



(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**

(43) Date of publication:
14.11.2007 Bulletin 2007/46

(51) Int Cl.:
G07F 11/30 (2006.01) G07F 11/44 (2006.01)

(21) Application number: **07075343.9**

(22) Date of filing: **04.05.2007**

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

(72) Inventors:
• **Bevelander, Marinus Christiaan**
3247 DR Dirksland (NL)
• **Groeneveld, Lourens**
4465 AK Goes (NL)
• **van den Berg, Gerard**
2821 XF Stolwijk (NL)

(30) Priority: **11.05.2006 NL 1031791**

(71) Applicant: **C & R Investment B.V.**
3247 DR Dirksland (NL)

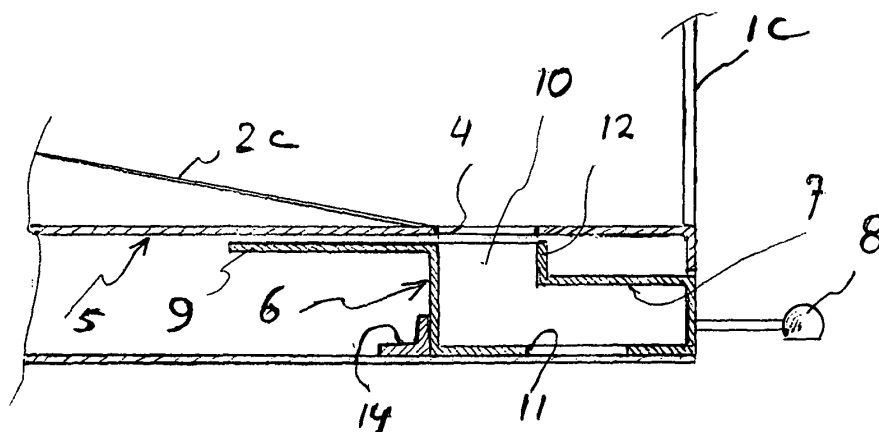
(74) Representative: **Reynvaan, Lambertus Johannes**
Octrooibureau Reynvaan
Singel 123
3311 PC Dordrecht (NL)

(54) **Confectionery dispenser, and also an assembly of such dispensers**

(57) Confectionery dispenser, consisting of a container (1) for the confectionery to be dispensed, which container has a funnel-shaped bottom (2). At the lowest point the bottom is provided with an outflow aperture (4), to which a dispensing element (6) is connected. The dispensing element is formed by a tray that is guided in a

tubular guide (5). The tray has a filling aperture (10) in the top wall and an outlet aperture (11) in the bottom wall, which outlet aperture is slightly staggered relative to the filling aperture. The tray also contains a closing plate (9) for closing off the outflow aperture (4) when the tray is in the pulled-out position.

Fig. 2



Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a confectionery dispenser for dispensing confectionery or candy, of the type by means of which the customer himself can fill a bag or tray with the desired confectionery. More particularly, the invention relates to an assembly of such confectionery dispensers.

[0002] A wide variety of confectionery dispensers are known. Such confectionery dispensers generally comprise a container which is filled with confectionery and a mechanism for dispensing one or more items of confectionery from said container. Such confectionery dispensers are also often in a shape that is attractive for children, such as, for example, the shape of an animal.

[0003] The present invention in fact relates more to an assembly of confectionery dispensers by means of which a customer can choose from different types of confectionery, or confectionery of different flavours, in order to be able to assemble a desired assortment of confectionery of the desired quantity himself. It is known that for this purpose shops have a number of open trays with confectionery, which are disposed alongside each other and/or above each other, so that the customer himself can take a scoop and fill a bag with the confectionery of his choice. However, such open trays are not hygienic and do not comply with the current standards.

[0004] The object of the invention is then to provide a confectionery dispenser by means of which the customer himself can obtain the desired quantity of confectionery in a hygienic manner.

