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(54) Improved lidded container

(57) A lidded container is provided which comprises
a shaped tray (10) and a generally flat lid (11) sealed to

the tray. The lid (11) has at least one lateral extension
(12) folded downwardly in use from the lid and secured
to the tray.

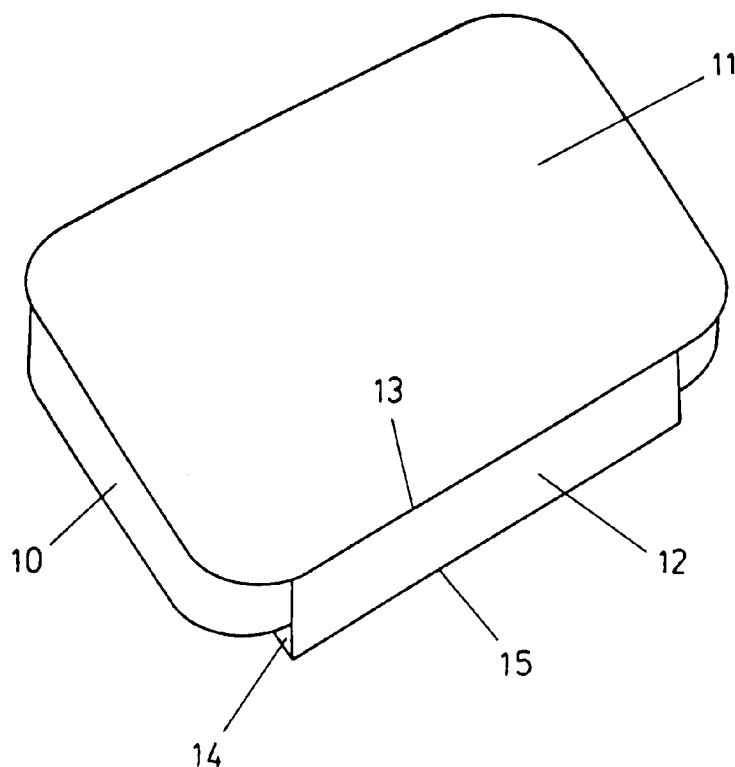


FIG. 1

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Description

The present invention is concerned with lidded containers, of the type wherein cooked or uncooked food may be provided, typically in quantities of the order of one or two servings, for heating in the container ready to be served.

Lidded containers of this type may be supplied within individual cartons, which latter usually bear comprehensive details of the contents of the container and instructions regarding preparation of the contents for serving. However such individual cartons add to the weight and cost of the food packages and consume unnecessary packaging materials and it is therefore increasingly usual for the lidded container to be sold without any additional packaging. Thus a typical lidded container of food may simply comprise a tray, shaped to contain the food, and a flat lid heat-sealed to close the tray. One particularly advantageous form of such a lidded container is described in our prior UK Patent Specification No. 2280416.

With lidded food containers of the foregoing types which are not sold packed in individual cartons, the container itself, typically of an ovenable board, usually cannot readily bear consumer information such as details of the contents and cooking requirements of the product. Such information is readily provided upon the lid itself. However the confining of such information to the lid alone may prove disadvantageous if the lidded containers are not stored and/or displayed in a manner appropriate to their design.

If lidded containers of this type are stored and/or displayed in their normal horizontal condition in a chest freezer, which of course is accessible from the top, then the potential customer can readily select the desired product by reading the lid. However if the products are similarly stacked in a cabinet freezer of the front-opening type, then the containers are visible mainly from the side and the potential customer cannot read the consumer information which is confined to the lid. Any attempt to display these lidded containers more effectively by stacking them on edge with the lids vertical and therefore visible from the front of the cabinet freezer is likely to be unsuccessful because the shaped sides of the containers do not lend themselves to such stacking.

It is an object of the present invention to reduce or eliminate this disadvantage of currently-available lidded food containers.

According to the present invention there is provided a lidded container comprising a shaped tray and a substantially flat lid sealed thereto, wherein the lid has at least one lateral extension folded downwardly in use from said lid and secured to the tray.

Two such lateral extensions of the lid may be provided if desired, for example at opposite edges of the lid or at an adjacent side and end of the lid respectively. However a single such extension, preferably from one of the longer sides of the lid, usually suffices to meet all

the requirements of the product producer, the retailer and the potential customer.

