

**NALSAR PROXIMATE EDUCATION
NALSAR UNIVERSITY OF LAW, HYDERABAD
P.G.DIPLOMA IN PATENTS LAW**

2017-18 (Supplementary Exams)

**Paper II – Practical
(Exploitation of Patents – Drafting, Specification & Patent Writing)**

Time: 2 ½ hours.

TOTAL MARKS: 100

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- 1. The question paper to be interpreted as given and no clarification can be sought from the invigilator.**
- 2. Attempt only one choice – either A or B**
- 3. Answers in illegible handwriting will not be taken into consideration.**

You are required to draft a complete specification containing; a.) Title of the Patent b.) Background of the Invention c.) Summary of the Invention d.) Claims e.) Abstract of the invention. (Do not write a detailed description or draw figures.)

The Claims in the patent draft carries 50 marks and remaining specification carries 50 marks.

Note:

The answer guidelines contain some points (non-exhaustive) that could be covered in the answer to the Paper.

(12) **United States Patent**
Mantis

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 7,451,889 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Nov. 18, 2008**

(54) **CARRY-OUT FOOD CONTAINER**

D467,496 S 12/2002 Hayes et al.

(76) Inventor: **Lee Mantis**, 5512 Amity Pl., Charlotte, NC (US) 28212

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 642 days.

GENPAK, Hinged (Dinner) Containers, pp. 1-3, published prior to Jan. 16, 2004.

GENPAK, Hinged (Sandwich & Snack) Containers, pp. 1-3, published prior to Jan. 16, 2004.

DART, Foam Hinged Containers, pp. 1-3, published prior to Jan. 16, 2004.

PACTIV, Conventional Hinged Containers, p. 1, published prior to Jan. 16, 2004.

PACTIV, Double Laminated Hinged Containers, p. 1, published prior to Jan. 16, 2004.

PACTIV, Black Hinged Containers, p. 1, published prior to Jan. 16, 2004.

PACTIV, SmartLock Hinged Containers, p. 1, published prior to Jan. 16, 2004.

SYSCO, Serene Foam Hinged Containers, p. 1, published prior to Jan. 16, 2004.

LINPAC, Hot Food Boxes and Trays, pp. 1-2, published prior to Jan. 16, 2004.

* cited by examiner

(21) Appl. No.: **10/758,754**

(22) Filed: **Jan. 16, 2004**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2005/0155966 A1 Jul. 21, 2005

(51) **Int. Cl.**
B65D 25/04 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **220/530; 220/529**

(58) **Field of Classification Search** None
See application file for complete search history.

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

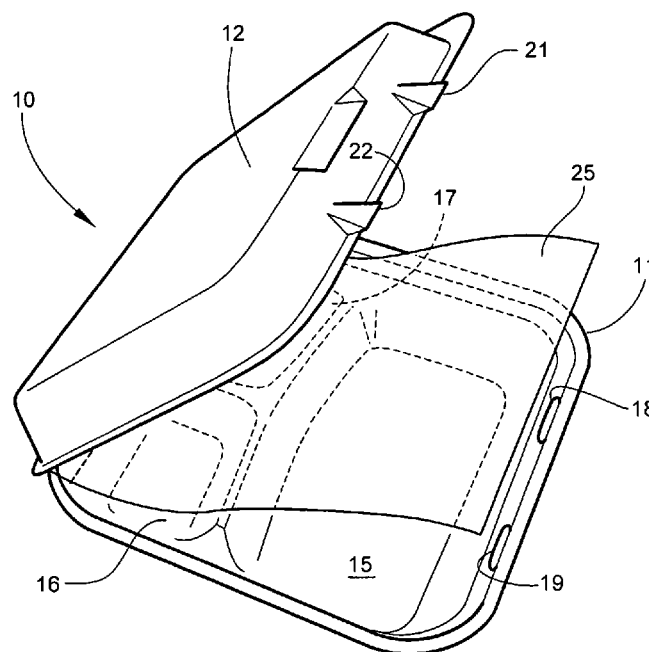
3,765,595	A *	10/1973	Bernhardt	229/125.08
D254,776	S	4/1980	Edwards	
4,241,863	A *	12/1980	Faller	229/120.03
D270,708	S	9/1983	Dart	
D277,167	S	1/1985	Dart	
4,856,666	A *	8/1989	Easley	215/272
4,962,849	A *	10/1990	Anderson	206/45.24
5,758,794	A	6/1998	Rider, Jr. et al.	
5,762,231	A	6/1998	Rider, Jr. et al.	
5,899,333	A *	5/1999	Williams et al.	206/469
5,938,068	A	8/1999	Atkins et al.	
6,102,231	A	8/2000	Rider, Jr. et al.	

Primary Examiner—Stephen J. Castellano
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Schwartz Law Firm P.C.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A carry-out food container includes a food compartment tray adapted for holding a food item, and a lid for removably covering the food item contained in the tray. An integrally-formed hinge interconnects the tray and the lid at a joined side edge. The hinge enables pivoting movement of the lid relative to the tray between an open position and a closed position. A flexible sheet is attached adjacent the hinge and is adapted for residing between the tray and the lid.