[0005] Starting from a confectionery dispenser comprising a container for the confectionery to be dispensed, which container has a funnel-shaped bottom, which bottom at the lowest point is provided with an outflow aperture, to which aperture a dispensing element is connected, this object is achieved according to the invention in that the dispensing element consists of a tray that is provided so that it slides in a tubular guide situated below the bottom of the abovementioned container, which tray has a filling aperture in the top wall and an outlet aperture in the bottom wall, which outlet aperture is slightly staggered relative to the filling aperture in the direction of movement of the tray, which tray also contains a closing plate for closing off the outflow aperture in the abovementioned bottom, which tray can be pulled out from a pushed-in position in which the aperture in the bottom of the container substantially overlaps the filling aperture of the tray, to a position in which the closing plate closes off the aperture in the bottom of the container, and the outlet aperture in the bottom of the tray projects beyond the tubular guide in order to dispense the confectionery.

[0006] According to the present invention, an assembly of such confectionery dispensers is provided, consisting of a number of dispensers disposed one above the other, which together form a column, which column has a removable rear wall.

[0007] The invention is explained in greater detail with

reference to the appended drawing, in which:

Figure 1 shows a front view of a confectionery dispenser according to the present invention;

Figure 2 shows a section of the dispenser along line II-II in Figure 1; and

Figure 3 shows a perspective view of an assembly of a number of confectionery dispensers according to Figure 1.

[0008] As can be seen from Figures 1 and 2, the confectionery dispenser according to the present invention consists of a container 1 with side walls 1a, 1b, a front wall 1c, a rear wall (not visible here), and a funnel-shaped bottom 2. The funnel-shaped bottom 2 contains a flat part 3 which is situated centrally between the side walls 1a and 1b and adjoins the front wall 1c of the container, from which part a number of bottom walls 2a, 2b and 2c run obliquely upwards. The flat part 3 consequently forms the lowest part of the bottom and is provided with an outflow aperture 4, which is situated at some distance from the front wall 1c of the container.

[0009] As can be seen more clearly in Figure 2, a guide tube 5 is provided below the bottom 2 of the container in the central area between the side walls 1a and 1b, which guide tube extends from the front wall 1c of the container, the top wall of said tube at least adjoining or coinciding with the flat part 3 of the bottom 2 of the container. A dispensing element 6 is guided so that it slides in said guide tube. The dispensing element 6 consists of a tray 7 having on the front side a handle 8 and on the rear side a closing plate 9, which slopes down from the tray and lies parallel to and at a short distance from the top wall of the guide tube. The tray then has in the top wall an inlet aperture 10 adjoining the rear wall of the tray, and in the bottom wall has an outlet aperture 11, which two apertures are staggered slightly relative to each other in the direction of movement of the tray or the longitudinal axis of the guide tube. On the front side the height of the tray is less than the height of the guide tube 5, and the inlet aperture 10 is bounded by an upstanding wall 12, so that said aperture connects to the top wall of the guide tube.

[0010] In the position of the dispensing element shown in Figure 2 the inlet aperture 10 of the tray is situated below the outflow aperture 4 of the funnel-shaped bottom 2 of the container, so that the items of confectionery present in the container fall into the tray. In this position the outlet aperture 11 of the tray is closed off by the bottom wall of the guide tube. When the dispensing element is pulled out by pulling the handle 8, the tray slides out, whereupon the closing plate 9 covers the outflow aperture 4 and the outlet aperture 11 of the tray comes away from the bottom wall of the guide tube, with the result that the contents of the tray fall out through said aperture. The outward movement of the dispensing element 6 is

limited by the fact that the upstanding wall 12, which bounds the inlet aperture of the tray, goes against a wall part 13 of the front wall that closes off the guide tube and lies flush with the front wall 1c of the container.

[0011] By pressing the dispensing element back again, the outlet aperture is closed off by the bottom wall of the guide tube, and the closing plate 9 clears the outflow aperture 4 again, so that confectionery can flow into the tray again. In this way each time that the dispensing element is pulled out, a predetermined quantity of confectionery is dispensed. A stop 14 is provided on the bottom wall of the guide tube in order to limit the return movement of the tray.

