(19) Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets

(11) EP 1 325 869 A2

(12) EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:
09.07.2003 Bulletin 2003/28

(51) Int Cl.[7]: **B65D 1/30**, B65D 81/34

(21) Application number: **03000007.9**

(22) Date of filing: **02.01.2003**

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB GR HU IE IT LI LU MC NL PT SE SI SK TR
Designated Extension States:
AL LT LV MK RO

(30) Priority: **04.01.2002 US 345804 P**

(71) Applicant: **THE PILLSBURY COMPANY**
Minneapolis, MN 55402-1464 (US)

(72) Inventors:
- **Stephens, Cheryl Ann**
  Minnesota 55025 (US)
- **Reil, Steven Lawrence**
  Minnesota 55449 (US)
- **Strange, Robert Alexander**
  Minnesota 55304 (US)
- **Johnson, Mitchel Emanuel**
  Minnesota 55435 (US)

(74) Representative: **VOSSIUS & PARTNER**
Siebertstrasse 4
81675 München (DE)

(54) Tray for sauces, products containing same and methods

(57) A multiple portion sauce tray (10) formed from a rigid foam material is provided. The sauce is located in a plurality of receptacles (12) for holding individual portions of sauce. The receptacles (12) of the tray (10) do not separate when the tray is processed by automated packaging equipment, but may be readily separated by the consumer at time of use. The tray (10) is particularly useful in a combination product, wherein sauces are provided with comestible articles for dipping therein. Methods for manufacture of the sauce tray (10) and the combination product, as well as uses of the tray (10) and the combination product are provided.

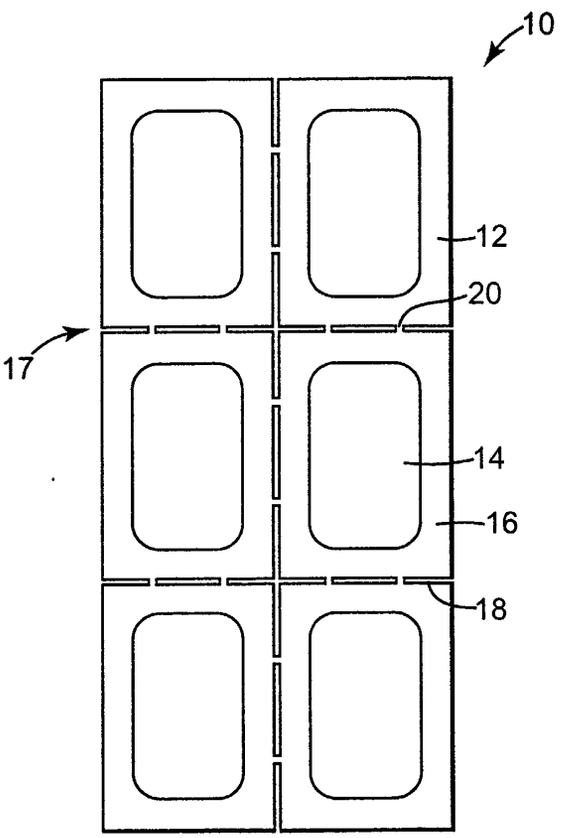

Fig. 1

EP 1 325 869 A2

Description

[0001] The present invention is related to a tray for sauces. More specifically, the present invention is related to a tray for holding a plurality of servings of sauces, products containing this tray and methods of use of this tray.

[0002] Delivery of food to consumers in convenient portions has long been a challenge. In the case of sauces and other food materials that accompany comestible articles, individual portions have long been prepared. US Patent No. 1,168,731 discloses a jelly container formed in the shape of a tray, having a number of individual receptacles in which the jellies are deposited and sealed. The base plate is provided with indentations or perforations that provide for easy separation of the receptacles. The tray is formed of a fibrous or analogous material, suitably impregnated so as to render it fit for the storage of jellies.

[0003] A compartmented container unit is disclosed in US Patent No. 3,520,439, which is formed from a self-supporting but frangible material and comprises a plurality of containers. At least one separation cut is formed between adjacent containers. The container unit may be formed from a plastics material, and advantageously may be moulded from expanded polystyrene. The container unit as shown in this patent has long cuts 6 formed in the container, with the compartments being interconnected by small portions 7 of material. The compartments are releasably secured to one another by means of a pair of lengths of contact adhesive coated tape 8 adhered about the upper peripheral edge portions of the side walls.

[0004] A food product container is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,786,011, which comprises a central section, peripheral sections and individual cavities to contain small portions of food product. Each cavity of the body overlaps the central section and one of the peripheral sections which are linked via a weakening line permitting detachment of the two sections. The detachment allows for the removal of the food item from the cavity. The line of weakening thus divides the cavity itself, and is not a separation of the cavities that allows for separation of the food items from the multi-portion container without opening the cavity.

[0005] The present invention provides a multiple portion tray comprising a plurality of receptacles for holding individual servings of sauce. The tray has lines of weakness between the receptacles so that the receptacles do not separate from one another under tensile forces that generally correspond to the amount of force normally imparted to a tray when being conveyed by conventional automated packaging equipment, but which receptacles do separate under tensile force such that the consumer can readily separate the receptacles one from another by using only tensile force. The tray is formed from a rigid foam material. A preferred embodiment of the tray of the present invention has receptacles being connected in the tray by land areas having a width of 1-3 mm and a gap area having a width of 15-30 mm between each land area.

