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(54) **Tray comprising a basic frame and at least one inlay element**

(57) A tray (1) which has a supporting surface (7) for supporting items such as food items and/or drinks comprises two elements (2, 3) which are detachably arranged with respect to each other, wherein one (2) of the elements (2, 3) has at least a substantial portion of the supporting surface (7). In a practical embodiment, this one (2) of the elements is shaped as a plate, wherein the other (3) of the elements (2, 3) is adapted to support the

plate.

The detachable connection may be a snap connection, in which case it is very easy for a user to deal with the tray (1).

In the tray (1) as described, the element (2) having at least a substantial portion of the supporting surface (7) is interchangeable, which offers many interesting possibilities. Furthermore, both elements (2, 3) of the tray (1) may be lightweight.

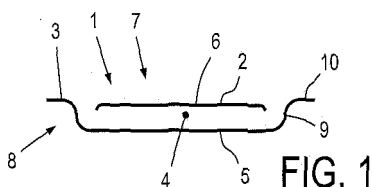


FIG. 1

Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a tray having a supporting surface for supporting items such as food items and/or drinks. Such a tray is well-known, and is used in a wide variety of applications. In many cases, the applications are related to displacements of food items and/or drinks, such as are taking place in respect of airplane flights, and in restaurants and canteens.

[0002] In a basic embodiment, the tray is formed as a single plate, wherein a shape of the periphery of the plate may be any suitable shape, for example, rectangular, square, oval or round. In most practical cases, the tray has a standing rim along its circumference for preventing items from sliding off the tray. Furthermore, it is possible for the tray to have handles in order to facilitate handling of the tray, but in many cases, the design is simpler than that, with only a circumferential rim portion extending outwardly with respect to a standing circumferential rim portion.

[0003] Especially in respect of handling trays in the context of airplane flights, there is a need for reduction of weight. Currently, the trays which are used in this context are made from a plastic material through injection molding or compression molding techniques. Due to this, there is a minimum to the thickness of the trays which is not so much determined by the necessary strength of the trays, but rather by limitations of the molding techniques. In short, these limitations boil down to the fact that the molds which are used need to offer a certain amount of space for the material to flow through in order to prevent the pressures from getting too high.

[0004] It is an objective of the present invention to provide a tray which is sufficiently strong to perform its supporting function, and which may have dimensions and shapes similar to those of conventional trays on the one hand, but which may have a reduced weight with respect to the conventional trays on the other hand. This objective is achieved by providing a tray comprising at least two elements which are detachably arranged with respect to each other, wherein at least a substantial portion of the supporting surface of the tray is defined by at least one of the elements, and wherein at least one other of the elements serves to support the at least one surface defining element.

[0005] According to the present invention, the tray is composed of at least two elements, wherein at least a substantial portion of the supporting surface of the tray is defined by at least one of the elements. In the following, for sake of clarity, it will be assumed that the tray comprises no more than one surface defining element and one supporting element. It should be understood that this does not imply that the present invention is limited to such embodiment of the tray. On the contrary, many other types of embodiments are feasible, especially types of embodiments comprising more than one surface defining element.

[0006] The fact that there are two elements in the tray

which are detachable with respect to each other offers many advantageous possibilities. In particular, the desired weight reduction as described in the foregoing may be achieved. For example, the supporting element may be adapted to constitute a basic frame which defines a periphery of the tray, and may have a space for receiving and accommodating the surface defining element which is adapted to be used as an inlay element in that case. As the surface defining element is supported by the supporting element in the assembled state of the tray, the surface defining element may be thin and light-weight. Basically, the surface defining element may be shaped like a flat plate, which is easy to manufacture by means of injection molding processes or other suitable processes, wherein the thickness of the surface defining element may be considerably less than the thickness of any known tray. Furthermore, the supporting element may have weight-reducing features. For example, the supporting element may be provided with one or more holes, wherein the holes are positioned at areas where there is no need for direct support of the surface defining element. In such case, when the whole of two elements is compared to a conventional tray, it is clear that weight reduction is actually achieved.

[0007] Due to the detachable arrangement of the surface defining element and the supporting element with respect to each other, it is possible to remove the surface defining element and replace it by another if so desired. This fact offers many advantageous possibilities, which are not present in the context of conventional trays. In the following, three of these possibilities will be further explained.

