



⑪ Publication number : **0 460 933 A1**

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EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

②① Application number : 91305077.9

⑤¹ Int. Cl.⁵: B65D 81/32

②② Date of filing : 05.06.91

(30) Priority : 07.06.90 US 534777

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④3 Date of publication of application :
11.12.91 Bulletin 91/50

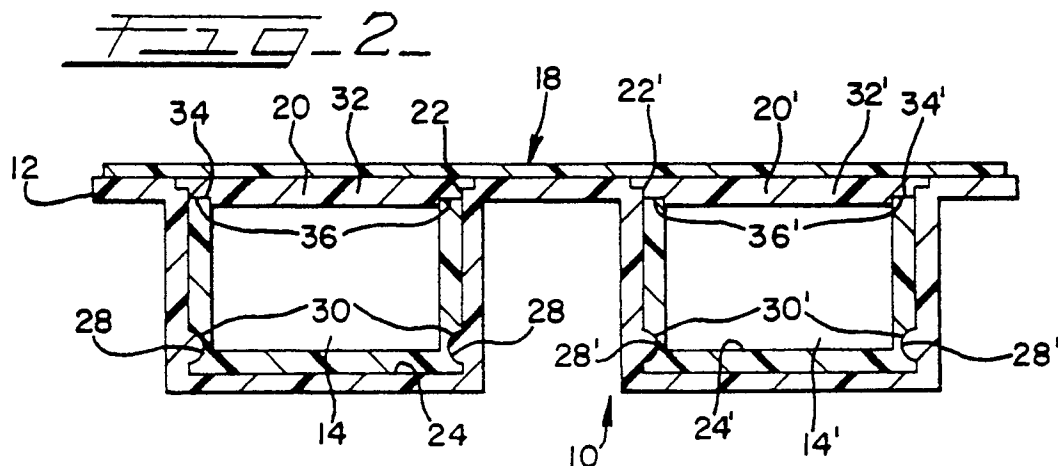
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(84) Designated Contracting States :
AT BE CH DE DK ES FR GB GR IT LI LU NL SE

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(54) Unitized compartmented package.

(57) A unitized compartmented package (10; 100; 200) for use in packaging separate, multiple product compartments (14, 14'; 114, 114', 114"; 230, 230') together in a single package is disclosed. The package (10; 100; 200) includes a package support component (12; 112; 202) which houses the multiple product compartments (14, 14'; 114, 114', 114"; 230, 230'). A cover member (18; 118; 203, 210) is attached to the outer package support, component (12; 112; 202) by way of a relatively weak attachment bond (36, 36') and to removable portions of the inner multiple product compartments (14, 14'; 114, 114', 114"; 230, 230') by way of a relatively strong attachment bond (18; 118; 203, 210) removes all of the removable portions from the inner multiple product compartments (14, 14'; 114, 114', 114"; 230, 230') to expose their contents such that different products may be incorporated in a single package.



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Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a multi-component package for food products. More particularly, the present invention relates to a package for multiple food products in which separate, individually sealed product compartments are packaged together in a single unit.

Background of the Invention

There are many instances where it is desirable to package two or more component products together and sell them as a unit. Often, in instances where the component products are food products, the freshness or perception of freshness of such products may be affected in some manner if the two component products were in contact with one another at any time. Thus, it is often desirable to package two or more components in the same unit but in isolation from each other.

As an example, preassembled lunch packages composed of sliced meat, sliced or diced cheese, stacked crackers and/or dessert pudding can be packaged in this manner. The flavor, texture and perceived freshness of these products may be affected if they are exposed to or allowed to contact one another during the assembly of such packages at the time of package filling. In addition, changeovers from one type of meat to another would require a wet sanitation which would seriously reduce production and greatly affect the freshness of certain components, such as the crackers.

To effect the quick and efficient assembly of such multiple compartment packages, it becomes desirable to initially form, fill and seal individual product compartments which carry the package component products and then later insert the filled product compartments carrying the into a package carrier member for assembly into a final, point-of-use package. Where the individual product compartments can be selectively inserted into the carrier member, successive carrier members may be interconnected in the form of a single continuous web to reduce manufacturing costs and more easily attain higher production speeds by virtue of the ease in which the desired component products are changed for insertion into new packages. In such a continuous process, it is desirable to provide a continuous length of precut paperboard stock to serve as the carrier or package support member, which receives the desired individual product compartments successively.

There have been some attempts to produce multi-compartment packages. For example, U.S. Patent No. 3,292,810 describes multi-packs for perishable merchandise, wherein multi-pack includes a having individual receptacles, each of which is sealed by a single cover sheet. The cover sheet is perforated to

allow one or more of the individual receptacles to be separated from the others without damaging the seal of the other receptacles.

U.S. Patent No. 4,159,771 describes a container having multiple, independently openable compartments. The individual product compartments are formed and filled in a separate product tray which is later inserted into a paperboard carton. The paperboard carton is sealed shut by a single sheet having perforations at the boundaries of each compartment. Discrete portions of the sealing sheet may be removed to unseal individual compartments without affecting the seal of the remaining compartments.

U.S. Patent No. 4,355,755 describes a tray suited for packaging food which is formed by drawing a unitary blank of paperboard and includes an outwardly extending flange along the upper edge of the tray to provide a face to which a cover sheet is bonded. The tray includes arcuately shaped troughs in the face of the flange at each corner of the tray and a plastic cover sheet which covers the top of the tray.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention relates to a compartmented package including an outer package carrier or support member and at least two separate, inner product compartments held in place in the carrier member. The inner product compartments are held in the carrier member by a retaining means. Each individual product compartment members have a removable first cover which permits opening of and access to the inner product compartments. The carrier member also includes a second cover member which is removably attached to both the carrier member and the individual product compartment first cover members. The first cover members are removable from their associated product compartments by less force than is needed to remove the same from the outer carrier member and also by less force than is needed to remove the second cover member from the carrier member. Therefore, removal of the outer, second cover member opens all of the inner product compartments by removing the first cover members associated therewith.