8 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



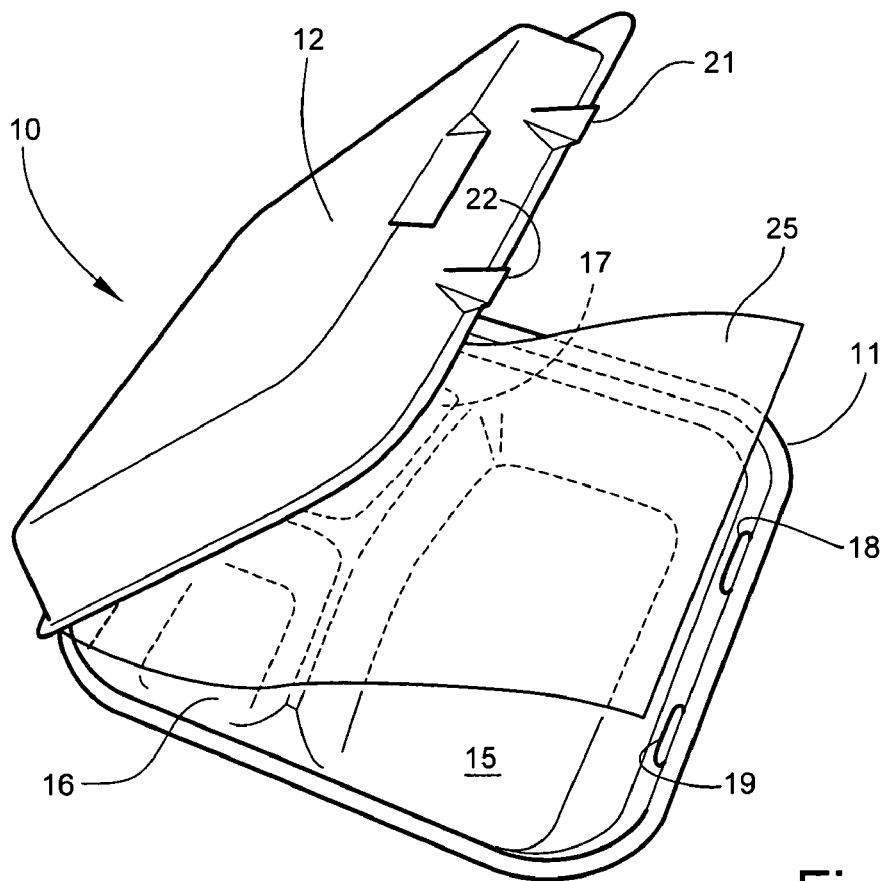


Fig. 1

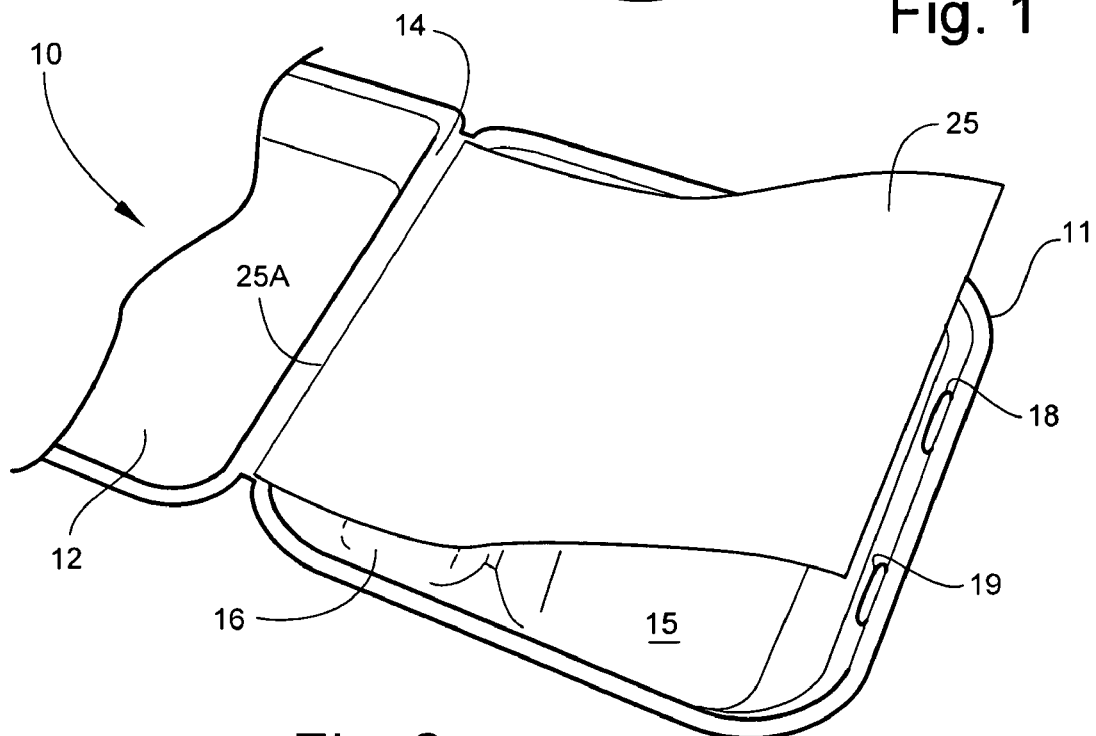


Fig. 2

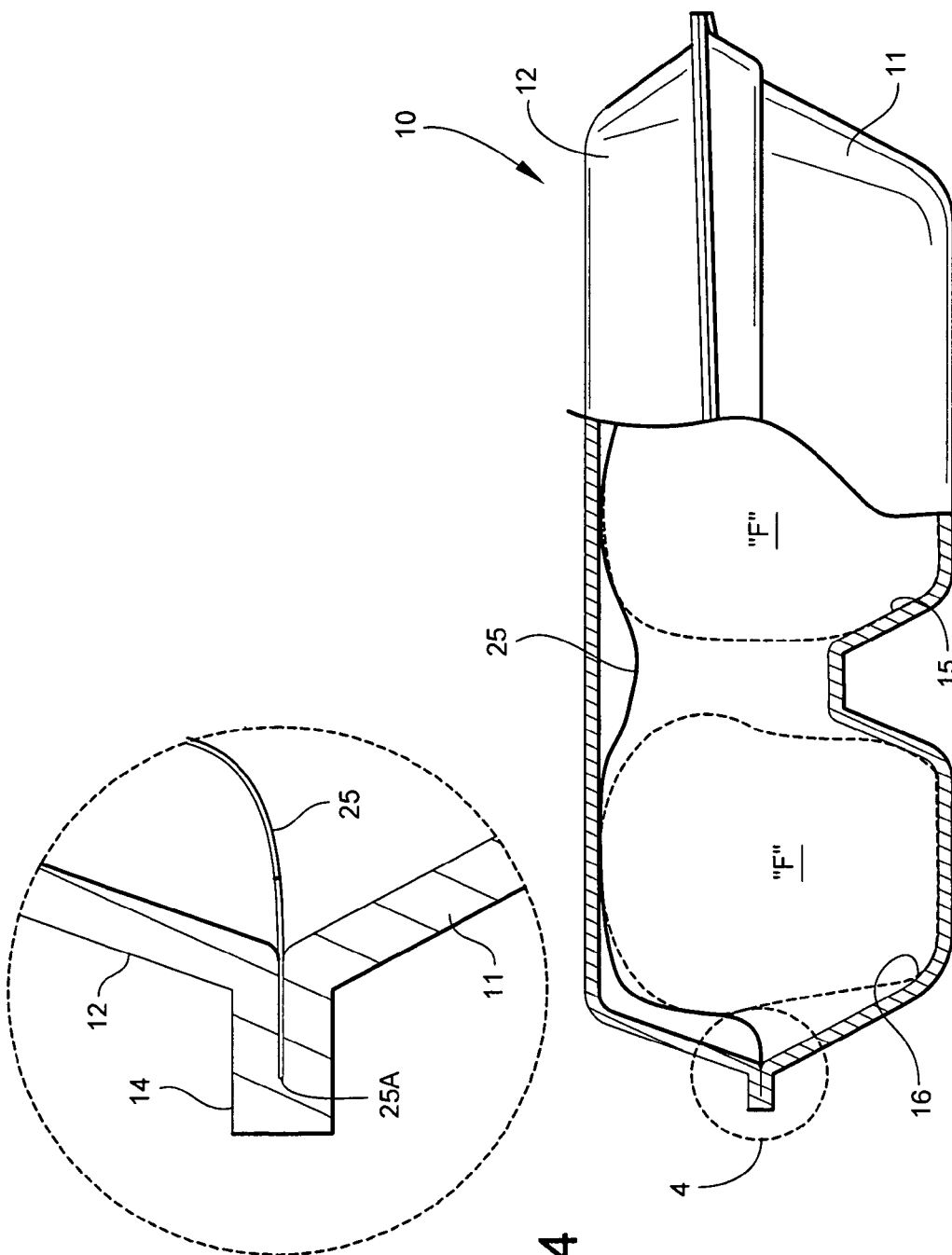


Fig. 4

Fig. 3

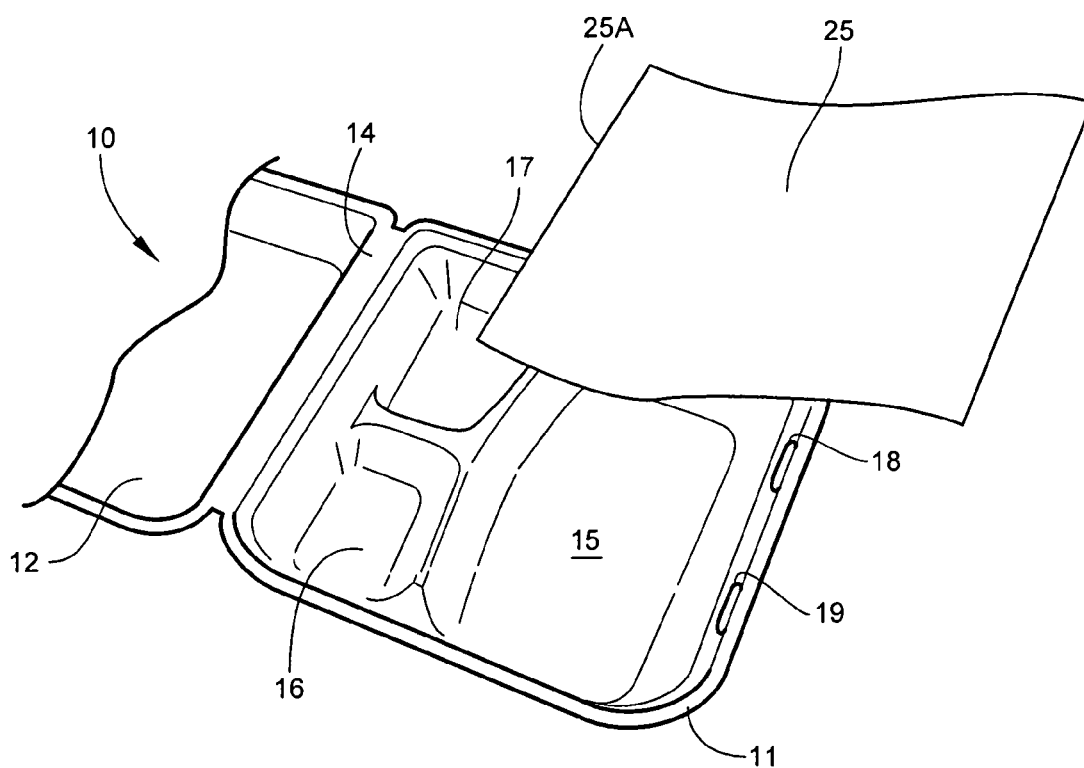


Fig. 5

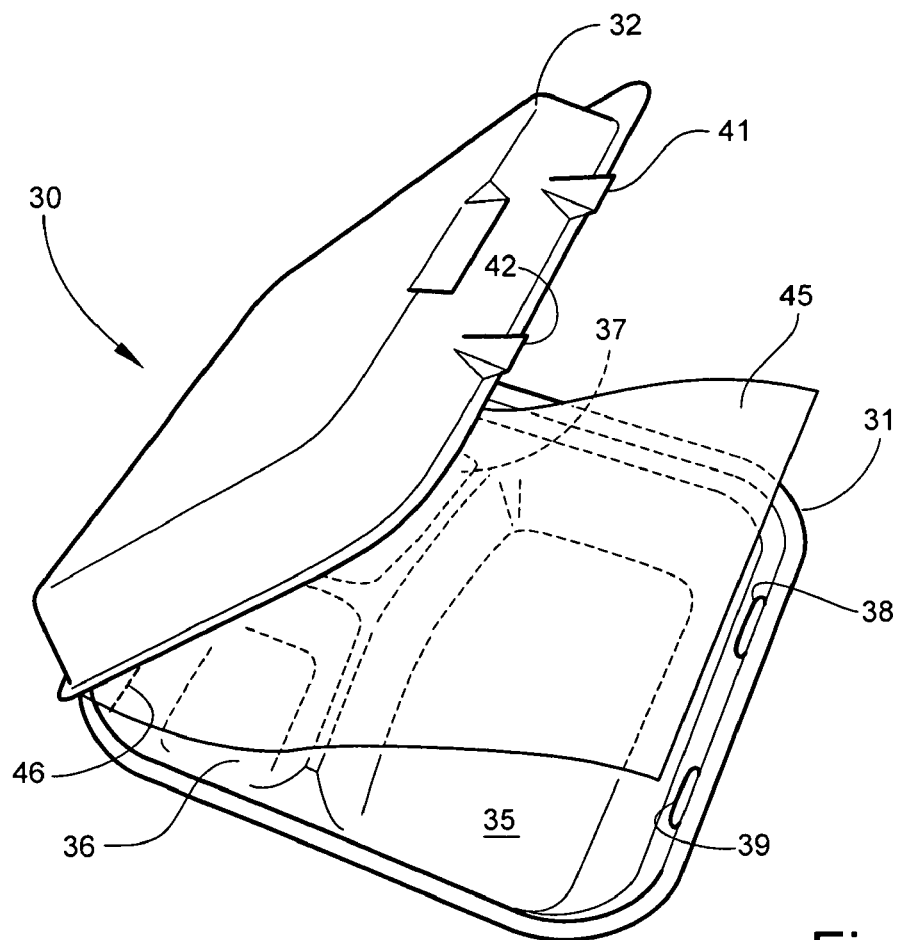


Fig. 6

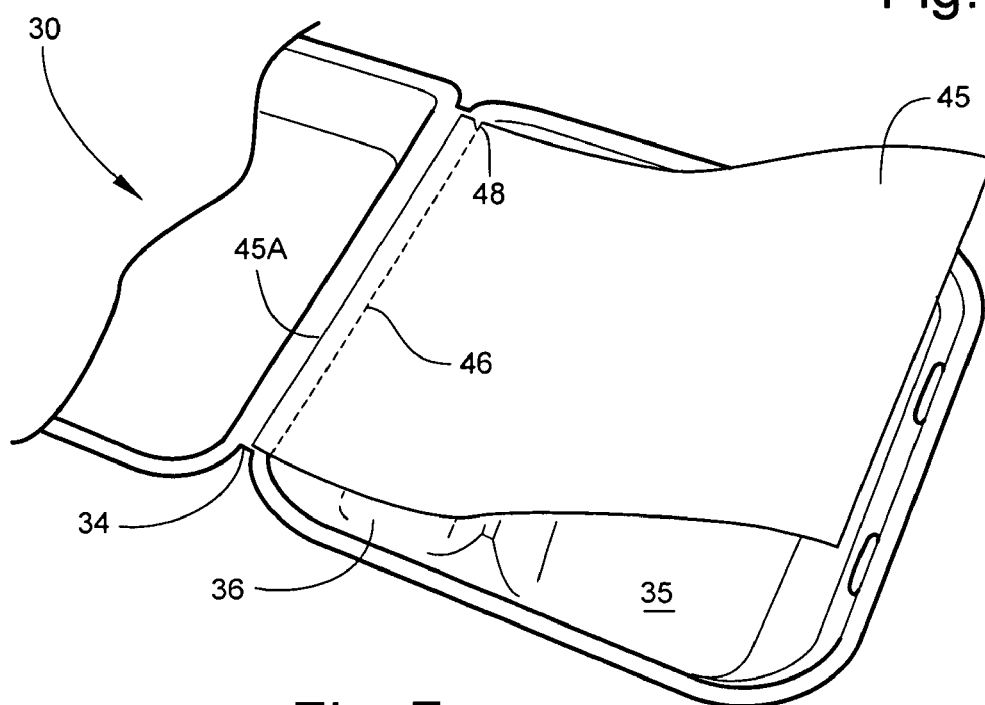