[0008] In the first place, the extent of hygiene in using the trays may be increased. As the surface defining element may be removed from the supporting element, it is more appealing to subject it to a thorough cleaning process. There is no need for thorough cleaning of the trays on the spot, as a dirty surface defining element may easily be replaced by a clean one. It is also possible that the surface defining element is used as a disposable, wherein there is hardly a need for a cleaning process. In that case, a dirty surface defining element can simply be thrown away and replaced by a new one.

[0009] In the second place, the surface defining element may be used as a carrier of advertisements, wherein adapting an advertisement over time simply involves applying a new surface defining element, so that there is no need for replacing the entire tray. The advertisement may come in various ways. One feasible example is providing the surface defining element with an inmold label. It is also possible that imprinting or embossing techniques are used.

[0010] In the third place, it is possible to have various types of the surface defining element, wherein one type of surface defining element may be replaced by another when there is a need for a new functionality. For example, a number of supporting elements may be used in combination with a number of surface defining elements

which are simply shaped as flat plates on the one hand, or a number of surface defining elements which are having a hole or a recess for receiving and accommodating a bottom of a cup, for example, on the other hand, depending on the requirements regarding the use of the trays in particular situations.

[0011] According to an advantageous option existing within the scope of the present invention, the size of the tray may be adjustable. In particular, the supporting element may comprise at least two parts which are movably arranged with respect to each other. For example, the supporting element may comprise parts which are slidable or pivotable with respect to each other. The size of the surface defining element may also be adjustable on the basis of a layout of the surface defining element with at least two parts which are movable with respect to each other, but it is a preferred option if the supporting element having an adjustable size is combined with surface defining elements having various sizes, wherein it is simply a matter of choosing the appropriate surface defining element. In that case, a collection of trays having an adjustable size may be provided in the form of a collection of supporting elements and surface defining elements, wherein the supporting elements comprise at least two parts which are movably arranged with respect to each other, and wherein the surface defining elements have various sizes and are more in number, namely as much times the number of supporting elements as there are alternative sizes.

[0012] The detachable connection between the elements of the tray according to the present invention may be realized in any suitable way. Hence, the elements may be provided with any suitable means in this respect. According to one feasible possibility, means which are suitable for establishing a detachable snap connection may be provided, but that does not alter the fact that there are many alternatives.

[0013] The elements of the tray according to the present invention may be manufactured from a plastic material. In that case, injection molding techniques and/or thermoforming techniques may be used to manufacture the elements. However, other materials and/or other manufacturing methods may be applicable as well. Examples of other materials are metal or wood. In case the surface defining element is intended to be used as a disposable, practical materials include bamboo, recycled pulp, carton and plastics.

[0014] It has already been mentioned in the foregoing that the surface defining element may have a hole or a recess for receiving and accommodating a bottom of a cup, for example. In general, at least one of the surface defining element and the supporting element may be provided with at least one hole or recess for receiving and accommodating an item to be supported by the tray. A well-known advantage of having holes and/or recesses in a tray is that items to be supported by the tray are securely retained within those holes and/or recesses.

[0015] In an advantageous embodiment, the tray ac-

cording to the present invention further comprises at least one element which is movably arranged on the surface defining element, and which is movable between a position with respect to the surface defining element for allowing free access to a surface of the element, and a position with respect to the surface defining element for covering at least a portion of the surface of the element. In other words, the tray may comprise a movably arranged lid for covering at least a portion of the surface of the surface defining element. A lid as mentioned may be used for keeping items which are placed on the surface defining element in place, and for protecting items which are placed on the surface defining element from external influences. For example, when the items are food items, the lid may be used to keep the items at a desired temperature. Furthermore, the whole of surface defining element and lid may be used as a closeable waste container which may simply be removed from the supporting element and thrown away, which is a very advantageous option in the field of food distribution where empty food packages and leftovers need to be collected for disposal. By providing a closeable waste container, the hygiene of the collecting process is significantly enhanced.

[0016] For sake of completeness, it is noted that within the scope of the present invention, it is also possible to have a lid which is arranged on the supporting element, for example. However, in such case, there is no option of having a removably arranged waste container integrated in the tray.