The present invention successfully addresses the aforementioned disadvantages and provides significant advantages in that it provides an outer package carrier component which serves as a support for multiple, individual product compartments. During assembly, a preselected number of separate, preformed multiple individual product compartments are inserted in place on a package support panel section of a carrier member and a covering film is applied to all of the product compartments and its support panel to provide a hermetic seal disposed around each of the multiple product compartments. Preferably, the package individual product compartments and the

entire package covering members have easy-open or "peel" seal portions which can maintain a vacuum pressurized and/or gas-flushed environment within the package while permitting at least a portion of the covering film to be removed by the application of digital forces.

The package carrier component may include one or more package end panels extending from the package support panel to effectively enclose the individual product compartments between the package end panels and support panel to thereby provide an assembled package having a "boxed" and somewhat rigid shape which is particularly well-suited for automated packing of individual package units into larger shipping boxes.

Accordingly, it is a general object of the present invention to provide an improved unitary package having multiple, individually sealed product compartments.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a multi-compartmented package that is operable by removing a single cover member.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a package which is adapted to hold separate multiple compartments in place within a package carrier member and wherein the multiple product compartments are adapted to contain quantities of different food products such as sliced meat products, dairy products and cracker products.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a package which permits unlimited flexibility in substituting one component product for another without the need for cleaning and sanitizing the assembly equipment.

Still another object of the present invention to increase the capability of automating the final assembly line by providing a package which, in the final stage of assembly, requires only a mechanical assembly operation.

Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a package having multiple separate product compartments wherein the product compartments are supported by a package face panel.

It is still another object of the present invention is to provide a process for manufacturing a multiple product compartment package having multiple product compartments formed in an outer package wrapper.

These and other objects of the present invention will be apparent from a reading of the following detailed description which follows.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 is a perspective view of one embodiment of a package constructed in accordance with the principles of the present invention having one of the two containers open;

Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of the of Figure

1 taken along line 2-2;

Figure 3 is a cross-sectional view of a second embodiment of a package constructed in accordance with the principles of the present present invention;

Figure 4 is a perspective view of a third embodiment of a package constructed in accordance with the principles of the present invention;

Figure 5 is a cross-sectional view of the package of Figure 4, taken along line 5-5; and

Figure 6 is an elevational view of a package illustrating assembly of the panels of the package blank to form a package similar to that shown in Figure 4.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiment

The unitized compartmented package is a packaging concept designed to greatly simplify and increase the flexibility of multi-component packaging. Its use is especially advantageous where two or more individually packaged component products are to be incorporated into a single package which is sold as a unit.

Figure 1 illustrates an embodiment of the unitized compartmented package 10 constructed in accordance with the principles of the present invention. The package 10 is particularly suitable for sealing multiple distinct portions of perishable meat, dairy and cracker products between individual product compartments 14, 14' and an outer cover member 16. The package 10 includes three main components: the package carrier member 12, the individual product compartments 14, 14' and the package cover member 18.

The individual product compartments 14, 14' are easily vacuum formed in a conventional manner from a formable plastic film and may be rigid, semi-rigid or flexible. Each product compartment typically is illustrated as generally rectangular in shape; however, it will be understood that other shapes, such as circular shapes, can accommodate the various food products intended for depositing therein. The product compartments 14, 14' each have a sufficient number of vertical and bottom sidewalls to form a receptacle or product compartment having a desired depth to accommodate a preselected amount of food products.

As illustrated in FIGS. 1-2, the product carrier member 12 may have a plurality of enclosed recesses 24, 24' formed therein, which are adapted to retainingly engage the corresponding product compartments 14, 14' therein. In this embodiment, the product compartments may either each include a peripheral rim 22, 22' which abuts a surface of the carrier member 12. The product compartments 14, 14' may also include detent means shown in FIGS. 1-2 as grooves 30, 30' formed in the sidewalls of the product compartments which engage complementary shaped ridges

28, 28' formed in the carrier member recesses 24, 24'. The ridges 28, 28' engage their corresponding grooves 30, 30' in a relatively strong "snap-in" or interference engagement to retain the product compartments 14, 14' in place within the carrier member 12 when the package is opened and the second cover sheet 18 is removed. The positioning of the detent means on the product compartment and carrier member is arbitrary and it will be understood that the product compartments 14, 14' may include outwardly extending ridges while the carrier member recesses 24, 24' include corresponding grooves. Alternatively, the individual product compartments 14, 14' may also be retained within the carrier tray recesses 24, 24' by any suitable conventional means such as by adhesive sealing, heat sealing or ultrasonic welding.

Alternatively, as illustrated in the package embodiment 100 shown in FIGS. 4-6, the package carrier member 112 need not include a formed rigid tray with recesses, but may include a series of openings 107, 108, 109. Each opening is adapted to receive an individual product compartment 114, 114', 114" therein. In this embodiment, it is preferable that the product compartments 114, 114', 114" include outer rims 122, 122', 122" which extend around the perimeter of the product compartments. These outer rims 122, 122', 122" have a sufficient width to form an inner flange 126, 126', 126" which provides the package carrier member 112 with an underside surface which can be securely attached to the package carrier member as by heat sealing, adhesive sealing or ultrasonic welding. However, and as shown particularly in Figure 6, each product compartment 114, 114', 114" may include ridges or detents 170, 170' which protrude outward from the sidewalls of the product compartment hollow receptacles. These ridges 170, 170' engage the underside of the carrier member face panel 152 and serve to retain the product compartment hollow receptacles 111, 114', 114" in place within the carrier member openings 107, 108, 109 when the package second cover film 118 is removed from the package 100.