[0012] Figure 3 shows a perspective view of an assembly of such confectionery dispensers. As can be seen in this figure, five of such dispensers are provided one above the other in a column-shaped frame 15. In such a column the dispensers have a common rear wall 16, which can be removed in order to permit refilling of the individual dispensers easily through the rear side of the column. It can also be seen in this figure that a guide chute 17 is provided on the front wall 13 of each dispenser, which guide chute surrounds the dispensing element at least on the underside in the pulled-out position. The purpose of this chute is to guide the confectionery items falling out of the dispensing element, so that said confectionery items fall into a bag or box held at this chute by the user.

[0013] The idea here is that each dispenser should contain confectionery of a different flavour. It is conceivable here for several of such columns to be placed beside each other. The containers 1 of the dispensers have a transparent front wall 1c here, while the front wall 13 covering the guide tube and containing the aperture for the dispensing element can be of a colour which corresponds to that of the confectionery present in the dispenser. It will be clear that not all sorts of confectionery are suitable for such a dispenser; what the inventor has in mind is confectionery with a relatively hard and smooth outside surface.

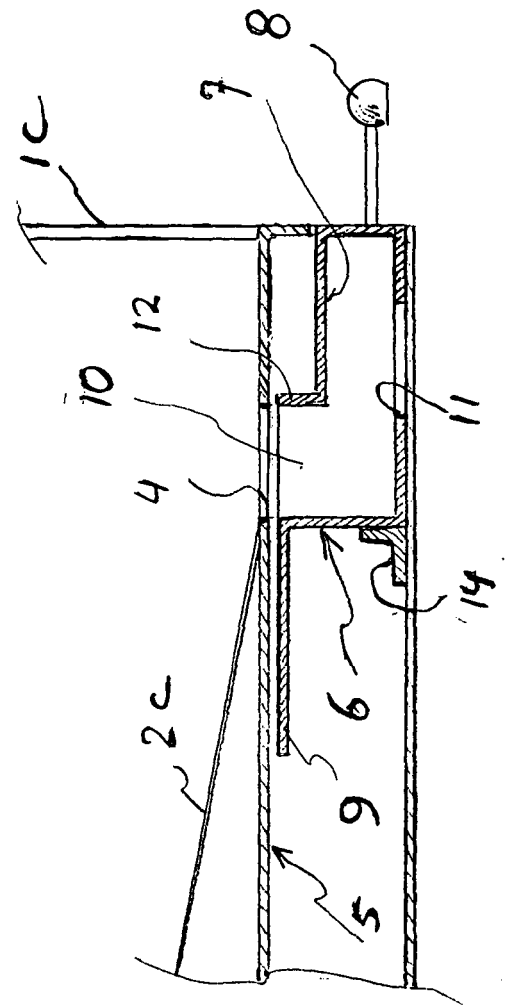
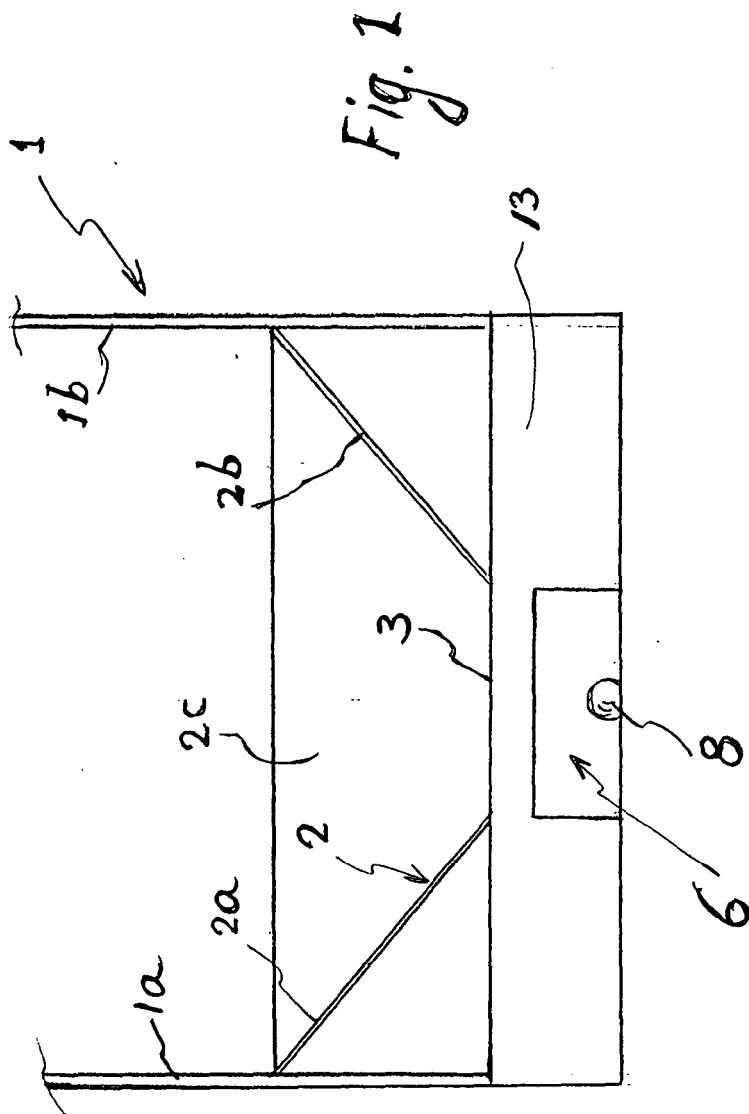
[0014] It will also be clear that the invention is not limited to the embodiment illustrated and described here, but that a large number of variants and modifications that will be obvious to the person skilled in the art are possible within the scope of the appended claims.