[0017] Besides the features as mentioned, the tray according to the present invention may have features which are known per se in the field of trays. For example, the supporting element may be equipped with handles, the surface defining element may have anti-slip features, a surface of the surface defining element which is at least a substantial part of the supporting surface of the tray may have various segments for receiving specific items, the tray may be designed such as to be stackable, etc.

[0018] The tray according to the present invention is suitable to be applied in any field of professional food distribution. For sake of completeness, it is noted that a method for handling the trays comprises the following steps: starting from a situation in which the elements are separated from each other, assembling the elements of the tray prior to use by a consumer; collecting the trays and detaching the elements from each other after use by a consumer; and cleaning or disposing of at least one of the elements.

[0019] The present invention will further be explained on the basis of the following description, wherein reference will be made to the drawing, in which equal reference signs indicate equal or similar components, and in which:

figure 1 diagrammatically shows a sectional view of a tray according to the present invention, in a disassembled state;

figure 2 diagrammatically shows a sectional view of a tray according to the present invention, in an assembled state;

figures 3-8 diagrammatically show top views of various alternative embodiments of a basic frame which is part of the tray according to the present invention; figures 9 diagrammatically shows an embodiment of the tray according to the present invention in which a basic frame which is part of the tray is provided with holes;

figures 10 and 11 serve to illustrate how a cup may be placed inside one of the holes of the tray as shown in figure 9;

figure 12 diagrammatically shows an embodiment of the tray according to the present invention in which a basic frame which is part of the tray is provided with a hole and a recess;

figure 13 diagrammatically shows an embodiment of the tray according to the present invention in which a basic frame which is part of the tray is provided with a hole which is accessible from a periphery of the frame;

figure 14 diagrammatically shows an embodiment of the tray according to the present invention in which an inlay element which is part of the tray is provided with holes;

figure 15 illustrates a first possible design of a basic frame which is part of the tray as shown in figure 14; figure 16 illustrates a second possible design of a basic frame which is part of the tray as shown in figure 14;

figure 17 diagrammatically shows a top view of an embodiment of the tray according to the present invention in which an inlay element which is part of the tray is provided with a lid for covering the inlay element; and

figure 18 diagrammatically shows a sectional view of the tray as shown in figure 17.

[0020] Figures 1 and 2 show a sectional view of a tray 1 according to the present invention, wherein figure 1 shows the tray 1 in a disassembled state, and wherein figure 2 shows the tray 1 in an assembled state.

[0021] The tray 1 according to the present invention comprises two elements 2, 3. One of the elements 2, 3, which will hereinafter be referred to as inlay element 2, is shaped as a flat plate, and another of the elements 2, 3, which will hereinafter be referred to as basic frame 3 is shaped as a shallow cup, wherein its interior space 4 is suitable for receiving and accommodating the inlay element 2. Both the inlay element 2 and the basic frame 3 are shown in a normal orientation and mutual position in figures 1 and 2, i.e. a substantially horizontal orientation, wherein the bottom 5 of the cup shape of the basic frame 3 is at the bottom, and a mutual position in which the inlay element 2 is above the bottom 5 as mentioned. A surface 6 of the inlay element 2 which is at the top is intended to be used for supporting items (not shown in

figures 1 and 2) to be displaced by means of the tray 1 and constitutes thereby a supporting surface 7 of the tray 1. In the following, indications of orientations and positions will be given with the normal orientation as a basis.

[0022] In the shown example, the basic frame 3 is shaped as a shallow cup, as has already been noted. Hence, the basic frame 3 comprises a rim 8 which has a standing portion 9. This rim portion 9 may serve for preventing items placed on the tray 1 from slipping off. Furthermore, in the shown example, the rim 8 has a portion 10 extending outwardly with respect to the standing portion 9. This rim portion 10 is suitable to be taken hold of by a user of the tray 1.