[0006] Sauce-filled trays and combination products containing the tray and comestible article are also provided. Additionally, methods of making the sauce-filled trays, combination products, and methods of using the combination products are also provided.

[0007] The invention will be described in detail in connection with the drawings.

Fig. 1 is a plan view of a tray embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a side view of the embodiment of the invention as shown in fig. 1.

Fig. 3 is a perspective view of the embodiment of the invention as shown in fig. 1.

Fig. 4 is a perspective view of the embodiment of the invention as shown in fig. 1, with individual cover sheets applied thereto.

Fig. 5 is a perspective view of the embodiment of the invention as shown in fig. 1, with a full cover sheet applied thereto.

Fig. 6 is a plan view of an alternative tray embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 7 is a plan view of an alternative tray embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 8 is a plan view of an alternative tray embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 9 is a plan view of an alternative tray embodiment of the present invention.

[0008] The tray of the present invention provides substantial benefits to both the manufacturer and the consumer of prepackaged food products. Specifically, the present invention enables a low cost system for packaging sauces in individual portions, whereby such portions may be handled in a bulk manner, yet where the portions are easily available for individual service. From the manufacturing perspective, the tray of the present invention provides easy processability, because multiple individual portions may be handled as a unitary article. Because the tray of the present invention holds together when exposed to certain incidental forces that would tend to separate the receptacles, the tray may be handled by automated processing equipment and conveyed to appropriate destinations for packaging insertion. Further, a unitary tray comprising a plurality of individual portions provides easier handling of the sauce, because a larger tray tends to be easier to mechanically manipulate than smaller individual portions. This reduces the possibility of damage of individual portions in the automated processing and conveying equipment. An added benefit of the unitary tray is the immobilization of individual sauce portions in the package of the combination product comprising sauce portions and comestible articles in the product packaging. Because individual receptacles containing sauce are connected to each

other, there is less shifting in the product packaging of items contained therein. The reduction in shifting provides a more consistent product appearance upon opening of the package by consumers, and reduction of product damage (to either the sauce portions or the comestible articles) caused by shifting or instability of items within the combination product package. The unitary aspect of the tray provides significant quality control capabilities of the overall product.

[0009] The present invention also provides convenience to the consumer, because it is now possible to provide a unitary package comprising both the comestible articles together with a suitable sauce for the comestible article together in a single package location. Because the individual receptacles for holding the sauces are attached to each other, there is less opportunity for sauce receptacles to go missing in the home freezer or other storage location. Additionally, the combination product of the present invention enhances the ability to link any particular sauce with a particular comestible article, thereby providing a unitary and unique product identification. Specifically, the flavor of the sauce may be uniquely matched with the comestible article to provide maximum flavor impact. The present system allows for unique product combinations to be made, and additionally simplifies the matching of the comestible article with the sauce. This is of particular benefit for "do-it-yourself" serving for individuals having difficulty in otherwise preparing such products. For example, the present invention is a particular benefit for do-it-yourself serving by children. Thus, children find it very gratifying and pleasing to be able to go to a single package to obtain their own food product and assemble this product for consumption by themselves. Further, children seem to be naturally drawn to food products wherein a food article is dipped into an accompanying sauce. The tray of the present invention simplifies this process for children. Because the tray of the present invention is made from a rigid foam material, it is easier to safely handle the sauce-containing receptacle (sometimes referred to as a "dipping cup") after heating the sauce in a microwave. Likewise, the present tray and combination product provides benefit for certain of the elderly or other people for whom matching of food components can be challenging, or who find such a combination to be highly convenient.

[0010] The tray of the present invention particularly finds benefit in the embodiment where the product is stored in the freezer and heated in the microwave. The freezer to oven food preparation embodiment is an extremely convenient and safe product presentation. Because the tray of the present invention is made from a rigid foam material, the tray is both stable to wide temperature ranges, and also provides an insulating effect that is beneficial to the handler of the sauce. In particular, the insulating properties of the rigid foam material tend to protect the consumer from discomfort during handling of the sauce receptacle when frozen. The same insulating properties tend to protect the consumer when the sauce receptacle is withdrawn from the microwave oven after heating, because the hot temperature of the sauce is insulated from the hand of the user by the rigid foam.

[0011] Referring now to the drawings, wherein like numerals designate like parts, Figs. 1-3 show an embodiment of the present invention wherein tray 10 is provided with a plurality of individual receptacles 12 for holding individual portions of sauce. As shown, each receptacle 12 has a recess 14 and a rim 16 at the perimeter of recess 14. Preferably, recess 14 is of a size sufficient to accommodate from about 10 to about 50 ml, and more preferably from about 20 to about 40 ml of sauce. Each tray may comprise any number of receptacles as is determined to be suitable for packaging together with a predetermined number of comestible articles together in a unitary package. The ultimate customer is thereby conveniently provided with a multiple serving supply of comestible articles, with the ability to serve only the number of articles desired to be consumed at that time, together with the accompanying portions of sauce. For example, each tray may comprise 2, 4, 6, 8, 9 or 10 receptacles of sauce, and more preferably 6 -10 receptacles of sauce. Preferably, the tray comprises a symmetrical array of receptacles.

