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(54) **Beverage dispensing valve, in particular for a household refrigeration appliance**

(57) The present invention relates to a beverage dispensing valve (10), in particular for a household refrigeration appliance (1), said valve (10) having a main body (20) comprising:

- a first portion (21) for the entrance of the beverage into said valve (10);
- an intermediate portion (201) for said beverage to flow through the valve (10), said intermediate portion (201) comprising at least one opening (20A) that allows the beverage to flow out of said intermediate portion (201);
- a second portion (22) extending substantially parallel to an axis (A) of the valve (10), a sealing member (23) being associated with said second portion (22) in the proximity of a terminal part (22A) thereof, said valve (10) having a lower body (30) associated with the main body (20) in encircling relation to said second portion (22) and said at least one opening (20A) of the intermediate portion (201), said lower body (30) being adapted to slide axially over said intermediate portion (201) and second portion (22) to move:
 - from a first operating condition, in which an inner surface (31) of the lower body (30) cooperates with said sealing member (23) to prevent the beverage from coming out of said valve (10),
 - to a second operating condition, in which at least one gap (L) is formed between said inner surface (31) and said sealing member (23) to allow the flow of the beverage, and vice versa.

The invention is characterized in that said valve (10) comprises a sleeve (40) having:

- a first end (41), which is adapted to be coupled to said main body (20);
- a second end (42), which is adapted to be coupled to said lower body (30);
- an intermediate part (43) made of an elastic material, which is adapted to move from a substantially stretched state, occurring when the lower body (30) is in said first operating condition, to a contracted state, occurring when the lower body (30) is in said second operating condition, the intermediate part (43) of the sleeve (40) allowing a depression to be formed in said stretched state to prevent dripping downstream of the sealing member (23).

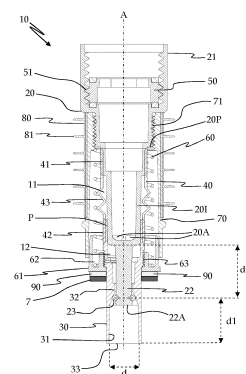


Fig. 3a



EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
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DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IPC)
A	AT 373 564 B (ARTMANN KURT [AT]) 10 February 1984 (1984-02-10) * figure 1 *	1	INV. B67D1/12 B67D1/14 B67D3/00
A	EP 0 617 261 A1 (ERCA [FR]) 28 September 1994 (1994-09-28) * column 3, line 37 - line 48 *	1	F25D31/00 F25D23/12 F16K23/00 B67D3/02 B67D3/04
A	US 5 857 596 A (LEE YONG-KWEON [KR]) 12 January 1999 (1999-01-12) * abstract *	1	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (IPC)
			B67D F25D F16K
<p>1 The present search report has been drawn up for all claims</p>			
Place of search		Date of completion of the search	Examiner
Munich		7 June 2013	Desittere, Michiel
<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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CLAIMS INCURRING FEES

The present European patent application comprised at the time of filing claims for which payment was due.

☐ Only part of the claims have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those claims for which no payment was due and for those claims for which claims fees have been paid, namely claim(s):

☐ No claims fees have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those claims for which no payment was due.

LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION

The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

see sheet B

☐ All further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for all claims.

☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, the Search Division did not invite payment of any additional fee.

☐ Only part of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the inventions in respect of which search fees have been paid, namely claims:

☒ None of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the invention first mentioned in the claims, namely claims:

see additional sheet(s)

☐ The present supplementary European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the invention first mentioned in the claims (Rule 164 (1) EPC).



LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION
SHEET B

Application Number
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The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

1. claims: 1-4, 15

Beverage dispensing valve with an elastic sleeve

2. claims: 5-8

Beverage dispensing valve having a valve member with a slit

3. claims: 9-14

Beverage dispensing valve wherein in closed position the sealing O-ring of the valve member is spaced between 10 and 30 mm from the outlet section of the valve

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

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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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07-06-2013

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For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82