[0023] According to the present invention, a tray 1 has at least two elements 2, 3 which are detachably arranged with respect to each other, wherein at least a substantial portion of the supporting surface 7 of the tray 1 is defined by at least one 2 of the elements 2, 3, and wherein at least one other 3 of the elements 2, 3 serves to support the at least one surface defining element 2. The assembly of the inlay element 2 and the basic frame 3 as shown in figures 1 and 2 is only one example of the various possibilities existing within the scope of the present invention. For example, as far as the shape of the elements 2, 3 is concerned, the basic frame 3 does not necessarily need to be shaped like a shallow cup, but may also be shaped like a flat plate.

[0024] The present invention proposes a detachable connection between the elements 2, 3 of the tray 1. Such connection may be realized in any suitable available manner, wherein it is preferred when both the processes of assembling and disassembling the tray 1 may be performed in a simple manner with a minimum of necessary actions. To this end, the elements 2, 3 may be provided with means for realizing a snap connection when they are placed on top of each other and lightly pressed against each other. It is most advantageous if such means are also adapted to disconnect as soon as a certain minimum force for pulling the elements 2, 3 apart is exerted. In any case, regardless of the type of connection means, it is preferred if the connection means are designed in such a way that all it takes to assemble the tray 1 is properly positioning the elements 2, 3 with respect to each other and lightly pressing the elements 2, 3 against each other, and that all it takes to disassemble the tray 1 is pulling the elements 2, 3 apart by exerting a force that is low enough to be provided by hand, and by any person. However, feasible alternatives exist as well. For example, the connection means may comprise a kind of guiding rim, wherein the inlay element 2 is connected to the basic frame 3 by sliding the inlay element 2 with respect to the basic frame 3 and letting the guiding rim of the basic frame 3 engage edges of the inlay element 2 in the process.

[0025] Figures 3-8 show various alternative embodiment of the basic frame 3, in order to illustrate a number of further possibilities existing within the scope of the present invention.

[0026] Figure 3 serves to illustrate that the basic frame 3 may have a central hole 11, whereby weight is saved. Furthermore, it is shown that the basic frame 3 may have several items 12 which are arranged near its periphery and around the hole 11, and which are intended to be used for establishing a connection to the inlay element 2. Another possible feature of the basic frame 3 which is shown in figure 3 is a provision of handles 13.

[0027] Figures 4 and 5 serve to illustrate that in case the basic frame 3 has a central hole 11 as shown in figure 3, the basic frame 3 may also have strips 14 extending in the space of the hole 11. Such strips 14 may be arranged for the purpose of providing the basic frame 3 with the necessary strength, and may play a role in supporting the inlay element 2 in the assembled state of the tray 1. The number and positioning of the strips 14 may be chosen freely. It is preferred if the strips 14 are positioned such that they may serve for as a support for fingertips of a person who puts his/her hands around the edge of the basic frame 3, and who may otherwise unintentionally press the inlay element 2 away from the basic frame 3 if the connection between the elements 2, 3 is detachable in that way.

[0028] Figure 6 serves to illustrate that in case the basic frame 3 has weight-reducing features, this does not necessarily need to involve the provision of one or more holes 11. According to the alternative option as shown, at least one area of the basic frame 3, for example, a central area, may have a honeycomb structure 15.

[0029] Figure 7 serves to illustrate that the periphery of the basic frame 3 may have any suitable shape. In the embodiments of the basic frame 3 shown in figures 3-6, the periphery has a rectangular shape. This figure 7 illustrates the alternative possibility of a circular shape.

[0030] Figure 8 serves to illustrate that the basic frame 3 may be provided with any suitable pattern of holes 11 and strips 14, which may even be such that the basic frame 3 is also suitable to be used separately as a tray which is adapted to receive smaller trays of a predetermined shape, wherein such smaller trays are intended to be positioned in the holes 11, and may have a more or less conical or stepped shape for allowing the trays to enter the holes 11 on the one hand, but to prevent the trays from completely falling through the holes 11 on the other hand.

[0031] Outside of an area which is suitable for receiving and accommodating the inlay element 2, the basic frame 3 may be provided with one or more holes 16 and/or recesses 17 for receiving and accommodating any desired item(s), wherein a circumference of the holes 16 and/or recesses 17 may have any suitable shape. Figure 9 shows an example in which the basic frame 3 has three circular holes 16. Figures 10 and 11 serve to illustrate how a cup 18 may be positioned inside one of the holes 16. The cup 18 has a conical shape, wherein a diameter of the cup 18 at a bottom side of the cup 18 is smaller than a diameter of the hole 16, whereas a diameter of the cup 18 at a top side of the cup 18 is larger than the

diameter of the hole 16. Due to this fact, it is possible for the cup 18 to be retained inside the hole 16 in a way as shown in figure 11.

