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(54) **Implement for grasping and eating food**

Gerät zum Greifen und Verzehren von Nahrungsmitteln

Ustensile pour saisir et manger des aliments

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Description

[0001] This invention relates to an implement for eating food.

[0002] Particularly in the light of the seemingly ever-increasing expansion of fast food outlets, including take-away outlets, a need is perceived for a simple, inexpensive yet practical means by which the items of food may be consumed, i.e. by which relatively small portions of a serving of food may be selected and transferred to the mouth to be eaten. Currently available means, e.g. plastics cutlery or throw away wooden forks are far from ideal and are either relatively expensive or not very efficient for the purpose intended.

[0003] Also unsuitable are various known types of relatively large food serving implements. These include salad servers made up of a spoon and fork with the handles joined by a coupling so that they can be used in the manner of tongs or which can be de-coupled so as to be usable separately.

[0004] US Patent US-A-3596965 discloses a food handling implement comprising two separate elongate members made of plastics material coupleable together by a tongue at the end of one member being engaged in a rectangular hole in the end of the other member, these ends of the members comprising shaped thickened portions able to ride one on another in a hinge action.

[0005] Meanwhile, US patent US-A-3957298 discloses tongs made up of two spaced parallel strips of wood permanently joined by a wooden dowel at one end and usable for picking toast out of an electric toaster.

[0006] It is an object of the invention to provide an improved implement for eating food which is primarily (but not exclusively) intended to be disposable and intended for eating fast food, i.e. as a replacement for the currently used throw-away wooden or plastic forks.

[0007] According to the invention there is provided a food eating implement comprising two separate elongate members each able to flex longitudinally and coupling means for connecting the ends of the members so that they extend alongside one another and so that food can be grasped between the other ends of the members **characterised in that** said members comprise respective flat strips, and in that said coupling means comprises a hole and interconnected slot in an end region of one strip and a narrowed width portion in an end region of the other strip, for the two strips to be interengaged at said end regions with the strips extending along opposed sides of a V-shape, and the open end of the 'V' may be closed by finger pressure on the outside of the strips.

[0008] Preferably, the strips are of elongated, generally rectangular shape, ideally with rounded ends.

[0009] Advantageously, said one strip has a round hole towards one of its ends with two linear slots extending from opposite sides of the hole in the longitudinal direction of the strip for the two slots to accommodate

the width and thickness of the other strip, the narrowed width portion of the other strip being defined by two arcuate slots, one in each longitudinal edge towards one end of the strip and corresponding to the positioning of the hole for enabling the strips to be rotated relative to each other to form said V-shape.

[0010] The strips are preferably of identical external dimensions, i.e. length, width and thickness. They may be of any suitably flexible material, e.g. plastics, metal, wood or rigid card. They may, if desired, be coloured and/or carry a logo or other decoration but it may be preferred for many intended uses that they are plain, simple and inexpensive for throwaway use.

[0011] The invention enables a practical inexpensive means of providing a utensil for the eating of food which can be picked up by the tongs - or tweezer-like action of the device. It has widespread applicability, e.g. as indicated above, in takeaways and other fast food outlets and cafeteria, for picnics and buffets and the like.

[0012] The invention will now be described by way of example only with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a plan view of a first arm for use in an eating implement according to the invention;

Figure 2 is a similar view of a second arm to cooperate with the first arm, and

Figure 3 is a perspective view of the implement formed by coupling together the arms of Figures 1 and 2.

[0013] In Figure 1 a flat arm is of elongated rectangular shape with longitudinal edges 10A, 10B and rounded short ends 10C, 10D. Towards end 10D is a centrally-disposed hole 11 with linear slots 12A and 12B extending in the longitudinal direction of the arm from opposite sides of the hole 11. Slots 12A, 12B are of sufficient width to accept the thickness of arm 20 (see Figure 2) and of sufficient overall length together with the diameter of hole 11 to accept the width of arm 20.

[0014] In Figure 2 arm 20 is of similar elongated rectangular shape with longitudinal edges 20A, 20B and rounded short ends 20C, 20D. A pair of opposed hemispherical slots 21A, 21B is formed in edges 20A, 20B respectively at a position along arm 20 corresponding to the position of hole 11 in arm 10.