Each product compartment 14, 14' also has an upper removable portion 32, 32' associated therewith. As shown in FIGS. 1-2, the removable portions 32, 32' may include the first cover film 20, 20' for each product compartment 14, 14' as well as a portion 34, 34' of the product compartments which portions are separated from the product compartments 14, 14' by a relatively weak point of attachment, such as a line of weakening 36, 36' extending around the product compartment sidewalls. Alternatively, as shown in FIGS. 4-5, the first cover members 120, 120', 120" alone may serve as the removable portions 32, 32', 32" of the product compartments 114, 114', 114".

Figure 1 illustrates a unitized compartmented package 10 in a half-opened position with its second cover member 18 being partially pulled away from the

surface of the package carrier member 12. When the second or outer cover member 18 is pulled, the product compartment removable portions 32, 32' remain attached to outer cover member and are removed from the inner product compartments 14, 14' along the lines of weakening 36, 36'. The inner product compartments 14, 14' remain housed in their corresponding carrier member recesses 24, 24' because a greater force is required to remove the product compartments 14, 14' from the carrier member than the force required to separate the removable portions 32, 32' from the product compartments 14, 14'.

The lines of weakening 36, 36' are preferably disposed close to the top of the inner product compartments 14, 14' in order to maximize the space available in the product receptacle for product storage. Where the removable portion 32, 32' includes a portion of the product compartments 14, 14', as in FIGS. 1-2, the lines of weakening 36, 36' are preferably within 10% of the height of the inner product compartments 14, 14' from the top of the product compartments 14, 14'.

Alternatively, where the line of weakening is the point of attachment between the first cover films 120, 120', 120" and the product compartment outer rims 122, 122', 122" (FIGS. 4-6), virtually all of the space of the product compartments 114, 114', 114" is available for product storage.

Turning now to the embodiment shown in FIGS. 4-6, it can be seen that the package carrier member 112 may also take the form of a package blank 150 wherein the individual multiple product compartments 114, 114', 114" are partially enclosed between two package panels of the package carrier member 112, shown as a top package face panel 152 and a package bottom panel 154. In this embodiment, the package carrier member 112 is preferably made from a paperboard or cardboard stock having a sufficient thickness to withstand the various steps of the package assembly process. Additionally, the package carrier member 112 and the various panels thereof should preferably have a surface which accepts printing inks and the desired means of retaining the product compartments 114, 114', 114" in the package carrier member 112.

The package carrier member 112 may include one or more extended package flap panels 156, 156' which extends away from the face panel portion 152 thereof and which is folded around the product compartment hollow receptacles 114, 114', 114" to partially enclose them between two opposing panels of the package 100, which extend away from opposing sides of the package face panel 152. In this embodiment, the individual product compartments 114, 114', 114" may be either "snapped" into place in the carrier member openings 107, 108, 109 so that the outwardly protruding ridges 170, 170' will engage the underside of the carrier member face panel 152 (figure 6).

Alternatively, the product compartments 114, 114', 114" may be constructed with outer rims 122, 122', 122" which may be adhered to the top surface of the carrier member face panel 152.

The package flap panels 152 are folded downwardly along a first fold line 158, 158' disposed generally parallel to and proximate to opposing edges of the package face panel 152 to define a pair of package side panels. The flap panels 156, 156' may be further folded along a second fold line 160, 160' disposed exterior of and generally parallel to the first fold lines 158, 158' to define a pair of package bottom panel halves 162, 162' and a pair of package sealing panels 164, 164'. The package sealing panels 164, 164' are attached together at confronting faces thereof and may also include a pair of additional sealing extension flanges 166, 166' at their ends.

The final "boxed" configuration of the package 100 is accomplished by either attaching the package sealing panels 164, 164' to each other or, in addition thereto, the additional extension flanges 166, 166' may be further attached to the underside of the carrier member face panel 152 as illustrated in FIG. 5. Inasmuch as the package flap panels extend away from the package face panel 152 on two sides thereof, the product compartment hollow receptacles 114, 114', 114" are partially enclosed between the package face panel 152 and the bottom panel halves 162, 162'.

The second, outer cover film 118, which is adhered to the carrier member face panel 152, the outer rims of the product compartment hollow receptacles and the first covers 120, 120', 120" thereof, by any conventional means such as by heat sealing, adhesive sealing or ultrasonic welding to effect a desired hermetic seal. The second cover 118 may be preprinted with suitable package graphics. The present invention provides certain advantages in that any desired number of individual product compartments may be inserted into the package carrier member 112. In this regard, only the eventual package carrier member width need be increased.

Another embodiment 200 of the present invention is illustrated in Figure 3 wherein two outer package carrier member portions 202, 203 are employed to form the unitized compartmented package 200. The bottom carrier member portion 202 includes a plurality of product compartment accommodating recesses 206, 206' and an outer rim portion 208 which surrounds the recesses 206, 206'. A second, outer, upper carrier member portion 203 is used as a rigid, second cover 210 for the unitized compartmented package 200. The top carrier member portion 203 includes similar recesses 212, 212' and an outer rim 214 which mate with the bottom carrier member portion 202.