[0032] Figure 12 shows an embodiment of the tray 1 in which the basic frame 3 has a circular hole 16 for receiving and accommodating a cup 18 or the like, and an elongate recess 17 for receiving and accommodating cutlery 19 or the like. It is noted once again that numerous possibilities exist within the scope of the present invention as far as the provision of holes 16 and/or recesses 17 for holding items is concerned. Figure 13 serves to illustrate another possibility, namely a hole 16 which is open to the periphery of the basic frame 3, which is particularly suitable for receiving and accommodating a wine-glass to be inserted from the side due to its specific shape.

[0033] Figure 14 serves to illustrate the fact that it is also possible for the inlay element 2 to have holes 16 and/or recesses 17, and that the circumference of such holes 16 and/or recesses 17 may have any suitable shape. In the shown example, the inlay element 2 comprises three holes 16, wherein the circumference of each of the holes 16 has a different shape.

[0034] Figures 15 and 16 illustrate two alternatives of the design of the basic frame 3 to be used in the tray 1 as shown in figure 14. In the first place, as shown in figure 15, the basic frame 3 may have a rim 8 which is at a higher level than the rest of the basic frame 3 in a normal orientation, so that when items 18 are placed in the holes 16, it is achieved that when the tray 1 having the items 18 is placed on a surface such as a table top, bottoms of the items 18 touch the surface first, after which the tray 1 moves to touch the surface as well, wherein the items 18 are released from the tray 1. In the second place, as shown in figure 16, the basic frame 3 may have a rim 8 which is at a lower level than the rest of the basic frame 3 in a normal orientation, wherein dimensions may be chosen such that when items 18 are placed in the holes 16, it is achieved that when the tray 1 having the items 18 is placed on a surface such as a table top, the items 18 are not allowed to touch the surface and remain hanging in the tray 1.

[0035] Figures 17 and 18 illustrate an advantageous option existing within the scope of the present invention. In the shown embodiment of the tray 1, the inlay element 2 is shaped as a shallow cup, wherein a lid 20 is hingeably arranged on the inlay element 2. In particular, the lid 20 is movable between an opened position for providing free access to the surface 6 and an interior space 21 of the inlay element 2, and a closed position for sealing this interior space 21. In this way, a closed container may be obtained, which is removable from the basic frame 3. The option of having a space 21 in the tray 1 which is sealable is advantageous in many feasible applications of the tray 1, as is the option of having a removably arranged container. For sake of completeness, it is noted that the first option may also be realized in an embodiment of the tray 1 in which a lid 20 is arranged on the basic frame 3. Furthermore, it is noted that the lid 20 does not neces-

sarily need to be hingeably arranged on the tray 1. For example, a slidable arrangement is also possible. All in all, the lid 20 may come in every suitable size, shape and material, and may be embossed and/or provided with any type of print as desired. Furthermore, instead of a single lid 20, a number of lids may be provided, which is handy in case it is desired to cover several compartments which may be present in the inlay element 2, one at a time.

[0036] The tray 1 according to the present invention, which has at least two elements 2, 3 which are detachably arranged with respect to each other, is suitable to be used in various applications.

[0037] In general, the tray 1 is prepared for use by taking the basic frame 3 and putting the inlay element 2 in place with respect to the basic frame 3, while establishing a temporary connection. After use, the inlay element 2 may be removed, and may be cleaned if so desired, or thrown away. It will be understood that the basic frame 3 may be cleaned at any time as well, but it may be expected that there is not so much need for cleaning in view of the fact that it is the inlay element 2 which is most likely to get dirty under the influence of spilled drinks etc. Furthermore, it is preferred if the basic frame 3 is a durable element, but this is not essential.

[0038] In case the trays 1 are processed in large volumes, it may be a feasible option to have a device for automatically performing the acts of putting the elements 2, 3 together for the purpose of assembling the trays 1 and/or for automatically separating the elements 2, 3 after use.