The length of the or each lateral extension, in a direction parallel to the edge of the lid, is preferably just a little less than the length of the lid in that direction, for example between 60 per cent and 90 per cent of the length of the lid.

In a direction perpendicular to its length, the dimension of the or each extension preferably exceeds the depth of the tray and typically may be of the order of twice the tray depth.

The or each lateral extension is folded downwardly from the lid, preferably so as to be approximately perpendicular to the plane of the lid, and is itself secured to the tray. In one preferred form of the invention, the or each downwardly-extending lid extension is itself folded to enable its lower edge to be secured to the tray, for example to the underside of the tray.

While the lid itself is preferably reversibly heat-sealed to the tray to allow it to be removed readily after the contents of the tray have been heated, the or each lid extension need not be reversibly sealed in this way and may remain attached to the tray after the contents have been removed.

In the design of the lidded container according to the present invention, details of the contents and their subsequent preparation, including an illustration of the prepared product, may be printed upon the lid itself in the usual manner. However some at least of that information, in particular such as to enable a potential customer readily to identify the contents of the container, may then be repeated upon at least one lid extension.

When the filled lidded container of the present invention is stored and/or displayed in a cabinet-type freezer, two particular advantages of the invention are gained. First of all, if the container is stacked horizontally in the conventional way, then the contents of the container can be determined by sight of the lid extension. However the retailer may alternatively display the product stacked vertically upon its side, in which position the lid extension forms a stable base for the product.

The invention will now be further described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, which illustrate one preferred form of the improved lidded container according to the present invention and wherein:-

Fig.1 is a perspective view of the lidded container, in sealed condition;

Fig.2 is an elevation from one end of the container of Fig.1; and

Fig.3 is a plan view of the lid before it is attached to the container.

The illustrated product comprises a tray 10, shaped from ovenable board and containing the cooked or un-

cooked food. A lid 11 is reversibly heat-sealed in position to close the tray and seal its contents. The lid 11 is formed with an extension 12 from one of its longer sides. The extension is able to fold downwardly relative to the lid 11 along a fold-line 13 and then the outer half of the extension, in the form of a flap 14, can be folded along a line 15 to enable it to be heat-sealed to the base of the tray 10.

Information regarding the contents of the lidded container is printed upon the lid itself and some of that information is repeated upon the upright part of the extension 12. Thus the contents of the lidded container can be identified by sight of the product from above or from the side.

When the contents of the lidded container are subsequently to be served, the whole container is heated as necessary to prepare the food for serving. The body of the lid 11 can be lifted away from the container to allow access to its contents but the lid may remain attached to the container by virtue of the continued attachment of the flap 14.

Claims

1. A lidded container comprising a shaped tray and a substantially flat lid sealed thereto, wherein the lid has at least one lateral extension folded downwardly in use from said lid and secured to the tray. 25
2. A container according to claim 1, comprising two such lateral extensions. 30
3. A container according to claim 2, wherein the lateral extensions are provided at opposite edges of the lid or at an adjacent side and end of the lid. 35
4. A container according to claim 1, comprising a single such extension, preferably from one of the longer sides of the lid. 40
5. A container according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the length of the or each lateral extension, in a direction parallel to the edge of the lid, is slightly less than the length of the lid in that direction, for example between 60 per cent and 90 per cent of the length of the lid. 45
6. A container according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein in a direction perpendicular to its length, the dimension of the or each extension exceeds the depth of the tray and is preferably of the order of twice the tray depth. 50
7. A container according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the or each lateral extension is folded in use downwardly from the lid so as to be substantially perpendicular to the plane of the lid, and 55

is itself secured to the tray.

8. A container according to claim 7, wherein the or each downwardly-extending lid extension is itself folded to enable its lower edge to be secured to the tray, for example to the underside of the tray. 5
9. A container according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the lid is reversibly heat-sealed to the tray to allow it to be removed readily after the contents of the tray have been heated, and the or each lid extension is not reversibly sealed in this way and remains attached to the tray after the contents have been removed. 10
10. A container according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein details of the contents and their subsequent preparation, including an illustration of the prepared product, are printed upon the lid, and at least some of that information, in particular such as to enable a potential customer readily to identify the contents of the container, is repeated upon at least one lid extension. 15