In this embodiment, the attachment between the top and bottom carrier members 202, 203 along the carrier member outer rim portion 208 is designed to be

weaker than the attachment between the bottom carrier member 202 and the product compartment removable portions 220, 220' along lines of weakening 225, 225' such that removal of the upper carrier member 203 from the lower carrier member 202 by the user will remove the product compartment removable portions 220, 220'. The inner product compartments 230, 230' are retained in place in the lower carrier member 202 by the outwardly extending ridges 250, 250' thereof which engage corresponding grooves 252, 252'. This embodiment provides the package with a rigid top and bottom and may be desirable for certain applications such as for inordinately tall inner product compartments.

The unitized compartmented package shown in Figures 1-2 of the present invention may be easily and efficiently manufactured. The carrier member 12 may be vacuum formed from any suitable rigid, semi-rigid or flexible plastic, having transparent, translucent or opaque visual properties as desired. The package component products are placed in the product compartment hollow receptacles 14, 14' and sealed with individual first cover film 20, 20' and conveyed to an assembly station for final assembly into the carrier member 12. Each component product may be packaged at different locations or they all may be packaged at one single location. The component product compartments 14, 14' may also be formed from any suitable plastic material. The products are preferably hermetically sealed in the individual product compartments 14, 14' to reduce the possibility of any cross-contamination between the component products.

The individual product compartments 14, 14' are placed in the carrier member recesses 24, 24' and are either snapped into place or adhered to a surface of the carrier member 12 by any suitable conventional means. The cover member 18, preferably a packaging film, is then attached to the carrier member 12 and to each removable portion 32, 32' of each product compartment 14, 14'. The unitized compartmented package may therefore be assembled at locations different from that for filling and packaging of the inner product compartments 14, 14' or at the same location if desired. As a result, a vast number of products which are placed in containers at a wide variety of locations can ultimately be packaged together utilizing the unitized compartmented package of the present invention.

The production of the "boxed" packages of the present invention may also be easily and efficiently accomplished by feeding a continuous strip of the package carrier member paperboard blanks which are preprinted and prepunched to provide the desired number of product compartment openings 107, 108, 109 in the package face panel 152 thereof. Each successive package carrier member 112 is advanced to a filling station where the desired product components, each hermetically sealed in its own product

compartment 114, 114', 114" are inserted into the carrier member 112. In instances where the product compartments 114, 114', 114" contain the outwardly extending detents or ridges 170, 170' which are adapted to engage the underside of the package face panel 152, the product compartments are easily "snapped" into the openings 107, 108, 109. Alternatively, the individual product compartments 114, 114', 114" may be attached to the carrier member face panel 152 by adhesively or heat sealing the outer rims 122, 122', 122" thereof to the carrier member portions surrounding the product compartment openings.

The filled assemblies are subsequently transferred to a package sealing station where the second or outer cover film 118 is fed into a position opposite to and above the multiple product compartments 114, 114', 114" and into contact therewith. The covering film sheet 118, which may be preprinted, is then adhered to the portion of the carrier member face panel 152 and the product compartments 114, 114', 114" which surround the product compartment hollow receptacles and is bonded or otherwise suitably affixed thereto to form a second, peelable hermetic seal. The outer cover film sheet 118 may be bonded to the carrier member assembly by any conventional sealing means which will effect the desired hermetic seal such as by heat sealing, adhesive sealing or ultrasonic welding.

The continuous sheet of filled, interconnected package assemblies are then conveyed to a package separating station where individual package assemblies are separated from the continuous feed strip along transverse lines. The individual package assemblies are then subsequently conveyed to a final package forming station where the package flap panel (or panels) 156, 156' are folded along first fold lines 158, 158' of the package face panel 152 (Figure 6) to form the side or end panels of the package 100. The flap panels 156, 156' are further folded along second fold lines 160, 160' exterior of the first fold lines 158, 158' to form the bottom package panel 154. As mentioned above, the package sealing flanges 164, 164' are adhered together to complete the package.

The unitized compartmented package of the present invention solves the problem of packaging two or more component products together without contamination of one product by any of the others. In addition, the unitized compartmented package allows unlimited substitution of component products without seriously slowing production or affecting the freshness of the packaged products since all products are individually pre-packaged in interchangeable inner packages 21 prior to being put together in outer package 10. This makes product line extensions easily achievable. The unitized compartmented package also permits each component product to be packaged in a manner which is best for that product. Particular packaging features desired of the inner product compartments such as

gas flushing, barrier properties, colors, and others can be obtained since each separate component product may be packaged and sealed individually and separately from other component products in any conventional manner. Also, a double seal is provided since the outer package 10 is preferably airtight and hermetically sealed in a conventional manner.

The unitized compartmented package greatly reduces assembly-line downtimes since inventoried components merely require mechanical assembly into the final package. Thus, there is no need to bring together multi-disciplined technology under one roof to handle diverse food products in a single operation. Further, USDA and FDA approvals needed for the final assembly line can be virtually eliminated since the final assembly can handle only sealed inner food packages if desired.

Another advantage of the unitized compartmented package is that the final assembly line is easily automated since it requires only a simple mechanical assembly operation. Because of this capability and the simplicity of final assembly, final assembly lines can be installed at strategic geographic locations to reduce shipping costs. In addition to these overall cost benefits, other advantages include likely savings in economies of scale, capital costs, fixed overhead costs, utilities, sanitation and utilization yields which can be realized by packaging component products in existing plants and shipping them in bulk to final assembly locations in comparison to the setup of a dedicated facility.