[0015] Arms 10 and 20 are then releasably coupled together to form a device for the consumption of food as shown in Figure 3. End 20D of arm 20 has been passed through hole 11 and slots 12A, 12B of arm 10 until edge slots 21A, 21B are received inside hole 11. The arms are then rotated through 90° relative to each other so that arm 20 is captured inside hole 11 of arm 10 and the arms face each other to form the 'V' shape shown in Figure 3. The flexibility of arms 10 and 20 allows them to be pressed towards each other so that their ends 10C

and 20C come together. Thus the tongs-like device may be held between the fingers and the thumb of one hand and the arms pressed together to pick up an item of food positioned between the arms.

[0016] The arms may be e.g. of wood, plastics material or rigid card.

Claims

1. A food eating implement comprising two separate elongate members (10, 20) each able to flex longitudinally and coupling means for connecting the ends (10D, 20D) of the members (10, 20) so that they extend alongside one another and so that food can be grasped between the other ends (10C, 20C) of the members, **characterised in that** said members comprise respective flat strips (10, 20) and **in that** said coupling means comprises a hole (11) and interconnected slot (12A, 12B) in an end region (10D) of one strip (10) and a narrowed width portion (21A, 21B) in an end region (20D) of the other strip (20), for the two strips (10, 20) to be interengaged at said end regions (10D, 20D) with the strips (10, 20) extending along opposed sides of a V-shape, and the open end of the "V" may be closed by finger pressure on the outside of the strips (10, 20).
2. An implement according to Claim 1, **characterised in that** the strips (10, 20) are of elongated generally rectangular shape.
3. An implement according to Claim 2, **characterised in that** the short sides (10C, 10D, 20C, 20D) of the rectangle are rounded.
4. An implement according to any preceding Claim, **characterised in that** said one strip (10) has a round hole (11) towards one of its ends (10D) with two slots (12A, 12B) extending from the opposite sides of said hole (11) in the longitudinal direction of the strip (10) for the two slots (12A, 12B) to accommodate the width and thickness of the other strip (20), the narrowed width portion of the other strip (20) being defined by two arcuate slots (21A, 21B), one in each longitudinal edge (20A, 20B) towards one end (20D) of the strip (20) and corresponding to the positioning of said hole (11) for enabling the strips (10, 20) to be rotated relative to each other to form said V-shape.
5. An implement according to any preceding Claim, in which the strips (10, 20) are of identical length, width and thickness.
6. An implement according to any preceding Claim, in which each strip (10, 20) is from 100 to 150 mm in length, 10 to 20 mm in width and 1 to 2 mm in thick-

ness.

7. An implement according to any preceding Claim, wherein the strips (10, 20) are made of wood or plastics material.

Patentansprüche

1. Vorrichtung zum Essen von Nahrungsmitteln, mit zwei getrennten länglichen Elementen (10, 20), die beide in Längsrichtung biegebar sind, und mit einem Verbindungselement zum Verbinden der Enden (10D, 20D) der Elemente (10, 20), so daß sie sich entlang ihrer Seiten erstrecken und so zwischen den anderen Enden (10C, 20C) der Elemente ein Nahrungsmittel erfaßt werden kann, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß** die Elemente jeweils flache Streifen (10, 20) sowie das Verbindungselement ein Loch (11) und damit verbundene Schlitz (12A, 12B) in einem Endbereich (10D) eines Streifens (10) sowie in einem Endbereich (20D) des anderen Streifens (20) einen Abschnitt (21A, 21B) mit einer verminderten Breite, aufweist, um die zwei Streifen (10, 20) in jenen Endbereichen (10D, 20D) miteinander in Eingriff zu bringen, wobei sich die Streifen (10, 20) entlang der einander gegenüberliegenden Seiten einer V-Form erstrecken und das offene Ende des "V" durch Fingerdruck auf die Außenseite der Streifen (10, 20) geschlossen werden kann.
2. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 1, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß** die Streifen (10, 20) eine längliche, im allgemeinen rechteckige Form aufweisen.
3. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 2, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß** die kurzen Seiten (10C, 10D, 20C, 20D) des Rechtecks abgerundet sind.
4. Vorrichtung nach einem der vorstehenden Ansprüche, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß** ein Streifen (10) zu einem seiner Enden (10D) hin ein rundes Loch (11) mit zwei Schlitz (12A, 12B) aufweist, die sich von den gegenüberliegenden Seiten des genannten Lochs (11) aus in Längsrichtung des Streifens (10) erstrecken und die zwei Schlitz (12A, 12B) der Breite und Dicke des anderen Streifens (20) angepaßt sind, wobei der Abschnitt des anderen Streifens mit einer verminderten Breite (20) durch zwei gekrümmte Ausnehmungen (21A, 21B) festgelegt ist, eine in jedem Längsrand (20A, 20B) zu einem Ende (20D) des Streifens (20) hin und entsprechend der Lage des genannten Lochs (11), um ein Verdrehen der Streifen (10, 20) gegeneinander zur Bildung der genannten V-Form zu ermöglichen.
5. Vorrichtung nach einem der vorstehenden Ansprü-