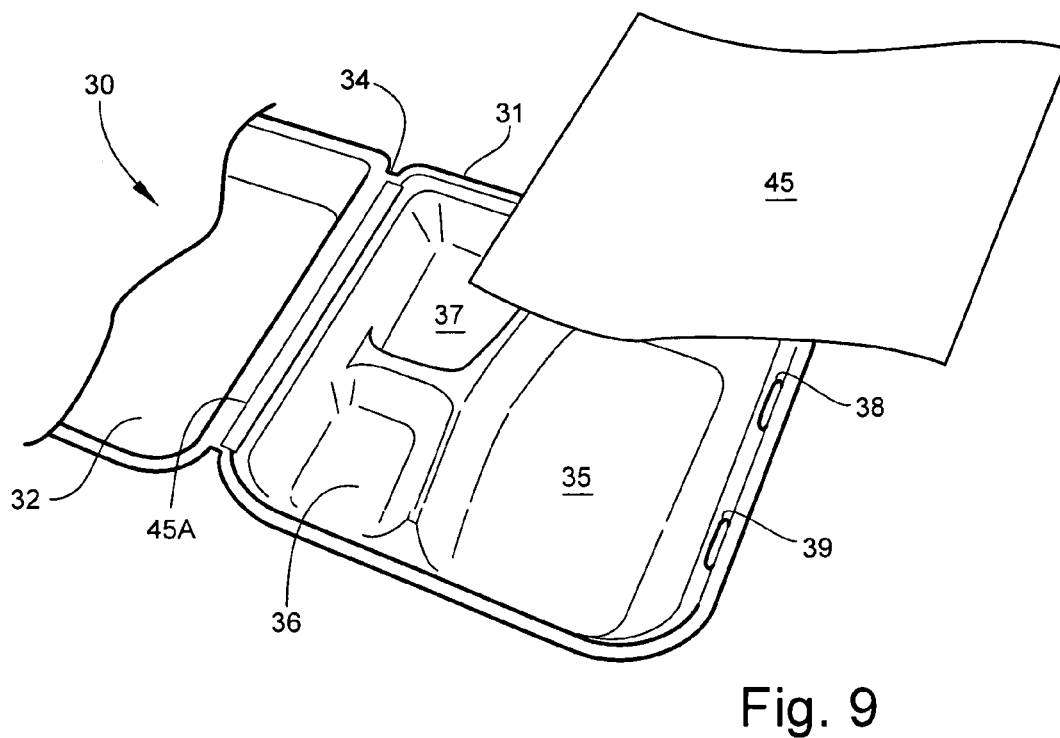
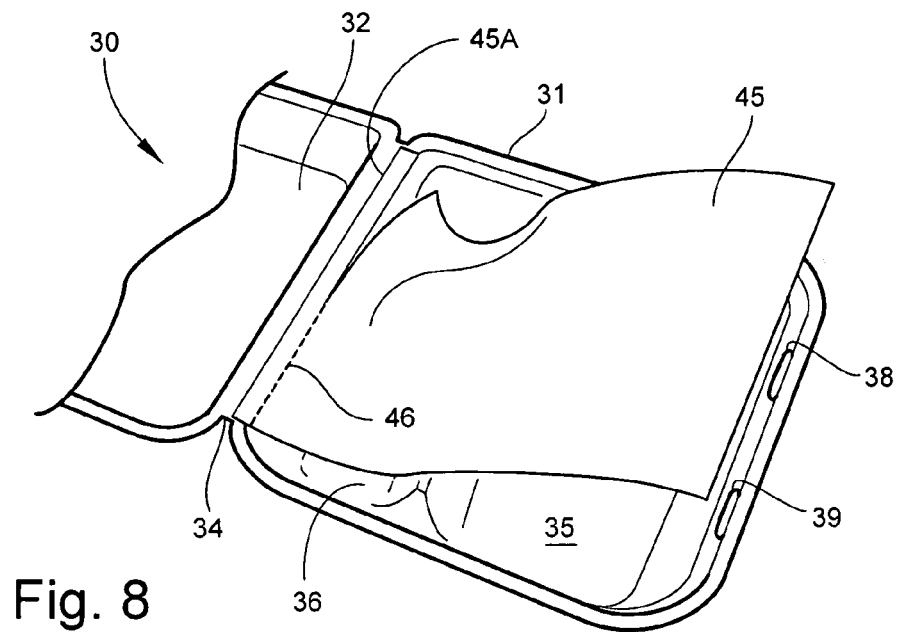


Fig. 7



1

CARRY-OUT FOOD CONTAINER**TECHNICAL FIELD AND BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

This invention relates to an improved carry-out food container, such as that commonly used in the restaurant industry to hold food items prepared for customer pick-up or delivery. Most, if not all, restaurants use carry-out containers to service customers who want to take their food "to-go." One category of widely-used carry-out containers are foam hinged containers. They are made in different shapes and sizes to accommodate room for sandwiches, hot dogs, dinner meals, etc.