It will be seen that while certain embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that changes and modifications may be made therein without departing from the true spirit and scope of the invention.

Claims

1. A compartmented package having multiple product compartments, comprising:
 - a package support component,
 - at least two inner product receptacles, each of the product receptacles having a removable receptacle cover sheet removably attached thereto,
 - means for retaining each of said at least two inner product receptacles in said package support component,
 - means for covering said at least two inner product receptacles removably attached to said package support component and substantially non-removably attached to said removable receptacle cover sheets of said at least two inner product receptacles,
 - whereby, when said covering means is

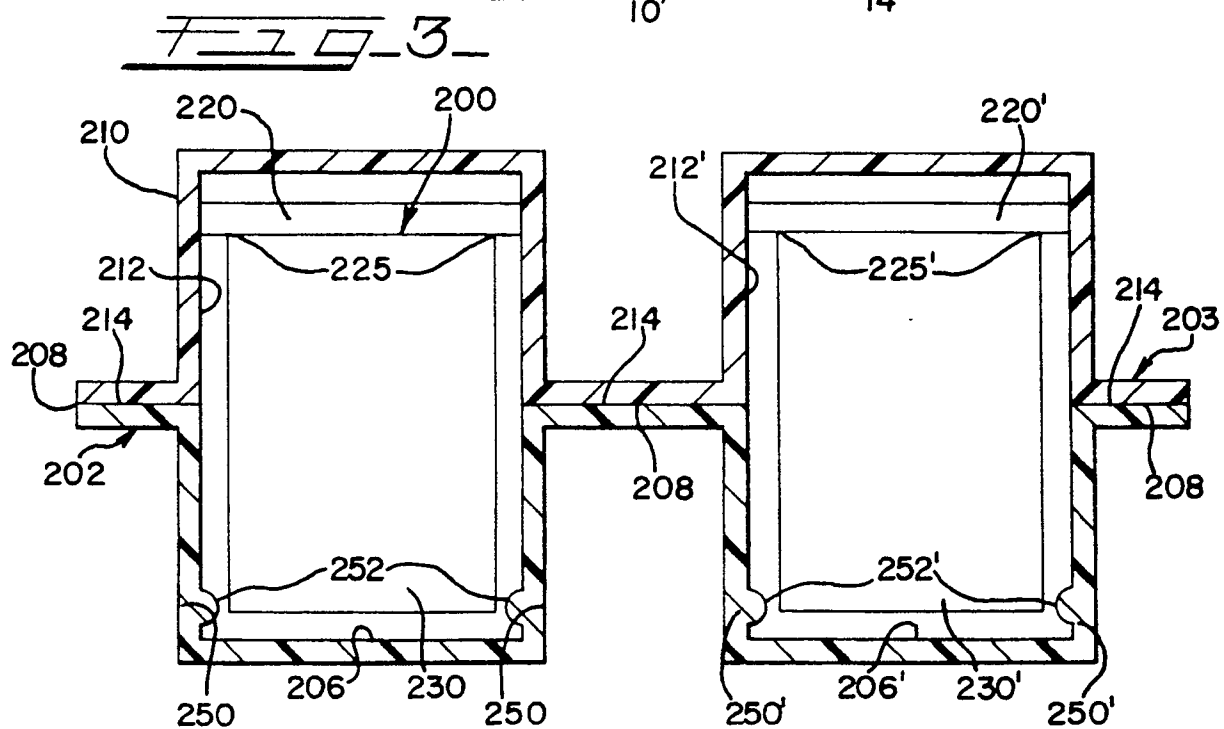
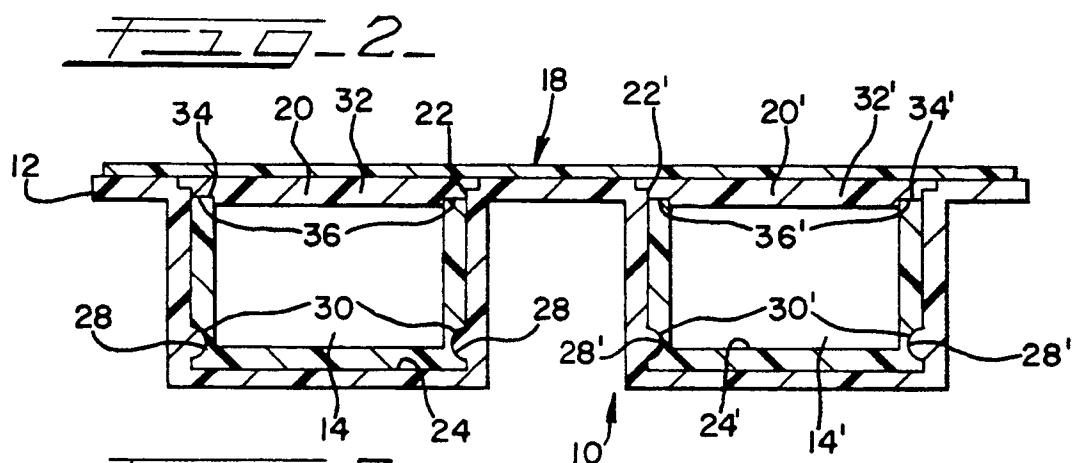
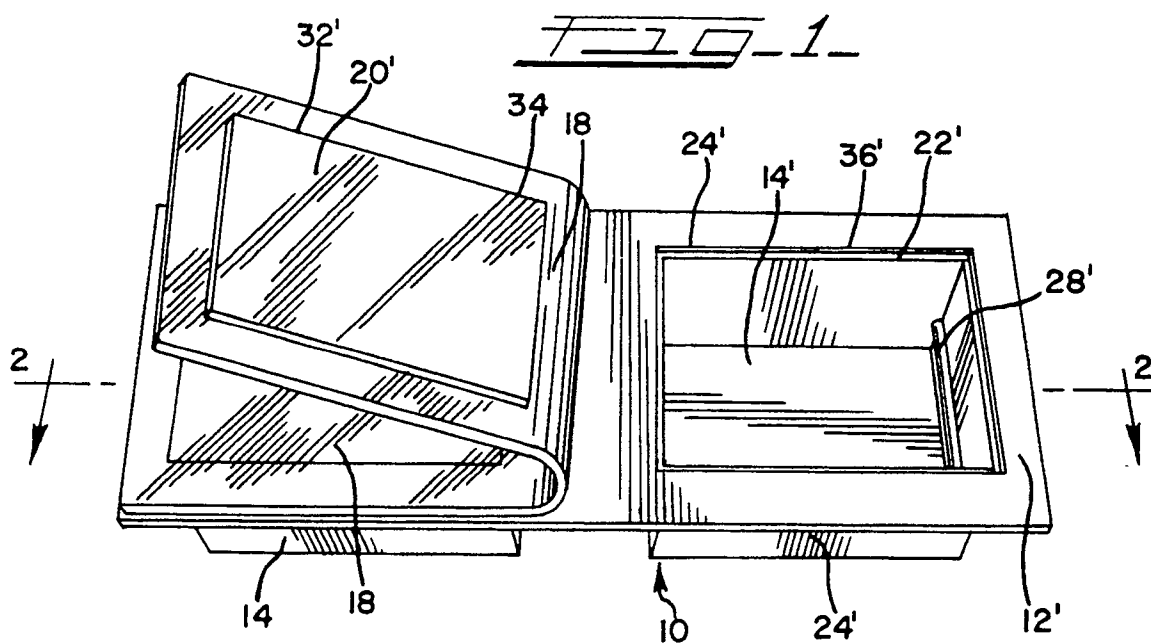
- removed from said package support component, said removable inner product receptacle cover sheets are removed from said at least two inner product receptacles without removing said at least two inner product receptacles from said package support component.
2. The package of Claim 1, wherein said package tray included three distinct inner product receptacles.
 3. The package of Claim 1, wherein said package tray includes seven distinct inner product receptacles.
 4. The package of Claim 1, wherein each of said at least two inner product receptacles included a rim extending around the perimeter thereof.
 5. The package of Claim 1, wherein each of said at least two inner product receptacles are retained in said package support component by adhesive sealing means.
 6. The package of Claim 1, wherein each of said at least two inner product receptacles are retained in said package support component by heat sealing means.
 7. The package of Claim 1, wherein each of said at least two inner product receptacles are retained in said package support component by way of detent means, the detent means including an outwardly extending portion of each of said at least two inner product receptacles which outwardly extending portions are engaged by portions of said package support component.
 8. The package of Claim 1, wherein each of said at least two inner product receptacles are retained in said package support component by way of detent means, the detent means including outwardly extending portions of said carrier member which engage portions of said at least two inner product receptacles.