[0039] The basic frame 3 may be part of a collection of basic frames 3 and inlay elements 2 for forming trays 1, wherein the inlay elements 2 may be of various types. This fact provides for optimal flexibility in applying the trays 1 for various specific functions. Besides an enhanced flexibility as far as its application is concerned, the tray 1 according to the present invention has many more advantages, including the advantages which have already been mentioned in the foregoing.

[0040] It will be clear to a person skilled in the art that the scope of the present invention is not limited to the examples discussed in the foregoing, but that several amendments and modifications thereof are possible without deviating from the scope of the invention as defined in the attached claims.

[0041] Although not shown in any of the figures, it may be practical for the tray 1 according to the present invention to comprise more than one inlay element 2. In such a case, the inlay elements 2 may have different size, shape, color, etc.

[0042] The application of a lid 20 for covering at least a portion of a supporting surface 7 of a tray 1 is not limited to trays 1 having at least two elements 2, 3 as described here. It is also possible to use a lid 20 in combination with a conventional single-piece tray or any other known type of tray. In that way, a device which is suitable to be used as both a tray and a container may be realized. In this respect, it is also possible to have a plurality of individual

lids if so desired.

[0043] In the foregoing, a tray 1 which has a supporting surface 7 for supporting items such as food items and/or drinks has been disclosed. According to one possibility existing within the scope of the present invention, the tray 1 comprises two elements 2, 3 which are detachably arranged with respect to each other, wherein one 2 of the elements 2, 3 has at least a substantial portion of the supporting surface 7. In a practical embodiment, this one 2 of the elements 2, 3 is shaped as a plate, wherein the other 3 of the elements 2, 3 is adapted to support the plate.

[0044] The detachable connection may be a snap connection, such that assembling the tray 1 only requires pressing together the elements 2, 3, and disassembling the tray 1 only requires pulling the elements 2, 3 apart. In such a case, it is very easy for a user to deal with the tray 1.

[0045] In the tray 1 as described, the element 2 having at least a substantial portion of the supporting surface 7 is interchangeable, which offers many interesting possibilities. Furthermore, both elements 2, 3 of the tray 1 may be light-weight, so that the tray 1 is suitable to be used on air planes, for example.

Claims

1. Tray (1) having a supporting surface (7) for supporting items such as food items and/or drinks, comprising at least two elements (2, 3) which are detachably arranged with respect to each other, wherein at least a substantial portion of the supporting surface (7) of the tray (1) is defined by at least one (2) of the elements (2, 3), and wherein at least one other (3) of the elements (2, 3) serves to support the at least one surface defining element (2).
2. Tray (1) according to claim 1, comprising no more than one surface defining element (2) and one supporting element (3).
3. Tray (1) according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the at least one supporting element (3) is adapted to constitute a basic frame which is intended to be taken hold of by a user of the tray (1).
4. Tray (1) according to any of claims 1-3, wherein the at least one supporting element (3) has a space (4) for receiving and accommodating the at least one surface defining element (2).
5. Tray (1) according to any of claims 1-4, wherein the at least one supporting element (3) comprises at least two parts which are movably arranged with respect to each other.
6. Tray (1) according to any of claims 1-5, wherein the

at least one supporting element (3) has weight-reducing features (11, 15).