When a carry-out order is prepared, items such as plastic utensils, salt, pepper, ketchup, butter and cracker packs, and bread are usually included. Restaurant employees tend to toss these items in the bag or place them in a separate container. At times, they may even forget to include these items. For a customer, the process of searching to find these items can be inconvenient. There are many cases where they even get lost. To avoid this, there are restaurants that make their employees place the food in the container, cover the food with a sheet of dry wax paper, and place these items over the wax paper. When the customer opens the box, everything he or she needs is right there. The food is kept warmer, and the chances of foreign objects falling in it are decreased. In essence, it further protects the food. Also, the cost of using a separate container to store these items can be saved. In some cases, restaurant employees may use aluminum foil instead of wax paper. However, aluminum foil is not entirely microwave safe, and wax paper is.

Restaurant employees that use wax paper for take-out orders still run into problems. The process of finding the wax paper and making sure it is placed neatly over the food can be time-consuming and inconvenient. At times, a restaurant employee may need to go back and forth throughout the kitchen to find wax paper. He or she may even run out of wax paper and have to go to the stock room to get some more. These become significant problems when the restaurant gets busy. The present invention addresses these problems by providing a carry-out container where the wax paper is already attached. This saves the employee time, and it can save the restaurant wax paper or aluminum foil costs. It can also serve as a way for an employee to pay closer attention to the amount of food that is placed in the container, which can also save costs. Furthermore, it increases the likelihood of an employee making sure that all items that need to come with a take-out order are there. The process of covering the food becomes more effective, and the overall appearance of the carry-out container is enhanced. These factors create a situation where the customer is satisfied and will likely come back. Overall, the invention makes the take-out process more smooth and efficient, and all restaurants can really benefit from it.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

Therefore, it is an object of the invention to provide a carry-out food container which conveniently stores and separates items, such as plastic utensils, salt, pepper, ketchup packs, bread, etc. from food items located in the container.

It is another object of the invention to provide a carry-out food container which keeps food warmer, and reduces the chances of any foreign objects falling into the food.

It is another object of the invention to provide a carry-out food container which is entirely microwave safe.

2

It is another object of the invention to provide a carry-out food container which facilitates the process of placing wax paper over the food items located in the container.

It is another object of the invention to provide a carry-out food container which is convenient and easy to use.

It is another object of the invention to provide a carry-out food container which increases the production and efficiency of restaurant workers.

It is another object of the invention to provide a carry-out food container which provides complete coverage of wax paper over the food items.

It is another object of the invention to provide a carry-out food container which guards against leaking and keeps its shape when holding your take-out meal.

It is another object of the invention to provide a carry-out food container which helps keeps hot food hot and cold food cold.

It is another object of the invention to provide a carry-out food container which keeps your food items fresh and intact.

It is another object of the invention to provide a carry-out food container which offers the combination of strength, lightness and durability.

These and other objects of the present invention are achieved in the preferred embodiments disclosed below by providing a carry-out food container. The container includes a food compartment tray adapted for holding a food item, and a lid for removably covering the food item contained in the tray. An integrally-formed hinge interconnects the tray and the lid at a common side edge. The hinge enables pivoting movement of the lid relative to the tray between an open position and a closed position. A flexible sheet is attached adjacent the hinge and is adapted for residing between the tray and the lid.

According to another preferred embodiment, the tray and lid are constructed of polystyrene.

According to another preferred embodiment, the tray defines a plurality of divided food compartments.

Preferably, the flexible sheet is dry wax paper.

According to another preferred embodiment, the flexible sheet is attached along a length of the integrally-formed hinge.

According to another preferred embodiment, the flexible sheet defines a perforated tear line extending from one side edge of the sheet to an opposite side edge of the sheet.

According to another preferred embodiment, a starter nick is formed at a leading end of the perforated tear line.

According to another preferred embodiment, the flexible sheet has a length and width dimension greater than a length and width dimension of the food compartment tray.

According to another preferred embodiment, the lid and tray have a complementary locking tab and slot, respectively, adapted for holding the lid in the closed position.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Some of the objects of the invention have been set forth above. Other objects and advantages of the invention will appear as the description proceeds when taken in conjunction with the following drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a carry-out food container according to one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a fragmentary view of the food container in an open position showing attachment of the wax paper sheet to the compartment tray;

FIG. 3 a cross-sectional view of the food container in the closed position;

3

FIG. 4 is an enlarged view showing a portion of the food container indicated at numeral 4 in FIG. 3;

FIG. 5 is a perspective view showing the wax paper sheet entirely removed from the compartment tray;

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of a carry-out food container according to a second preferred embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 7 is a fragmentary view of the food container shown in FIG. 5, and showing the perforated tear line attaching the wax paper sheet to the compartment tray;

FIG. 8 is a fragmentary view of the food container showing the wax paper sheet being removed from the compartment tray; and

FIG. 9 is a fragmentary view of the food container with the wax paper sheet removed from the compartment tray.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT AND BEST MODE

Referring now specifically to the drawings, a carry-out food container according to the present invention is illustrated in FIG. 1, and shown generally at reference numeral 10. The food container 10 is especially applicable for use in the restaurant industry for holding food items "F" (See FIG. 3) prepared for customer pick-up and delivery. The container 10 resembles a conventional, polystyrene foam, hinged-lid box commonly available in 8x8 or 9x9 sizes with small, medium, and large size tray wells. When using such boxes, the restaurant worker will generally place a separate sheet of dry wax paper or other covering over the food items, as described above, prior to closing the box and presenting it to the customer. The wax paper is typically stored in roll form or in a box dispenser containing pre-cut sheets. The process of retrieving the wax paper and properly arranging it over the food items "F" is generally time consuming and inconvenient.

Like conventional prior art boxes, the present food container 10 has a tray 11 and lid 12 interconnected by an integral (or "living") hinge 14 formed along a joined side edge. The hinge 14 enables pivoting movement of the lid 12 between an open position and a closed position relative to the tray 11. The tray 11 defines multiple compartments 15, 16, and 17 for separating the food items "F", and slots 18 and 19 adapted for receiving locking tabs 21 and 22 projecting from a front edge of the lid 12. The tabs 21, 22 insert into the corresponding tray slots 18, 19 to releasably hold the lid 12 in the closed position shown in FIG. 3. Preferably, the tray 11 is double laminated for maximum heat tolerance and strength.

