gently intervening in the artistic process. This became an

important lesson for me: even the people closest to us, who may not initially agree with what we do, can enter the world we create if we continue with care and commitment. My mother has no idea what art is, yet her everyday care in preparing and nourishing our food is itself an act of transformation and creativity. I remember watching her move a piece of food waste on the canvas, and I felt certain I was on the right path. She is a strict critic, and it would have been impossible to convince her that this work has meaning—but I didn't have to. I simply asked her, kindly and quietly, to save some beautiful pieces of waste for me. Through this process, she became part of the transformation—and so did our relationship. Criticism turned into acceptance, and through care and time, even the most unusual ideas can be understood and appreciated.



Title: The End of the Age of Pisces.

Food waste ingredients: Cuttlefish ink, egg, grape, red peppercorns, Brussels sprouts & fish tail.

Story: This work emerged from a deep internal struggle and a challenging external process. In early 2019, I returned to Greece and went back to Athens. I stayed temporarily at a friend's apartment—she lived abroad and had left her dog and cat at home. I became part of the household, keeping the animals company. During that time, I was eating Brussels sprouts, which are very nutritious, and the idea to work with a fish tail had also been growing inside me, for the exhibition in 2020. One day at the market, I saw a huge tail and thought, "Now or never." Ignoring the fact that I had a cat at home, I embarked on a difficult process—battling the smell of the fish and dealing with the cat. It was one of the hardest projects I have ever done. The base of the work had stains from cuttlefish ink. Previously, I had experimented on the surface and let the ink dry—it was sourced from Varvakeio Fish Market in Athens. I took a sponge and tried to remove it to make the surface white again, rubbing and rubbing, until I had an epiphany: the stain wouldn't come out, and my efforts were only making it worse. In that imperfection, I saw something beautiful and said, "This is it. I will leave it as it is, with the stain." I added leftovers from my Brussels sprouts salad, stems from a grape dessert, and some red pepper that had fallen by accident but I had saved for a special moment. This work was part of a group exhibition at the

Athens School of Fine Arts in 2020. For me, it marks the end of a difficult period and the beginning of a new one, with a more open mind and a more open heart.



Title: The Marathon Flower.

Food waste ingredients: Spinach, turmeric/curcuma, cabbage, antenna shirms.

Story: The first coronavirus, in early 2020, found me in a small village outside Athens. After 20 years in the city, I decided to move to nature; I had a strong need to be close to greenery and fresh air. At that time, many setbacks occurred, but there were moments when I could isolate myself from problems and say to myself: “Now I will create a space and time to let go, to create whatever comes from my soul and subconscious, without rules, without logic”. This was, after all, my art: a space without “shoulds” or rules, a space of complete trust in letting go, with no expectations for the outcome, and most of the time without any plan. I went only with my heart and whatever troubled me. A few days before creating this work, I visited a fishmonger at Varvakeio Market in the center of Athens, Agim, who was the only one patient enough to handle my crazy ideas and questions. He said, “In the 40 years I’ve sold fish, I’ve never met a more eccentric customer.” And indeed, I paid nothing; I only asked for leftovers: bags with cuttlefish ink, crab legs, shrimp antennae... He laughed and asked what I would do with all these “useless” and leftover pieces. In the village of Kaletzi – Vothonas, near Lake Marathon, I found great peace and a home with large yard. This work was created there, with the sounds of birds and the breeze coming from the Marathon coast. The area has a rich history, known for the great Battle of Marathon, which reminded me of the strength and endurance of another time. I felt the history of this place was with me, guiding and inspiring my art. Every piece, every leftover, became part of this connection between nature, history, and creation.