[0012] Rim 16 may be in the form of a small lip or alternatively may be a broad flange. Preferably, rim 16 has a width of about 1 to about 10 mm. Recess 14 accommodates individual sauce portions as further described below. Recesses are imparted to the tray, corresponding to the locations where portions of sauce are deposited. Recesses are preferably formed by a vacuum and heat process, as is well known in the foam sheet processing art.

[0013] As noted above, tray 10 is formed from a rigid foam material. For purposes of the present invention, a rigid foam material is any synthetic resin that has been converted into a rigid, polymeric matrix with a closed-cell or open-cell structure, and is sufficiently rigid to substantially hold its shape when filled with a sauce product under both frozen (-10 ° F.) and hot product temperature (225 ° F.) conditions. Tray 10 may be formed from a single rigid foam material, or a laminated construction. The laminated construction may optionally comprise a foam material, together with a rigidity augmenting scrim or with polymeric film layer. The rigid foam material preferably is a closed cell foam configured to reduce or preclude migration of the sauce into the rigid foam material. In an alternative embodiment, the foam is an open cell foam, preferably further comprising a sealing layer located between the foam material and the sauce to prevent migration of the sauce into the foam material. The sealing layer may be any suitable material for providing sealing functionality, such as an impervious polymeric film that is appropriate for contact with food. Most preferably, the foam tray material to be used in present invention has a density such that a 20 mil formable web

has a density from about 250 to about 320 grams/1000 square inches, and more preferably has a density from about 270 to about 300 grams/1000 square inches.

[0014] Tray 10 is preferably safely microwaveable with food and freezable without becoming excessively brittle. A preferred evaluation of the microwave ability of the tray is carried out by heating a sauce product in the tray in a microwave oven, and caramelizing the sauce product to the degree that the sauce product is no longer edible. If the tray does not substantially deform, and otherwise retains its structural integrity, it is considered to be microwavable by this evaluation. A preferred evaluation of the brittleness of the tray upon freezing is carried out by freezing a sauce product in a tray to a temperature of -10°F., and dropping the frozen product from a height from all the three feet. If the tray does not visibly crack, it is deemed to be to pass this brittleness evaluation. Particularly preferred rigid foam materials include cross-linked polypropylene, such as TiroFreeze, a foamed polypropylene sheet for frozen food packaging from TiroPak Convenience Food Systems, Bakel, the Netherlands. Examples of appropriate materials from which trays may be formed are disclosed, for example in US. Patent Nos. 6,063,504 and 6,132,539, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference. A particularly preferred foam material is made from crystalline polyethylene terephthalate ("CPET"). Preferably, the tray has a low coefficient of thermal transfer, so that when the sauce is heated to a temperature for consumption, such as 180 ° F., the tray containing the sauce will not be uncomfortable to hold in the palm of the hand for time of at least 30 seconds. Preferably, tray 10 has a nominal thickness of about 0.2 to about 3.0 mm, and more preferably a thickness of about 0.5 to about 1.0 mm. Preferably, the foam material of the tray is provided in sheet form, with the contour of the receptacles imparted by a heat and vacuum mold process as is conventional in the art.

[0015] Line of weakness 17 provides a unitary tray that separates easily when desired by the consumer for individual use. Thus, the tray of the present invention comprises lines of weakness between receptacles such that the consumer can readily separate the receptacles one from another by using only tensile force, without the need for separate manipulations such as removal of adhesive tape, flexing the package to further weaken the connection between the receptacles or other such inconvenient steps. As noted above, the line of weakness holds the receptacles together as a unitary tray until separation is desired. Thus the receptacles do not separate from each other under tensile forces that generally correspond to the amount of force normally imparted to a tray when being conveyed by conventional automated packaging equipment. Preferably, the receptacles do not separate under the forces encountered when dropping a tray of sauce from a height of three feet.

[0016] The line of weakness 17 may be any appropriate feature providing an ability to separate receptacles one from another when desired by the consumer. Examples of preferred lines of weakness include, but are not limited to, scoring, lines of perforation and temporary fasteners such as staples. Line of weakness 17 preferably is a line of perforation comprising a series of land areas 20 and gap areas 18. In the case there the line of weakness is a perforation, the gap areas may be provided by a knife cut, or may be imparted by heat or laser or other suitable step to provide the gap area. Alternatively, the line of weakness may be provided during the molding process of the tray through injection molding. Most preferably, the receptacles of the present tray are joined together only by the material of the tray, and not with a separate attachment material such as adhesive tape. The addition of such other attachment materials complicates the process of assembling trays of the present invention, and adds undesirable material expense. Preferably, the line of weakness 17 comprises land areas 20 and gap areas 18 in a ratio of about 1:30 to about 1:5, and more preferably in a ratio of about 1: 20 to about 1:10.

[0017] In a particularly preferred embodiment, the land areas are arranged as a bridge between receptacles having a width of about 1-2 mm, with a gap having a width of about 15-25 mm between each land area. This arrangement of land areas with broad gap areas provides an aesthetically pleasing orientation of receptacles in a tray arrangement. Additionally, this arrangement of land areas and gap areas provides secure connection of the receptacles, with an appropriate separability of the receptacles by the consumer. Preferably, the bridge or land area is made from the same material that the receptacles are made from. The manufacture of such trays without the use of additional attachment materials, such as adhesive tape, simplifies the manufacturing process and eliminates time and expense of qualifying the use of yet another material in the process. Additionally, the perceived quality of the resulting tray product is very high due to the clean and uncluttered appearance of the preferred tray of the present invention. A most preferred tray arrangement comprises rectangular receptacles having a length of about 30 to about 60 mm, a width of about 30 to about 60 mm, and are provided with 2-4, and more preferably two or three, land areas per adjoining receptacle lengths in a tray and 2-4, and more preferably two or three, land areas per adjoining receptacle widths in a tray. One particularly preferred embodiment of a rectangular receptacle is a square shaped receptacle.