7. Tray (1) according to claim 6, wherein the at least one supporting element (3) is provided with at least one hole (11). 5
8. Tray (1) according to claim 7, wherein the at least one supporting element (3) comprises strips (14) for supporting the surface defining element (2), which strips (14) are extending in the space of the at least one hole (11). 10
9. Tray (1) according to claim 6, wherein at least one portion of the at least one supporting element (3) has a honeycomb structure (15). 15
10. Tray (1) according to any of claims 1-9, wherein the elements (2, 3) are provided with means for realizing a snap connection between the elements (2, 3), which means are adapted to establish the snap connection when the elements (2, 3) are put in place with respect to each other starting from a situation in which they are separated from each other, and to detach the snap connection when the elements (2, 3) are moved away from each other starting from a situation in which they are connected to each other. 20 25
11. Tray (1) according to any of claims 1-10, wherein at least one of the at least one surface defining element (2) and the at least one supporting element (3) is provided with at least one hole (16) for receiving and accommodating an item to be supported by the tray (1). 30 35
12. Tray (1) according to any of claims 1-11, wherein at least one of the at least one surface defining element (2) and the at least one supporting element (3) is provided with at least one recess (17) for receiving and accommodating an item to be supported by the tray (1). 40
13. Tray (1) according to any of claims 1-12, further comprising at least one element (20) which is movably arranged on the at least one surface defining element (2), and which is movable between a position with respect to the surface defining element (2) for allowing free access to a surface (6) of the element (2), and a position with respect to the surface defining element (2) for covering at least a portion of the surface (6) of the element (2). 45 50
14. Collection of elements (2, 3) which are intended to be assembled for the purpose of forming trays (1) having a supporting surface (7) for supporting items such as food items and/or drinks, wherein the elements (2, 3) are of two different types, wherein the elements (3) of one type comprise at least two parts 55

which are movably arranged with respect to each other, and wherein the elements (2) of another type have various sizes and are more in number.

- 5 15. Method for handling trays in a context of professional food distribution such as in respect of airplane flights, and in restaurants and canteens, wherein the trays are trays (1) according to any of claims 1-13, wherein, prior to use by a consumer, the elements (2, 3) of the tray (1) are assembled starting from a situation in which the elements (2, 3) are separated from each other, and wherein, after use by a consumer, the trays (1) are collected and the elements (2, 3) are detached from each other for the purpose of cleaning or disposing of at least one of the elements (2, 3).