A flexible sheet 25 of dry wax paper is attached at the hinge 14, as best shown in FIGS. 2, 3 and 4. The sheet 25 is designed to lay in a precisely spread condition over the food items "F", and to remain in position after the lid 12 is closed and during transport of the container 10. Preferably, the sheet 25 has a length and width dimension slightly larger than the length and width of the tray 11 to ensure complete and proper coverage of the food items "F". The sheet 25 is attached along its rear edge 25A by any suitable means including, but not limited to, a contact adhesive, adhesive tape, or ultrasonic welding. When the container 10 is opened, the customer lifts the sheet 25 to uncover the food items "F". The sheet 25 insulates the container 10, and helps maintain the various food items "F" in their designated compartments 15, 16, and 17.

For relatively large food items "F" which may be difficult to cover, the sheet 25 may be readily removed at its rear edge 25A from the compartment tray 11, as shown in FIG. 5. In this case, the attachment strength of the sheet 25 to the tray 11 is

4

sufficiently strong to prevent inadvertent removal the sheet 25 when folding over to cover the food items "F", but sufficiently weak to allow intentional removal of the sheet 25 from the tray 11 without tearing.

A further embodiment of a carry-out food container 30 according to the present invention is shown in FIGS. 6-9. Like container 10, the container 30 has a tray 31 and lid 32 interconnected by an integral hinge 34 formed along a joined side edge. The tray 31 defines multiple compartments 35, 36, and 37 for separating the food items, and slots 38 and 39 adapted for receiving locking tabs 41 and 42 projecting from a front edge of the lid 32. The tabs 41, 42 insert into the corresponding tray slots 38, 39 to releasably hold the lid 32 in the closed position.

A flexible sheet of dry wax paper 45 is attached to the tray 31 along the integral hinge 34. The sheet 45 defines a perforated tear line 46 extending from one side edge of the sheet 45 to the other, and spaced forward of the attached rear edge 45A. A starter nick 48, shown in FIG. 7, is formed at the leading end of the tear line 46 to facilitate tearing and removal of the sheet 45 from the container 30. By pulling the sheet 45 away from the container 30, the sheet 45 quickly and cleanly separates from the tray 31 at the tear line 46, as shown in FIG. 8. Once removed, as shown in FIG. 9, the sheet 45 can be either discarded or conveniently laid unattached over the food items placed in the tray 31.

A carry-out food container is described above. Various details of the invention may be changed without departing from its scope. Furthermore, the foregoing description of the preferred embodiment of the invention and best mode for practicing the invention are provided for the purpose of illustration only and not for the purpose of limitation—the invention being defined by the claims.

I claim:

1. A carry-out food container, comprising:

- (a) a food compartment tray adapted for holding a food item, and comprising four raised side edges defining an upper open end;
 - (b) a lid for removably covering the food item contained in said tray, and said lid comprising four side edges corresponding to the side edges of said tray, and one of the lid side edges being joined to one of the tray side edges;
 - (c) an integrally-formed hinge located at the joined side edges of said tray and said lid, and enabling pivoting movement of said lid relative to said tray between an open position and a closed position;
 - (d) a flexible sheet with a rear edge, said rear edge attached to said food container adjacent the joined side edges of said tray and said lid, and said flexible sheet adapted for residing between said tray and said lid, and said flexible sheet being unsealed at all times to said tray along a remaining three of the tray side edges, such that said flexible sheet may be readily removed at its rear edge from said tray, whereby the attachment of said flexible sheet to said food container is sufficiently strong to prevent inadvertent removal of said sheet when folding over to cover the food item, but sufficiently weak to allow intentional removal of said sheet from said food container without tearing; and
 - (e) wherein said flexible sheet has a length and width dimension greater than a length and width dimension of said upper open end of said food compartment tray.
2. A carry-out food container according to claim 1, wherein said tray and lid are constructed of polystyrene.
3. A carry-out food container according to claim 1, wherein said tray defines a plurality of divided food compartments.

5

4. A carry-out food container according to claim 1, wherein said flexible sheet comprises dry wax paper.

5. A carry-out food container according to claim 4, wherein said flexible sheet is removably attached along a length of said integrally-formed hinge.

6. A carry-out food container according to claim 5, wherein said flexible sheet defines a perforated tear line extending from one side edge thereof to an opposite side edge thereof.

6

7. A carry-out food container according to claim 6, and comprising a starter nick formed at a leading end of said perforated tear line.

8. A carry-out food container according to claim 1, wherein said lid and tray comprise a complementary locking tab and slot, respectively, adapted for releasably holding said lid in the closed position.

* * * * *

United States Patent [19]

[11] Patent Number: 4,809,435

Printz

[45] Date of Patent: Mar. 7, 1989

[54] EATING UTENSIL

[76] Inventor: Gerald L. Printz, 18A Northtown Rd., Jackson, Miss. 39236

[21] Appl. No.: 139,131

[22] Filed: Dec. 23, 1987

274,695	4/1883	Badger	294/99.2
277,531	5/1883	Ackermann	294/99.2 X
3,640,561	2/1972	Law	294/16
3,889,995	6/1975	Lin	294/16
3,892,435	7/1975	Huey	294/16
3,937,510	2/1976	Lew	294/16
4,199,180	4/1980	Kelly	294/33
4,425,711	1/1984	Wood et al.	30/324

Related U.S. Application Data

[63] Continuation of Ser. No. 865,408, May 21, 1986, abandoned.

[51] Int. Cl.⁴ A47J 43/28

[52] U.S. Cl. 30/142; 30/322; 294/99.2; D7/148

[58] Field of Search 30/142, 322-325; 294/16, 99.2; D7/105, 148, 149, 137

References Cited

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

27,802	4/1860	Hills	D7/112
Des. 53,903	10/1919	Grier	D7/103
Des. 143,431	10/1945	Lapin	D7/149
174,646	3/1876	Truner et al.	D7/112
Des. 203,455	1/1966	Bruns	D7/105
Des. 233,398	10/1974	Lee	294/99.2 X
Des. 242,760	12/1976	Jensen	D7/3
Des. 269,060	5/1983	Creamer	D7/149
274,694	3/1883	Badger	294/99.2 X