[0018] Fig. 4 is a perspective view of the embodiment of the invention as shown in fig. 1, with individual cover sheets 22 applied thereto in a manner to hermetically seal sauce portions (not shown) within recesses 14. When the sauce is provided in the receptacle, a cover sheet is affixed over the recess of the receptacle to hermetically seal the sauce therein. The cover sheet is preferably applied to the tray such that even after separation of the receptacles at the line of weakness, each individ-

ual receptacle remains hermetically sealed until the cover sheet is removed by the consumer. The cover sheet may be affixed by any appropriate technique, including but not limited to adhesive bonding, sonic welding, or preferably by heat sealing. U.S. Patent Nos. 4,700,531; 3,783,089; and 6,042,862 (the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference) disclose systems of sealing containers that may be suitable for affixing cover sheets to receptacles. The cover sheet may be a continuous sheet provided with separation lines corresponding to lines of weakness in the tray, or may be separate sheets, one for each receptacle. The cover sheet may be any appropriate material for sealing the sauce in a receptacle, including but not limited to a polymeric film, a multi-layer film, a metal foil, laminated foil, and the like. Preferably the cover sheet is made from a material suitable for placing in a microwave oven. The cover sheet may be transparent, translucent or opaque, and optionally may be provided with indicia thereon.

[0019] Individual cover sheet 22 may optionally be provided with tab 24, to enable easy grasp of the cover sheet for removal by the consumer.

[0020] Fig. 5 is a perspective view of the embodiment of the invention as shown in fig. 1, with full cover sheet 26 applied thereto. As with the individual cover sheets, full cover sheet 26 is applied to hermetically seal sauce portions (not shown) within recesses 14. Full cover sheet 26 is provided with separation lines 28 generally corresponding with lines of weakness 17 in tray 10, so that upon separation of receptacles 12 one from another, full cover sheet 26 is also separated such that individual portions of sauce remain hermetically sealed within each individual receptacle 12.

[0021] While rectangular-shaped receptacles are preferred, receptacles having alternative shapes are contemplated. Thus, Fig 6 is a perspective view of an embodiment of the invention that is tray 60, comprising triangular shaped receptacles 62 having recesses 64 therein. Receptacles 62 are connected by land areas 68 having gap area 66 located therebetween. Similarly, Fig. 7 is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the invention, which is tray 70. The overall shape of tray 70 is in the shape of a circle, with pie-shaped receptacles 72 comprising recesses 74 therein. Pie-shaped receptacles 72 are attached to each other by land areas 78, having gap areas 76 located therebetween. Fig. 8 shows a different embodiment of the present invention, comprising tray 80, comprising interconnected circular receptacles 82 with recesses 84 therein. Circular receptacles 82 are connected by land areas 88. Fig. 9 shows yet a different embodiment of the present invention, which is tray 90 comprising octagonal-shaped receptacles 92 having recesses 94 therein. Octagonal-shaped receptacles 92 are attached by land areas 98 to each other, having gap areas 26 therebetween. Alternative shapes of receptacles are additionally contemplated, such as curved, irregular shapes or combinations of shapes in a single tray.

[0022] The tray of the present invention is designed for accommodating sauces to compliment comestible articles. Most preferably, the tray receptacle is provided with a geometry that accommodates dipping of the comestible article in the sauce contained therein. For purposes of the present invention a "sauce" is any liquid or semi-solid food item that may be dipped or spread onto a comestible article at the desired combination temperature for consumption by the consumer. The combination temperature is the temperature at which the sauce and the comestible article are combined by dipping or spreading. The combination temperature preferably is about the same temperature that the items are to be eaten, but may be at a lower temperature with subsequent heating for consumption, or may be at a higher temperature for ease of combination, with subsequent cooling before consumption. The sauce may be any sauce suitable for consumption together with a comestible article, and preferably comprises a distinctive flavor to augment the sensory enjoyment of the comestible article. Examples of suitable sauces include sweet sauces, such as fruit flavored sauces in the form of syrups, jams or jellies. A particularly preferred sauce is the syrups conventionally used with breakfast foods, such as maple syrup. Additional preferred sauces are the sweet and sour sauces and honey sauces. Another preferred category of sauces is the savory sauces, such as those comprising cheese, meat, gravy and barbecue flavors. Vegetable-based sauces, particularly the tomato based sauces, such as spaghetti/pizza sauce and ketchup are particularly preferred. Sauces predominant in a seasoning flavor, such as mustard sauce, are highly desired. Additional sauces, such as tartar sauce and butter sauces, find particular advantage in the present invention. Most preferably, the sauce used in the product of the present invention is particularly suited for eating at elevated temperature, i.e. at a temperature between about 120-200 ° F. Optionally, the sauce may comprise a combination of one or more of the above selections.