che, bei der die Streifen (10, 20) bezüglich ihrer Länge, Breite und Dicke identisch sind.

6. Vorrichtung nach einem der vorstehenden Ansprüche, bei der jeder Streifen (10, 20) eine Länge von 100 bis 150 mm, eine Breite von 10 bis 20 mm und eine Dicke von 1 bis 2 mm aufweist. 5
7. Vorrichtung nach einem der vorstehenden Ansprüche, worin die Streifen (10, 20) aus Holz oder einem Kunststoffmaterial hergestellt sind. 10

Revendications

1. Ustensile pour manger des aliments, comprenant deux éléments allongés séparés (10, 20), dont chacun est capable de fléchir longitudinalement, et des moyens d'accouplement pour relier les extrémités (10D, 20D) des éléments (10, 20) de telle sorte qu'ils s'étendent côte à côte et de telle sorte que des aliments puissent être saisis entre les autres extrémités (10C, 20C) des éléments, **caractérisé en ce que** lesdits éléments comprennent des baguettes plates respectives (10, 20) et **en ce que** lesdits moyens d'accouplement comprennent un trou (11) et une fente interconnectée (12A, 12B) dans une région d'extrémité (10D) d'une baguette (10) et une partie à largeur réduite (21A, 21B) dans une région d'extrémité (20D) de l'autre baguette (20), pour que les deux baguettes (10, 20) puissent venir mutuellement en prise au niveau desdites régions d'extrémité (10D, 20D), les baguettes (10, 20) s'étendant le long de côtés opposés d'une forme en V, et que l'extrémité ouverte du "V" puisse être fermée par la pression des doigts sur l'extérieur des baguettes (10, 20). 15 20 25 30 35
2. Ustensile selon la revendication 1, **caractérisé en ce que** les baguettes (10, 20) sont d'une forme allongée globalement rectangulaire. 40
3. Ustensile selon la revendication 2, **caractérisé en ce que** les petits côtés (10C, 10D, 20C, 20D) du rectangle sont arrondis. 45
4. Ustensile selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, **caractérisé en ce que** ladite première baguette (10) comporte un trou rond (11) vers l'une de ses extrémités (10D), deux fentes (12A, 12B) s'étendant à partir des côtés opposés dudit trou (11) dans la direction longitudinale de la baguette (10), pour que les deux fentes (12A, 12B) puissent recevoir la largeur et l'épaisseur de l'autre baguette (20), la partie à largeur réduite de l'autre baguette (20) étant définie par deux fentes incurvées (21A, 21B), une à chaque bord longitudinal (20A, 20B) vers une extrémité (20D) de la baguette 50 55

(20) et correspondant à l'emplacement dudit trou (11) pour permettre aux baguettes (10, 20) d'être tournées l'une par rapport à l'autre pour former ladite forme en V.

5. Ustensile selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel les baguettes (10, 20) présentent une longueur, une largeur et une épaisseur identiques.
6. Ustensile selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel chaque baguette (10, 20) mesure de 100 à 150 mm de long, de 10 à 20 mm de large et de 1 à 2 mm d'épaisseur.
7. Ustensile selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel les baguettes (10, 20) sont faites dans un matériau en bois ou en plastique.