tray has a filling aperture (10) in the top wall and an outlet aperture (11) in the bottom wall, which outlet aperture is slightly staggered relative to the filling aperture in the direction of movement, which tray also contains a closing plate (9) for closing off the aperture (4) in the abovementioned bottom, which tray can be pulled out from a pushed-in position in which the aperture in the bottom of the container substantially overlaps the filling aperture of the tray, to a position in which the closing plate closes off the aperture in the bottom of the container, and the outlet aperture in the bottom of the tray projects beyond the tubular guide in order to dispense the confectionery.

2. Dispenser according to Claim 1, **characterized in that** the tray is provided with one or more stops, which interact with stops in the tubular guide in order to limit the movement of the tray.
3. Dispenser according to Claim 1 or 2, **characterized in that** an upstanding edge (12) is provided around the filling aperture of the tray, which upstanding edge, on the one hand, forms the stop for limiting the pull-out movement of the tray and to which, on the other hand, the closing plate (9) is connected.
4. Dispenser according to Claim 1, 2 or 3, **characterized in that** a guide chute (17) is provided on the front wall (13), which guide chute at least partially surrounds the dispensing element on the underside in the pulled-out position.
5. Assembly of confectionery dispensers, **characterized in that** a number of dispensers according to one or more of the preceding claims are disposed adjacent to each other and have a common removable rear wall.
6. Assembly according to Claim 4, **characterized in that** the dispensers are disposed one above the other in the form of a vertical column.