[0023] The comestible articles to be used in combination products of the present invention may be any appropriate food product that is desirable to be eaten in conjunction with a dipping sauce. Most preferably, the comestible articles are those that may conveniently be stored in a frozen format. Examples of such comestible products include bread products such as breadsticks; batter products such as pancakes, muffins or waffles; potato products, such as hash browns in any form or French fries; cheese products, such as optionally breaded cheese sticks; meat products, such as chicken nuggets or like meat products; seafood products such as shrimp or fish sticks; vegetable products, such as sliced zucchini; combinations of the above, such as cheese and vegetable blends, for example jalapeno poppers, and the like. The comestible articles may optionally be provided with an outer coating, such as a breading, as desired.

[0024] The comestible article may be provided in any

shape as suitable for the particular product. For example, meat nuggets are conventionally provided in random geometries generally having a length of about three to six centimeters, a width of about 2 to 4 centimeters and a thickness of about 1 to 2 1/2 cm. Elongated comestible articles are particularly contemplated, preferably having a length of about 5 to 15 centimeters, a width of about 0.5 to 3 centimeters and a thickness of about 0.5 to 3 cm.

[0025] Preferably the amount of sauce in each individual portion is sufficient for providing sauce for a recommended individual serving of the comestible article. For example, if a recommended individual serving of comestible articles is deemed to be 5 to 8 articles, the amount of sauce in each portion is sufficient for satisfactorily dipping 5 to 8 comestible articles in the sauce. Preferably, each portion comprises from 1 to 3 ounces of sauce.

[0026] Product packages of the present invention comprise at least two recommended individual servings of the comestible articles, together with their corresponding sauce portions. Preferably, product packages of the present invention comprise at least four recommended individual servings, and more preferably at least six recommended individual servings.

[0027] Combination products of the present invention are preferably assembled using automated packaging equipment.

[0028] Most preferably, the combination product is stored in the frozen state, i.e. at a temperature below about 32 ° F. Optionally, the sauce trays are conveyed for packaging in the frozen state.

[0029] Most preferably, the combination product comprises foods suitable for microwave heating.

[0030] It will be understood that the above described embodiments are provided for the purpose of illustration only, and that changes and modifications may be made thereto without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

Claims

1. A multiple portion tray comprising a plurality of receptacles for holding individual portions of sauce, said tray comprising lines of weakness between the receptacles so that the receptacles do not separate from one another under tensile forces that generally correspond to the amount of force normally imparted to a tray when being conveyed by conventional automated packaging equipment, but which receptacles do separate under tensile force such that the consumer can readily separate the receptacles one from another by using only tensile force; said tray being formed from a rigid foam material.

2. The tray of claim 1, wherein said line of weakness is a perforation line.

3. The tray of claim 1, wherein said line of weakness comprises land areas and gap areas, wherein the ratio of land area to gap area is from 1:30 to 1:5.

4. The tray of any of claims 1 to 3, wherein said rigid foam material is foamed polymeric matrix having a closed cell structure.

5. The tray of any of claims 1 to 3, wherein said rigid foam material is a foamed polypropylene polymeric matrix.

6. The tray of any of claims 1 to 5, wherein said rigid foam material is a laminated construction comprising a foam polymer matrix and an impervious film layer.

7. The tray of any of claims 1 to 6, wherein said tray has a thickness of about 0.2 to about 3.0 mm.

8. A multiple portion tray comprising a plurality of receptacles for holding individual portions of sauce, said receptacles being connected in said tray by land areas having a width of about 1 to about 3 mm and a gap area having a width of about 15 to about 30 mm between each land area; said tray being formed from a rigid foam material.

9. The multiple portion tray of claim 8, wherein said receptacles are rectangular in shape and have a length of about 30 to about 60 mm, a width of about 30 to about 60 mm, and are provided with 2-4 land areas per adjoining receptacle lengths in a tray and 2-4 land areas per adjoining receptacle widths in a tray.

10. The multiple portion tray of claim 8 or 9, said tray being a symmetrical array of 2,4,6,8,9 or 10 receptacles in the tray.

11. The multiple portion tray of any of claims 8 to 10, said tray comprising from 6 to 10 receptacles in the tray.

12. A multiple portion microwavable dipping sauce tray comprising

    a) a tray of any of claims 1 to 7;
    b) sauce disposed within said receptacles suitable for microwave heating
    c) a cover sheet hermetically sealed over said receptacles, thereby ceiling in

    said sauce within said receptacles.

13. The multiple portion microwavable dipping sauce tray of claim 12, wherein
    said cover sheet is a polymeric film.

14. The multiple portion microwavable dipping sauce tray of claim 12 or 13, wherein said cover sheet is heat sealed to said receptacles.

15. The multiple portion microwavable dipping sauce tray of any of claims 12 to 14, wherein said cover sheet is an individual sheet for each receptacle.

16. The multiple portion microwavable dipping sauce tray of any of claims 12 to 15, wherein said cover sheet is a full sheet covering the entire tray, with separation lines corresponding to the lines of weakness so that upon separation of the receptacles from the tray, the cover sheet is also separated and the sauce remains sealed within the receptacle.

17. The multiple portion microwavable dipping sauce tray of any of claims 12 to 16, wherein said tray comprises about 10 to about 50 ml of sauce in each receptacle.

18. The multiple portion microwavable dipping sauce tray of any of claims 12 to 17, wherein said tray comprises about 20 to about 40 ml of sauce in each receptacle.