 9. The package of Claim 1, wherein said package support component includes at least one package flap portion extending away therefrom, the at least two inner product receptacles being contained between the package support component and the at least one package flap portion.
 10. The package of Claim 1, wherein each of said at least two inner product receptacles includes a line of weakening extending around the periphery thereof which defines the removable receptacle cover sheets associated therewith, said line of
- weakening being in close proximity to the top of each of said at least two inner product receptacles.
11. A package in accordance with Claim 10 wherein said lines of weakening are located less than 10% of the height of said respective inner product receptacles from the top of said inner product receptacles.
 12. The package of Claim 1, wherein said cover means includes a flexible film sheet.
 13. The package of Claim 1, wherein said cover means includes a rigid film sheet.
 14. The package of Claim 1, wherein said package support component includes a rigid tray having a plurality of recesses adapted to receive said at least two inner product receptacles therein.
 15. The package of Claim 1, wherein said at least two inner product receptacles are hermetically sealed.
 16. The package of Claim 15, wherein said cover means is hermetically sealed to said package support component.
 17. The package of Claim 1, wherein said package support component includes a rigid tray, the rigid tray having a plurality of recesses adapted to receive said at least two inner product receptacles, and said retaining means includes detent means disposed on said at least two inner product receptacles said detent means interferingly engaging said rigid tray.
 18. The package of Claim 1, wherein said package support component includes three distinct inner product receptacles and each of the three inner distinct product receptacles contains a product chosen from the group consisting of meat products, dairy products, cracker products or a combination thereof.
 19. The package of Claim 1, wherein said package support component includes two package flap portions disposed on opposite sides of said package support component, said package component having been formed from a blank including two first fold lines separating said package flap portions from a package support portion.
 20. A food product package having multiple separate product compartments disposed in a package carrier member, comprising: a package carrier member and a plurality of separate product com-