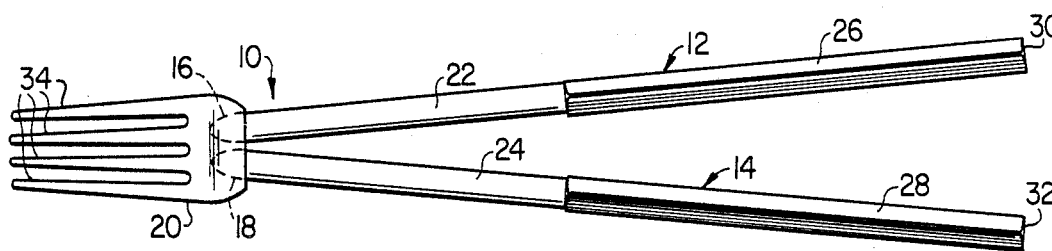
Primary Examiner—Douglas D. Watts

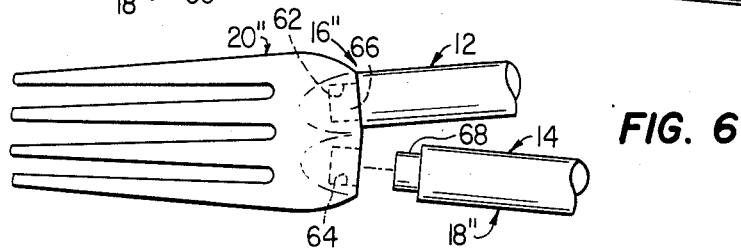
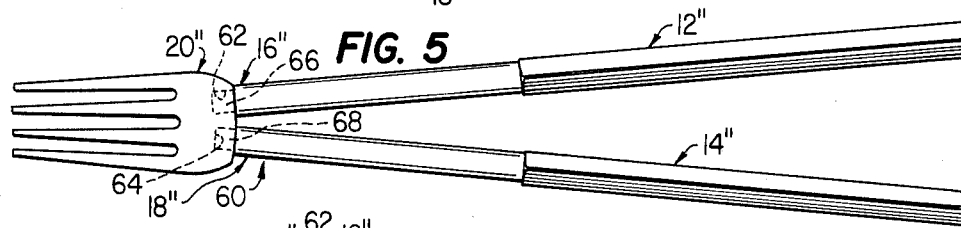
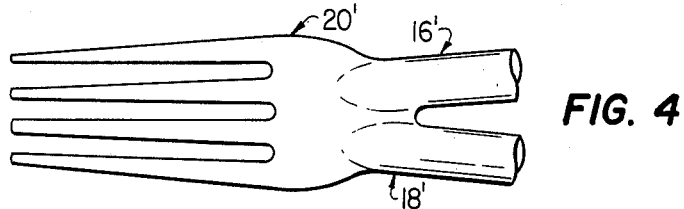
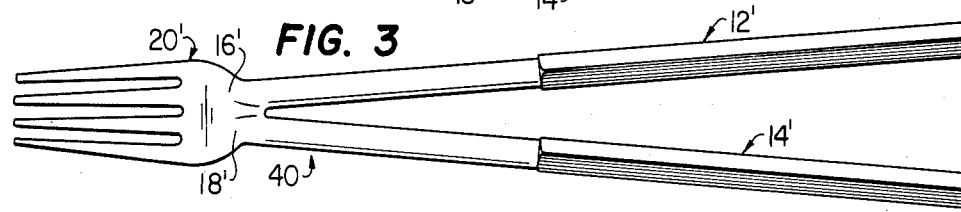
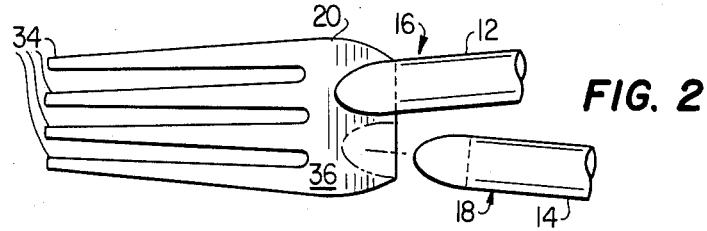
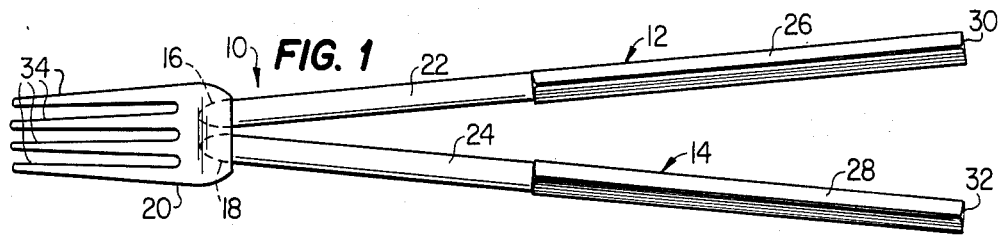
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Gregory W. Carr

[57] ABSTRACT

An eating utensil (10) which, when used, resembles chopsticks, but which does not require the skilled manipulation of chopsticks. The utensil (10) includes a pair of handles (12 and 14) resembling chopsticks that converge toward their distal ends (16 and 18), where they are secured to a food-engaging member (20), such as fork tines, a spoon, or other Western-style utensil. The food-engaging member (20) may be detachably secured to the handles (12 and 14), to allow replacement of the handles of the food-engaging member if any of such components should break, and to allow substitution of a variety of types of food-engaging members, such as forks or spoons, as desired.

5 Claims, 1 Drawing Sheet





EATING UTENSIL

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of application Ser. No. 06/865,408, filed May 21, 1986, now abandoned.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The invention relates to eating utensils and, more particularly, to a utensil that resembles chopsticks, but which does not require the manipulation of chopsticks.

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

It is a custom in the United States and elsewhere to eat Oriental foods, such as Chinese and Japanese foods, with utensils native to that part of the world, known as chopsticks. Chopsticks are generally a matching pair of rods several inches long. Unlike Western-style utensils, such as the spoon and fork, chopsticks must be manipulated carefully by the user with one hand to grasp and carry food to the user's mouth. To accomplish this task, the user must be able to both hold the chopsticks firmly between the fingers of one hand and manipulate the chopsticks between a grasping position, where the distal ends of the chopsticks are brought together to grasp food, and an open position, where the distal ends are moved apart to release food. Thus, chopsticks work in tweezer-like fashion to grasp and hold food.

Unfortunately, the use of chopsticks requires a great deal of dexterity, making their use impossible by those without training, and often making their use undesirable by those who do not use them regularly, but who do not wish to risk the embarrassment of dropping or otherwise mishandling the food they are eating. Moreover, even skilled users of chopsticks may have difficulty when eating rice, noodles and other foods, due to the tweezer-like manner in which chopsticks grasp such foods. Accordingly, those wishing to avoid embarrassment while eating often must break with Oriental custom by opting for the less-embarrassing and less enjoyable alternative of using Western-style utensils when eating Oriental cuisine.