19. A method for providing multiple portions of a sauce suitable for microwave heating, comprising

a) providing a tray of any of claims 1 to 7;
b) depositing a sauce suitable for microwave heating within a plurality of said receptacles;
c) providing a cover over said receptacles having sauce deposited therein, thereby sealing said sauce within said receptacles;
d) inserting said tray in a package by a mechanical package device.

20. A method for providing a multiple portion frozen food product suitable for microwave heating, comprising

a) providing a sauce tray of any of claims 12 to 18;

a. providing a plurality of comestible articles suitable for dipping in the sauce of step a above;
b. inserting said sauce tray and said comestible articles in a package by a mechanical package device;
c. holding said package at a temperature to maintain the sauce and the comestible articles in a frozen state.

21. A frozen food product comprising

a) the multiple portion microwavable dipping sauce tray of any of claims 12 to 18; and

a. a plurality of comestible articles suitable for dipping in the sauce of step a above;

said sauce tray and said comestible articles being contained within a single package in a frozen state.

22. A method of preparing a frozen food product of claim 21 for consumption comprising:

a) providing the frozen food product of claim 21;
b) selecting a quantity of comestible articles from the package;
c) selecting a quantity of portions of microwavable dipping sauce suitable for the quantity of comestible articles selected in step the above;
d) separating the selected quantity of portions of the sauce from the tray;
e) microwaving the quantity of portions of dipping sauce to a selected temperature; and
f) microwaving the quantity of comestible articles to a selected temperature.