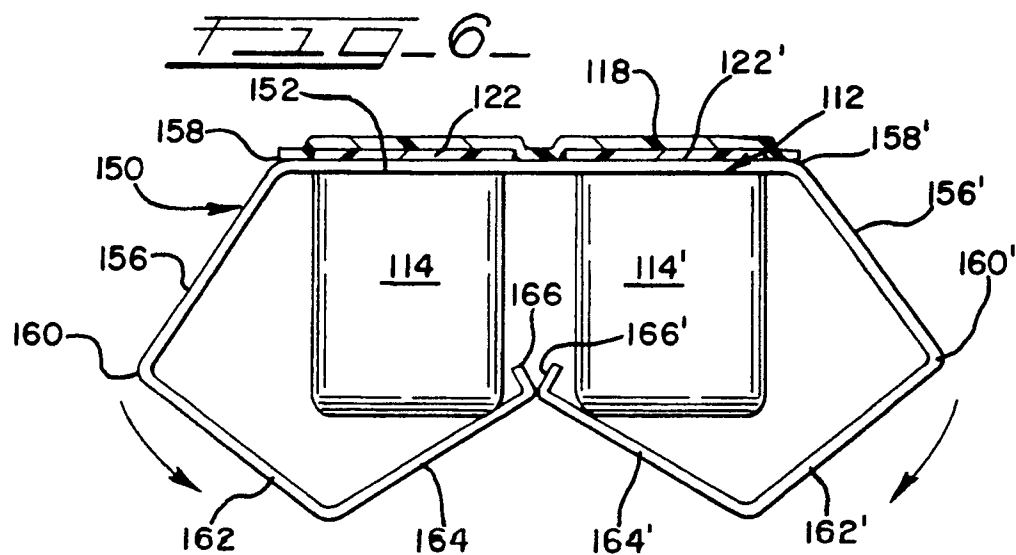
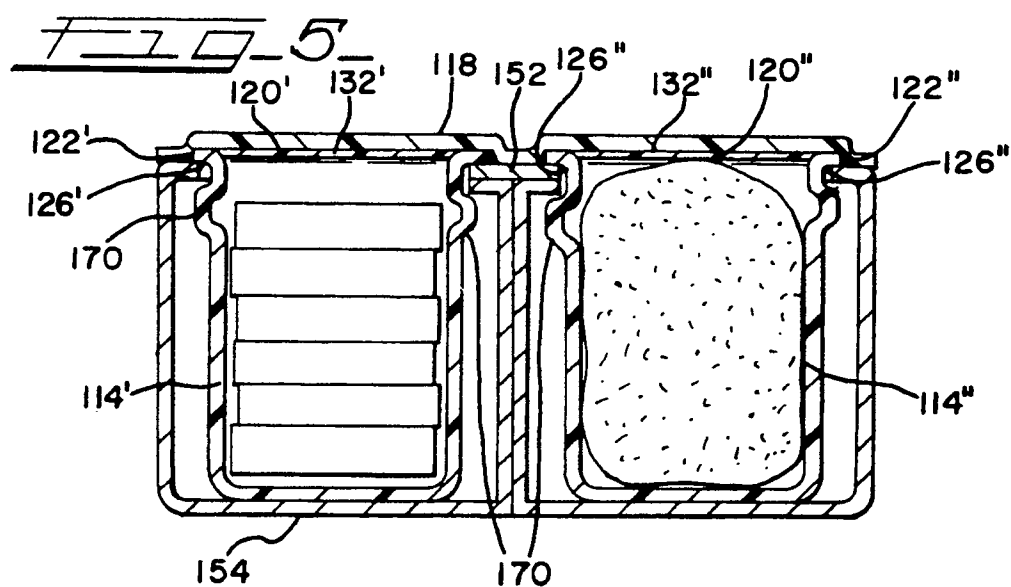
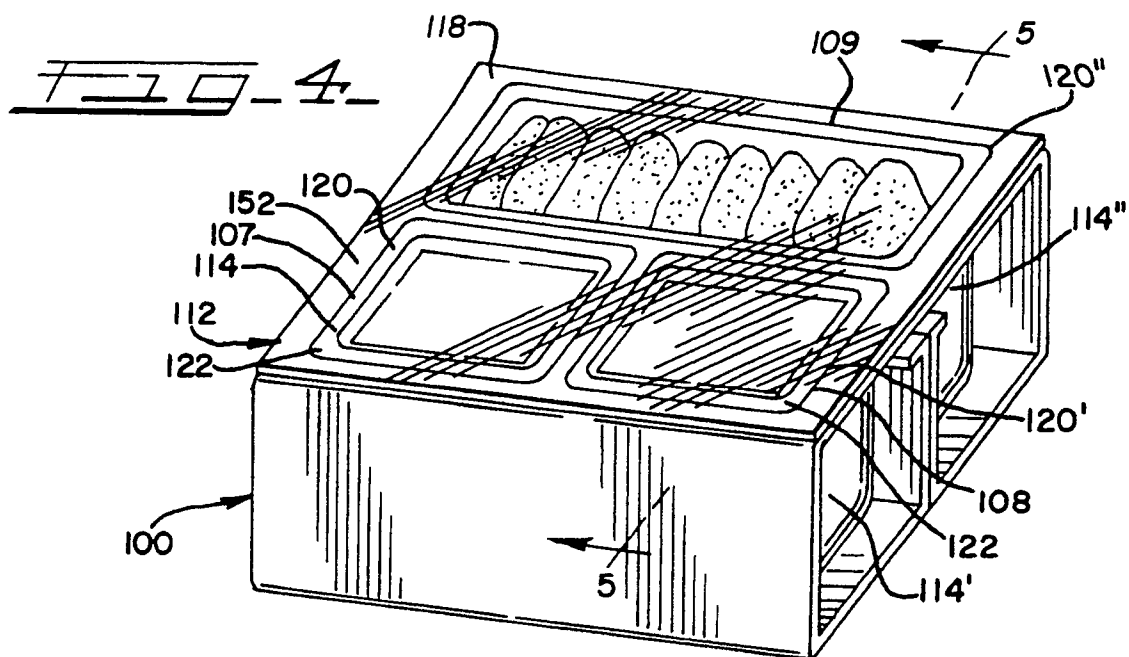
- partment members, the carrier member having a plurality of product compartment openings therein corresponding in number to the final number of product compartment members, each of the product compartment openings being adapted to receive a separate product compartment member therein, each of the separate product compartment members having an exterior rim extending around the product compartment opening associated therewith, each of said separate product compartment members further including means for retaining said product compartment member in its associated product compartment opening, each of said separate product compartment members further including a removable first cover sealing a product in each of said product compartment members, said package including a second cover sealing said plurality of separate product compartment members in said package carrier member, whereby, when said second cover is removed from said package carrier member, said removable first cover members are removed from said plurality of separate product compartment members.
21. The package of Claim 20, wherein said plurality of separate product compartment members are retained in said package carrier member by adhesive means.
22. The package of Claim 20, wherein said plurality of separate product compartment members are retained in said package carrier tray by heat sealing means.
23. The package of Claim 20, wherein said retaining means includes detent means extending outwardly from each of said plurality of product compartment members, the detent means interferingly engaging portions of said package carrier member.
24. The package of Claim 20, wherein said removable first cover members are hermetically sealed to corresponding separate product compartment members and said second cover is hermetically sealed to said package carrier tray.
25. The package of Claim 24, wherein said removable first cover member and said second cover hermetic seals are peelable.
26. The package of Claim 20, wherein said package carrier member includes two package flap members extending away from said package carrier member, the two package flap members contacting each other to enclose said plurality of separate product compartment members between said package flap members with said package carrier member.
27. The package of Claim 26, wherein said package carrier member includes a rigid tray having a plurality of recesses adapted to receive said plurality of separate product compartment members.
28. The package of Claim 26, wherein said two package flap members include first and second fold lines disposed generally parallel to each other, said first and second fold lines defining opposing package side members therebetween, said two package flap members each having a package bottom member disposed thereon exterior of said second fold lines, said plurality of separate product compartments being partially enclosed between said package support member and said package bottom members.
29. A multiple compartment package comprising a plurality of separate hollow receptacles for containing portions of products in a sealed state therein, each of the plurality of hollow receptacles having an outer flange defining the opening of said hollow receptacles each of the hollow receptacle outer flanges having a first cover sealingly attached to its associated receptacle outer flange to thereby seal the product in said hollow receptacle, said plurality of hollow receptacles being attached to a package support component, the package support component including a product carrier portion having a plurality of openings therein corresponding in number to the number of hollow receptacles held by the product carrier portion, said product carrier portion engaging each of said hollow receptacles, said product carrier portion having a pair of package end flap portions extending away from said product carrier portion, the package end flap portions adhesively engaging each other beneath said product carrier portion so as to enclose said hollow receptacles between said package carrier portion and said package end flap panels, said package further including a second cover extending over said hollow receptacles and a portion of said package carrier portion, the second cover being sealingly attached to said package carrier portion and said first covers.
30. The package of Claim 29, wherein said plurality of hollow receptacles adhesively engage said package carrier portion.
31. The package of Claim 29, wherein said plurality of hollow receptacles are retained in said package carrier portion by detent means, wherein