These disadvantages are overcome by the present invention, which provides an eating utensil that, when used, resembles chopsticks, but which does not require the skilled manipulation of chopsticks. The utensil includes a pair of elongate handles that converge toward their distal ends, where they are secured to a food-engaging member, such as fork tines, a spoon or other Western-style utensil. The food-engaging member may be detachably secured to the handles, to allow replacement of the handles or the food-engaging member if any of such components should break, or to allow substitution of a variety of types of food-engaging members, such as forks or spoons, as desired.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

A more complete understanding of the invention can be had by reference to the following Detailed Description in conjunction with the accompanying Drawings wherein:

FIG. 1 is a top view of a utensil incorporating a first embodiment of the invention, wherein the food-engaging member includes fork tines;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged partial bottom view of the portion of the utensil shown in FIG. 1, adjacent the food-engaging member;

FIG. 3 is a top view of a utensil incorporating a second embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 4 is an enlarged partial bottom view of the portion of the utensil shown in FIG. 3, adjacent its food-engaging member;

FIG. 5 is a top view of a utensil incorporating a third embodiment of the invention; and

FIG. 6 is an enlarged partial bottom view of the utensil shown in FIG. 5 adjacent its food engaging member.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring now to the Drawings, FIG. 1 shows a utensil 10 comprising a first embodiment of the invention. The utensil 10 includes a pair of handle members 12 and 14 secured at their distal ends 16 and 18 to a food-engaging member 20. The handles 12 and 14 and the food-engaging member 20 may be manufactured from plastic, metal, wood or other suitable materials.

The handles 12 and 14 are designed as a matching set, to resemble a pair of chopsticks. Portions 22 and 24 of the handles 12 and 14 adjacent their respective distal ends 16 and 18 have a generally curved surface tapering in diameter toward the distal ends 16 and 18, to facilitate gripping and manipulating the utensil 10 with one hand and to give the appearance of chopsticks. The handles 12 and 14 include portions 26 and 28 adjacent their proximal ends 30 and 32 having rectangular cross-sections and generally larger diameters than the portions 22 and 24 adjacent the distal ends 16 and 18. It will be apparent that the portions 26 and 28 of the handles 12 and 14 may have virtually any cross-section desired to resemble chopsticks, including various multi-sided or polygonal configurations. The handles 12 and 14 of the utensil 10 may be held with one hand, in a manner similar to the way in which chopsticks are held, to lift food from a plate or bowl, for example, to the user's mouth.

The handles 12 and 14 are also preferably sufficiently flexible or resilient to be bent together so that their proximal ends 30 and 32 are brought together in tweezer-like fashion. This allows the utensil 10 to be used as a pair of tongs to pick up articles with its proximal ends 30 and 32.

Food is engaged and held by the food-engaging member 20 of the utensil 10. The member 20 comprises a set of fork tines 34 which are directed by the user as is a conventional fork to lift or skewer food. It will be apparent that various types of fork tines may be utilized in the present invention, including sets of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc., tines of varying lengths and widths, and tines of various widths and shapes.

FIG. 2 illustrates the manner in which the distal ends 16 and 18 of the respective handles 12 and 14 are secured to the food-engaging member 20. The upper surface of each of the distal ends 16 and 18 of the handles 12 and 14 is contoured to mate with the lower surface 36 of the food-engaging member 20. The mating surfaces of the food-engaging member 20 and the distal ends 16 and 18 of the handles 12 and 14 are bonded together by glue, adhesive or other suitable means.

FIGS. 3 and 4 illustrates an eating utensil 40 comprising a second embodiment of the invention incorporating numerous component parts which are substantially identical in construction and function to component parts of the utensil 10 illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2. Such identical parts are designated by the same reference

numerals utilized in the description of trailer 10, but are differentiated therefrom by means of a prime (') designation. The embodiment of FIGS. 3 and 4 is primarily distinguishable from the embodiment of FIGS. 1 and 2 in that the handles 12' and 14' in the food-engaging member 20' of the utensil 40 form an integral unit. Thus, the utensil 40 can be easily manufactured, for example, from a single piece of molded plastic, wood, cast metal or the like.

FIGS. 5 and 6 illustrate a utensil 60 comprising a third embodiment of the invention incorporating numerous component parts which are also substantially identical in construction and function to component parts of the utensil 10 illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2. Such identical parts are designated by the same reference numerals utilized in the description of the utensil 10, but are differentiated therefrom by means of a double prime (") designation.

The embodiment shown in FIGS. 5 and 6 is primarily distinguishable from the embodiment shown in FIGS. 1 and 2 in that the utensil 60 incorporates fastening means for releasably securing the handles 12" and 14" to the food-engaging member 20". This is accomplished by providing the food-engaging member 20" with a pair of cylindrical sockets 62 and 64 sized suitably to tightly receive cylindrically-shaped inserts 66 and 68 extending from the respective distal ends 16" and 18" of the handles 12 and 14. The extensions 66 and 68 are held within their respective receptacles 62 and 64 by a friction fit when inserted, and may be removed from the sockets 62 and 64 merely by pulling the handles 12 and 14 from the engaging member 20". Alternatively, the inserts 66 and 68 may be permanently secured within the sockets 62 and 64 by means of glue, adhesive, or other suitable means.

The embodiment of FIGS. 5 and 6, or a similar arrangement allowing detachment of the handles 12" and 14" from the food-engaging member 20", facilitates replacement of any such component that is broken. In

addition, such an arrangement allows the food-engaging member 20" to be replaced with virtually any other type of food-engaging member, such as a soup spoon, dessert spoon, salad fork tines, and the like, depending upon the particular type of food to be eaten.

Although particular embodiments of the invention have been illustrated in the accompanying Drawings and described in the foregoing Detailed Description, it will be understood that the invention is not limited to the embodiments disclosed, but is capable of numerous rearrangements, modifications and substitutions of parts and elements without departing from the spirit of the invention.

I claim:

1. An eating utensil comprising:

a first chopstick, having distal and proximal ends;
a second chopstick, having distal and proximal ends;
a food-engaging member secured directly to the distal ends of the first and second chopsticks; and
the handle members being spaced apart at their proximal ends and converging together at their juncture with the food-engaging member, to resemble chopsticks holding food wherein the first and second chopsticks include a gripping portion adjacent its distal end for hand manipulation.

2. The eating utensil of claim 1 further comprising means for releasably securing the first and second chopsticks to the food-engaging member.

3. The eating utensil of claim 2 wherein the food-engaging member comprises fork tines.

4. The eating utensil of claim 1 wherein each chopstick includes a second portion adjacent its proximal end having a diameter generally larger than that of the gripping portion.

5. The eating utensil of claim 4 wherein the cross-section of the second portion of each has at least three sides.

* * * * *