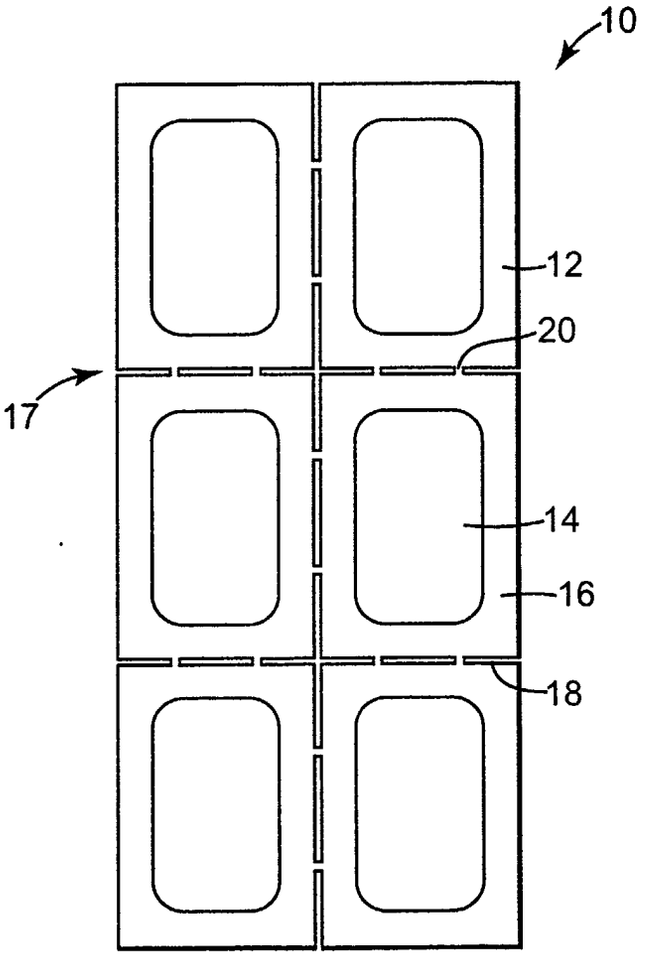

Fig. 1

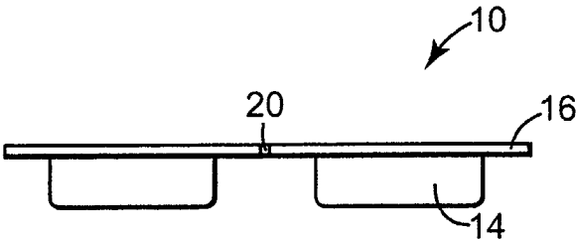

Fig. 2

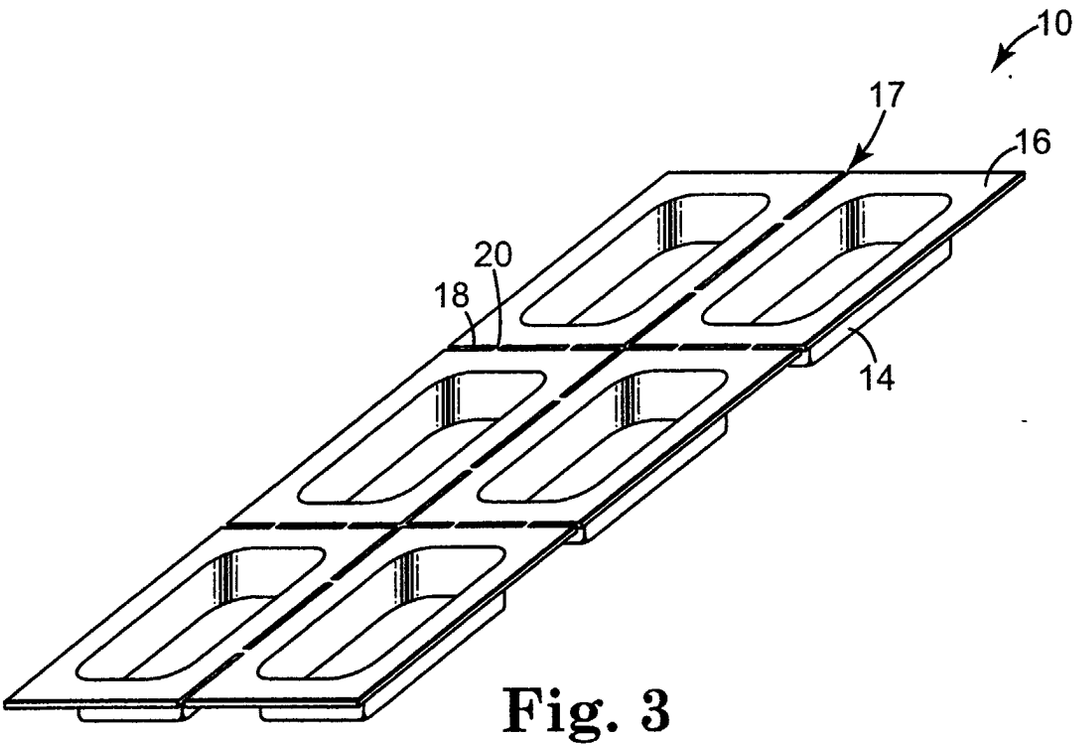

Fig. 3

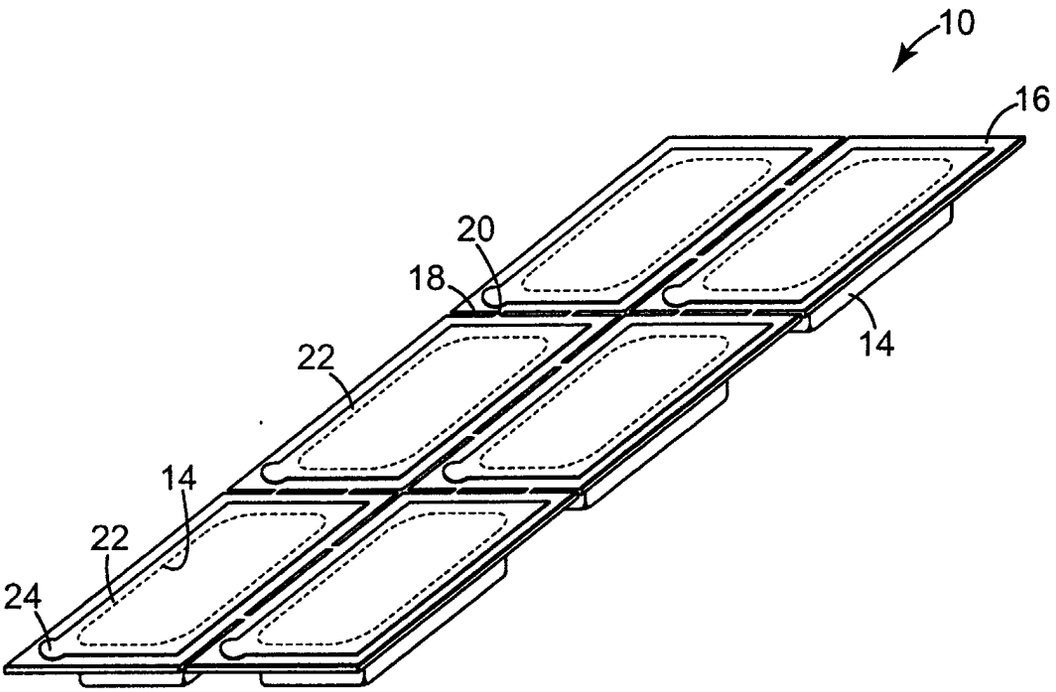

Fig. 4

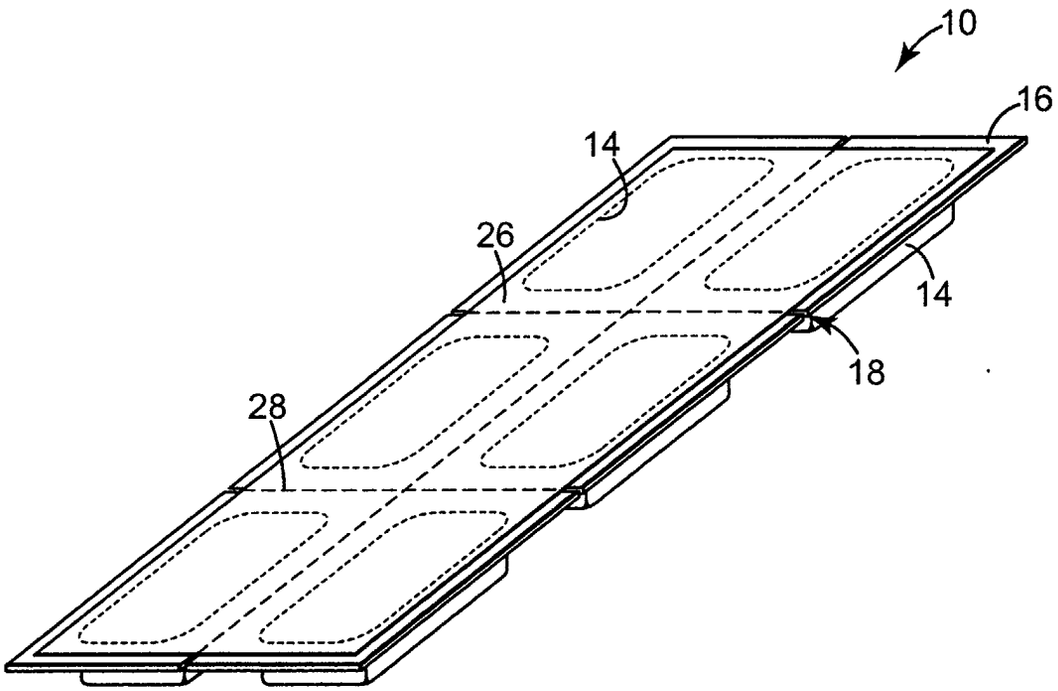