each of said hollow receptacles includes an outwardly extending portion which interferingly engages a portion of said package carrier portion.

32. The package of Claim 29, wherein said package carrier portion includes a rigid tray having a plurality of recesses therein adapted to engage said plurality of hollow receptacles. 5
33. The package of Claim 29, wherein said package carrier portion includes a first rigid tray having a plurality of recesses adapted to engage said plurality of hollow receptacles and said second cover includes a second rigid tray having a plurality of recesses also adapted to engage said plurality of hollow receptacle, said second rigid tray being adapted to sealingly engage said first rigid tray. 10 15
34. A multiple compartment package comprising a plurality of separate hollow receptacles for containing portions of products in a sealed state therein, each of the plurality of hollow receptacles having an rim defining the interior portion of said hollow receptacles, each of the hollow receptacle outer rime having a first cover film sealingly attached thereto to thereby seal the product portion in said hollow receptacle, said plurality of hollow receptacles being held by a package support component, the package support component including a product carrier portion having a plurality of openings therein corresponding in number to the number of hollow receptacles held by the product carrier portion, said product carrier portion having at least one package aide panel portion extending away from said package carrier portion and enclosing said plurality of hollow receptacles between said package carrier portion and said package side panel portion, said package further including a second cover sealingly covering said package carrier portion and said plurality of hollow receptacles. 20 25 30 35 40
35. A multiple compartment package comprising a plurality of separate hollow receptacles for containing portions of products in a sealed state therein, each of the plurality of hollow receptacles having a first cover film sealingly attached thereto and sealing the product portions in said hollow receptacles, the plurality of hollow receptacles being held in a package support component which includes a rigid tray, and a second cover film sealing said hollow receptacles in said package support component rigid tray. 45 50

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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number

EP 91 30 5077

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl.5)
X	FR-A-2 473 472 (P. FERRERO)	1, 4, 5, 12-15, 20, 21	B65D81/32
Y	* page 3, line 36 - page 4, line 1; claim 3; figures *	2, 7, 17, 18, 20-25	
A	---	3, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35	
Y	DE-A-1 511 973 (CEASE CENTRAL INC.)	2, 7, 17, 18, 20-25	
A	* page 4, line 23 - line 27; figure 2 * -----	1, 9, 19, 26, 27, 29, 31-35	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl.5)
			B65D
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 20 SEPTEMBER 1991	Examiner ZANGHI AMEDEO
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application I : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

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