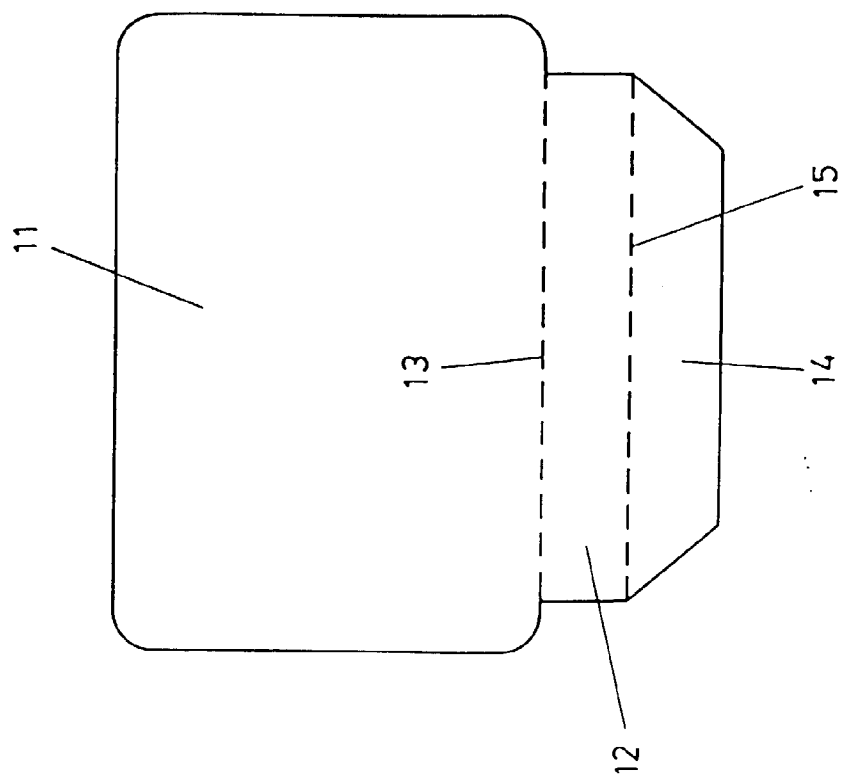


FIG. 1

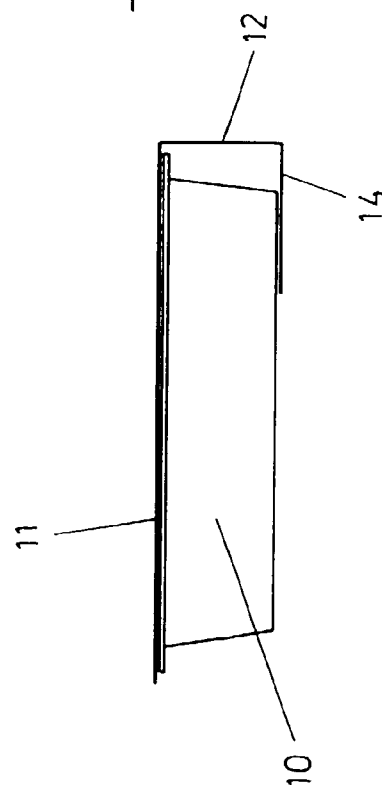


FIG. 2

FIG. 3



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 98 30 3078

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.6)
X	FR 2 078 747 A (E.S. & A. ROBINSON LTD) 5 November 1971 * page 2, line 11 - line 20 * * page 2, line 37 - page 3, line 8 * * page 4, line 1 - page 5, line 10; figures 1-4 *	1-10	B65D77/20
X	US 3 495 758 A (WIENECKE) 17 February 1970 * column 2, line 38 - column 3, line 28; figures 1-6 *	1-10	
X	GB 2 306 945 A (BENSON BOX LTD) 14 May 1997 * page 3, line 15 - line 26 * * page 5, line 10 - page 7, line 9; figure 5 *	1-10	
X	US 5 090 615 A (HOPKINS) 25 February 1992 * the whole document *	1-3,6-8	
X	US 5 421 510 A (CALVERT) 6 June 1995 * the whole document *	1-3,6-8	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.6)
X	US 4 880 112 A (CONRAD) 14 November 1989 * the whole document *	1,4,6-8	B65D
D,A	GB 2 280 416 A (PRINT DESIGN & GRAPHICS) 1 February 1995		
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 28 September 1998	Examiner Martens, L
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS 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		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 L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

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