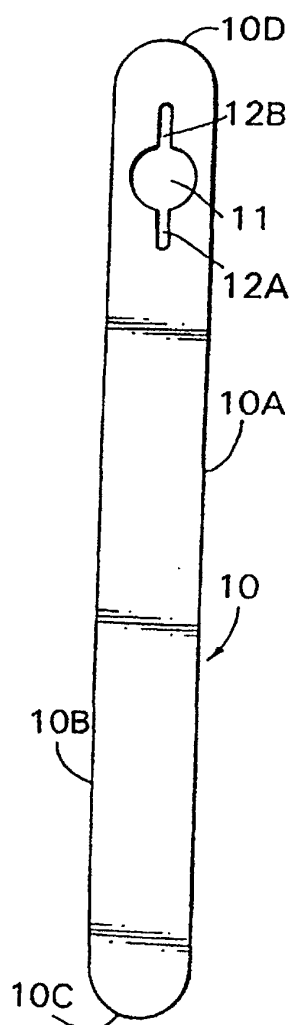


FIG. 1

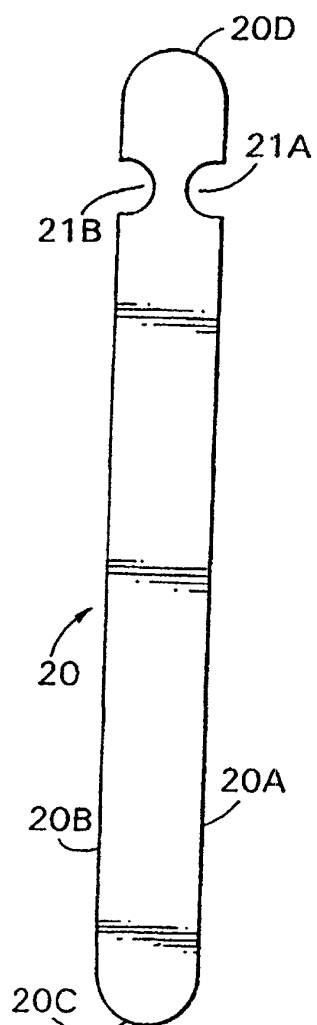


FIG. 2

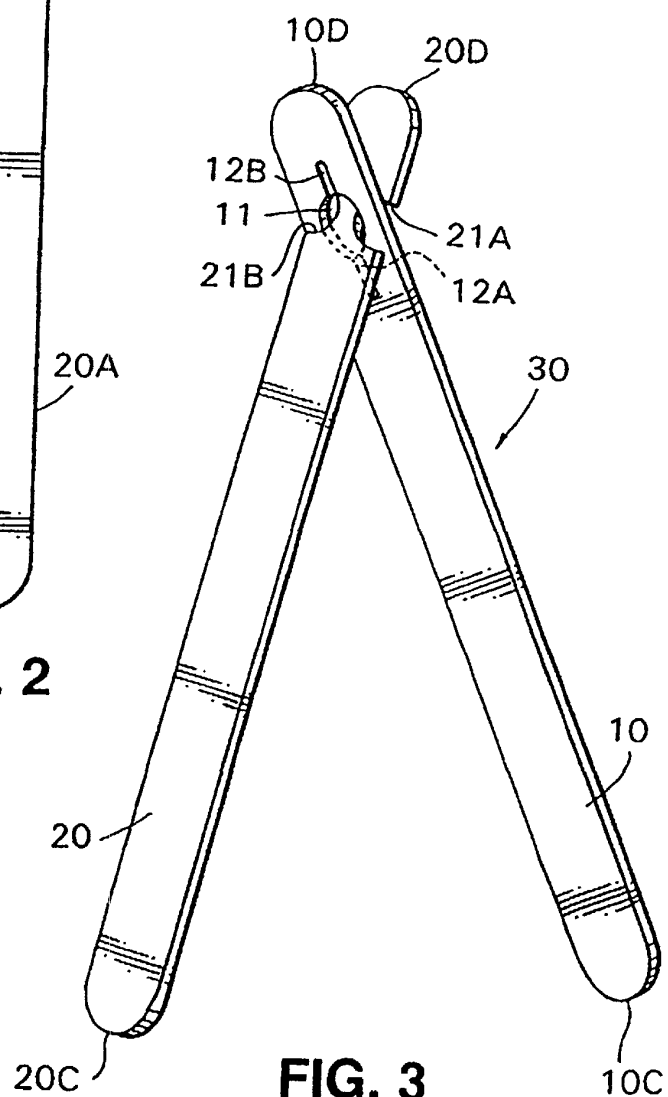


FIG. 3