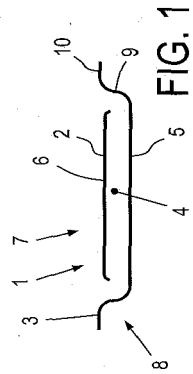


FIG. 1



FIG. 2

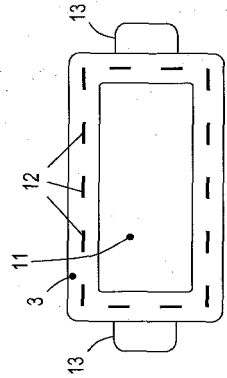


FIG. 3

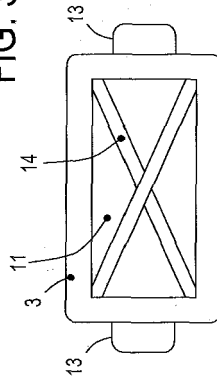


FIG. 4

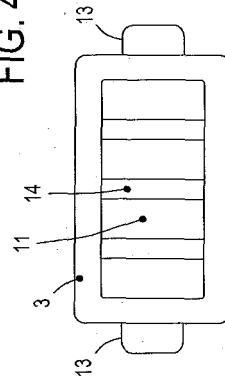


FIG. 5

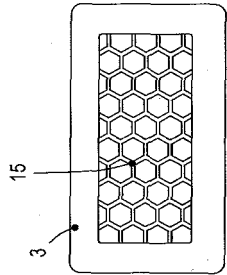


FIG. 6

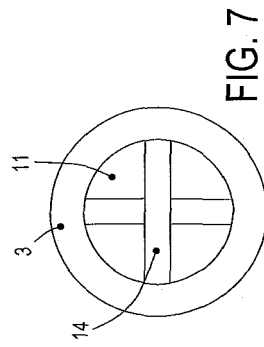
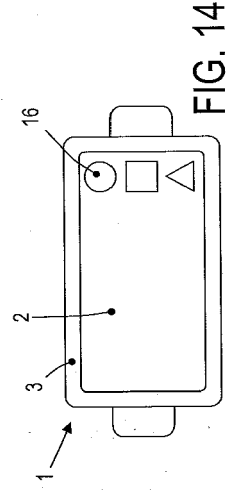
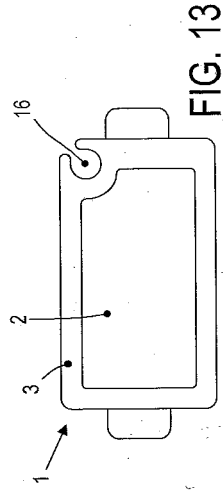
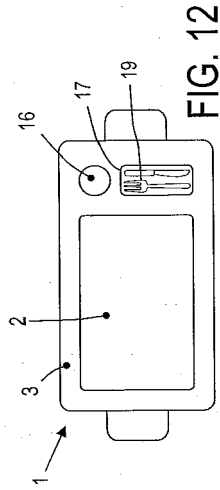
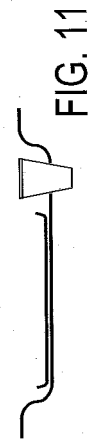
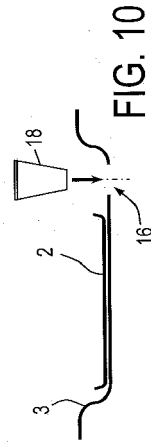
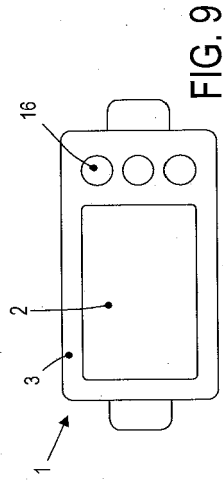
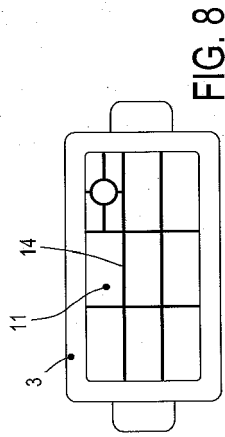
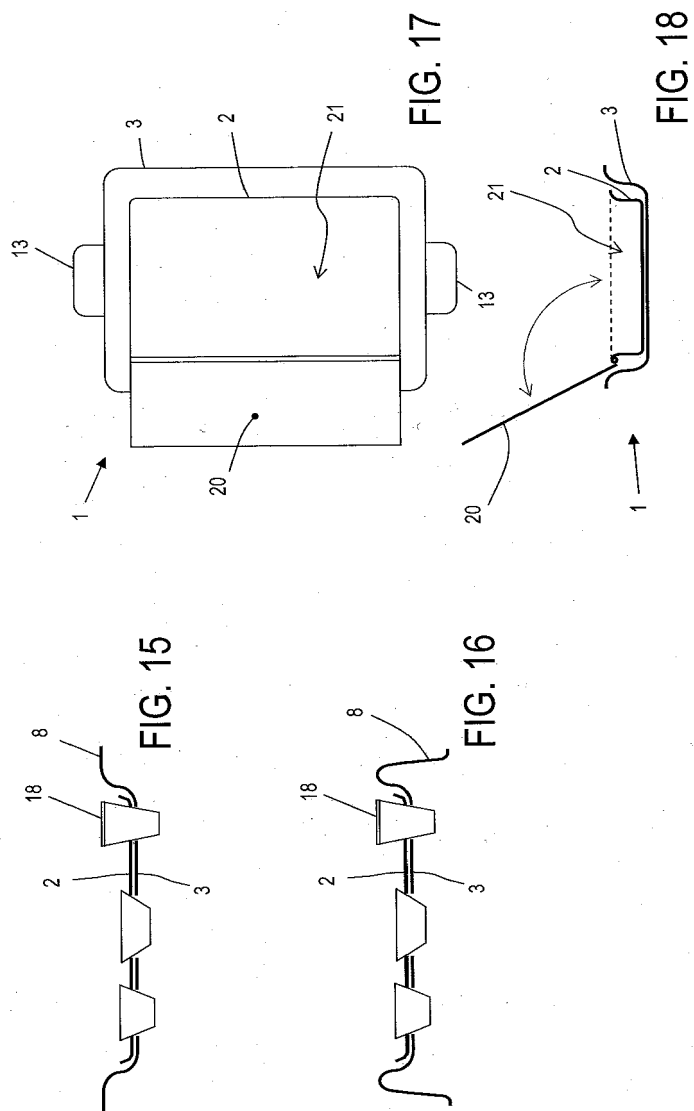


FIG. 7







EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 08 01 7187

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Place of search The Hague		Date of completion of the search 30 January 2009	Examiner Vistisen, Lars
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For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82