Claims

1. Confectionery dispenser, comprising a container for the confectionery to be dispensed, which container has a funnel-shaped bottom, which bottom at the lowest point is provided with an outflow aperture, to which aperture a dispensing element is connected, **characterized in that** the dispensing element (6) consists of a tray (7) that is provided below the bottom (2) of the abovementioned container (1) and is guided so that it slides in a tubular guide (5), which



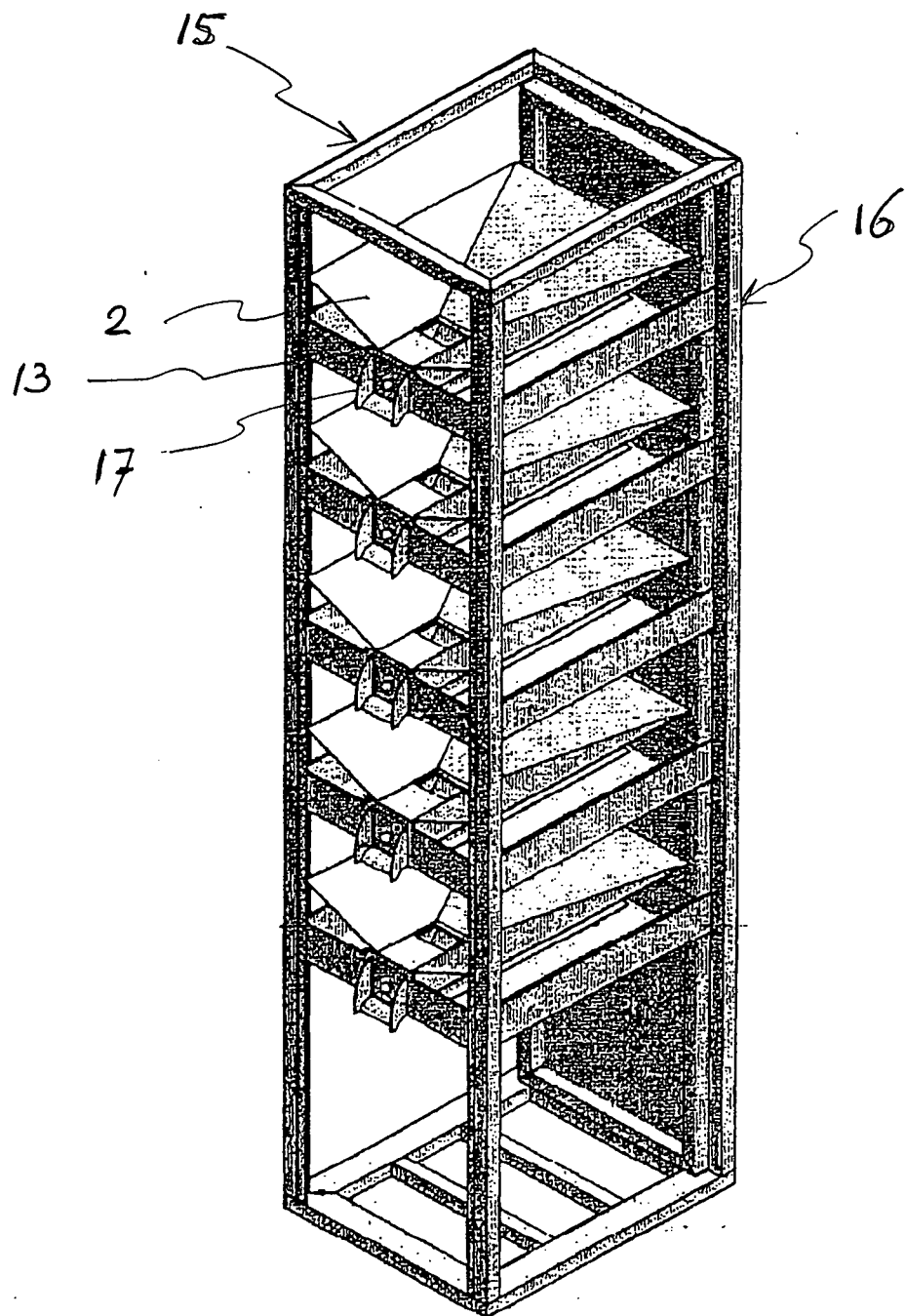


Fig. 3



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 07 07 5343

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Place of search Munich		Date of completion of the search 25 July 2007	Examiner Mülthaler, Evelyn
<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 L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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