Fig. 5

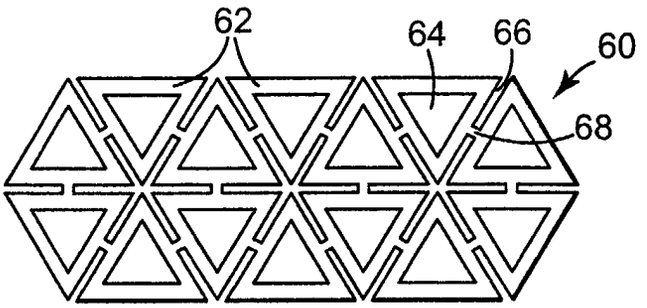

Fig. 6

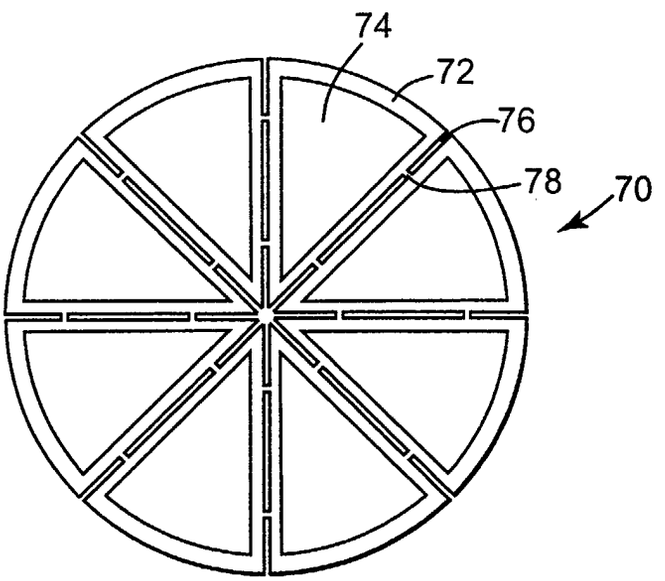

Fig. 7

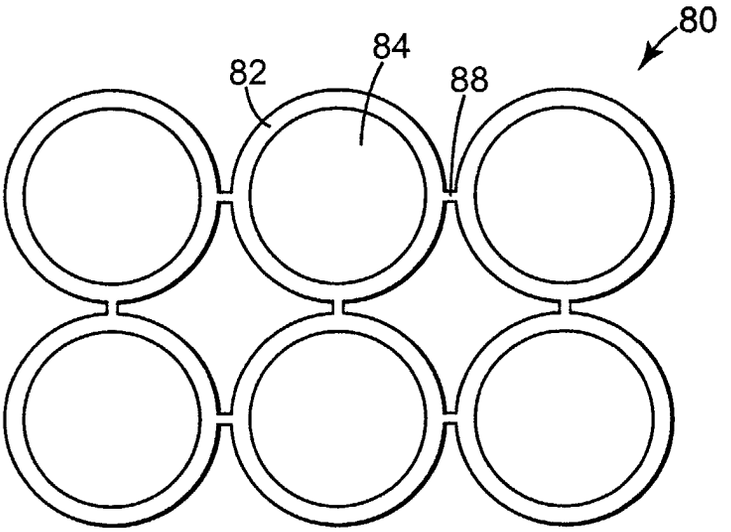

Fig. 8

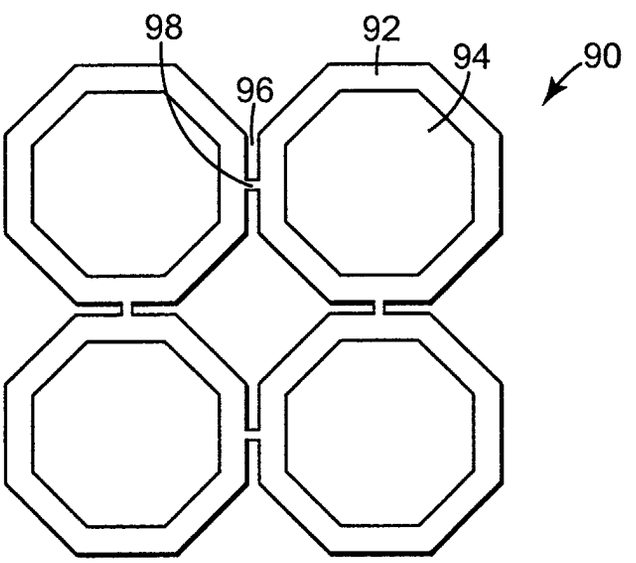

Fig. 9