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(54) **Food container**

(57) A container (10A, 10B) including a lower portion (30) and lid (20). The lower portion (30) has a sidewall (312) and a base portion (310) that define a hollow interior having an opening defined by a distal portion (330) of the sidewall. The sidewall has a keyway (342). The lid (20) has a body portion (200) with a peripheral portion (210). A flap (212A-212D) is attached to the peripheral portion. A key member (230) is positioned on the flap. The key member (230) is receivable inside the keyway (342) of the lower portion (30). The body portion (200) is configured to be pivoted relative to the flap when the key member (230) is received inside the keyway (342) to position the body portion (200) adjacent the distal portion (330) of the sidewall (312) to close the opening of the hollow interior.

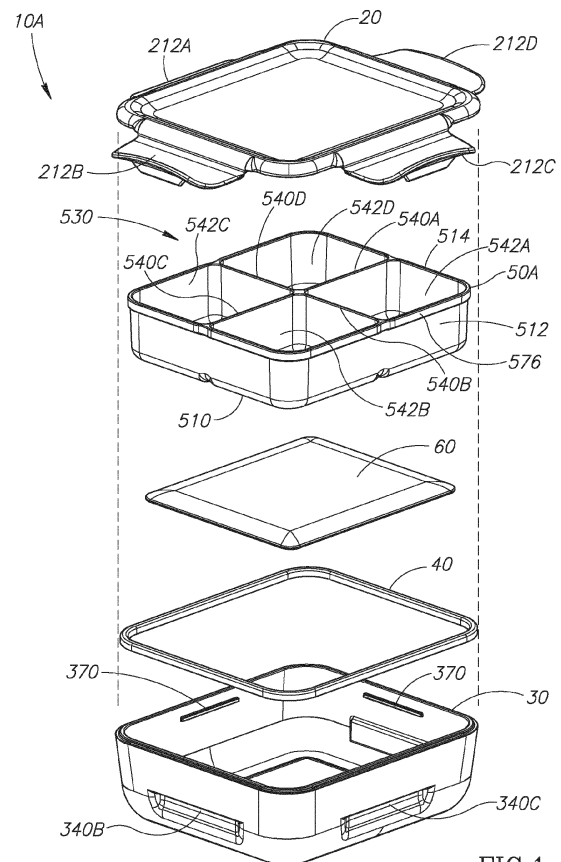


FIG.1

Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention is directed generally to food containers.

Description of the Related Art

[0002] Many people store food in sealable food containers. For example, food containers may be used to store and transport meals, such as lunch. Food containers sized and shaped to store sandwiches may be particularly useful. Further, containers configured to help maintain food at a desired temperature and prevent the contents of the container from leaking are particularly desirable. The present application provides these and other advantages as will be apparent from the following detailed description and accompanying figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING(S)

[0003]

Figure 1 is a perspective exploded view of a first embodiment of a food container.

Figure 2 is a perspective exploded view of a second embodiment of a food container.

Figure 3 is a perspective view of the first embodiment of the food container with its lid removed and positioned alongside a lower portion of the food container.

Figure 4 is a bottom view of a flap having a key member of the lid of both the first and second embodiments of the food container.

Figure 5 is a side view of the flap and the key member of Figure 4.

Figure 6 is a perspective view of the lower portion of both the first and second embodiments of the food container.

Figure 7 is a side view of the lower portion of Figure 6 illustrating a recess with a keyway formed therein.

Figure 8A is a perspective view of the first embodiment of the food container with the lid removed and the key member inserted into the recess with the keyway formed therein.

Figure 8B is a cross-sectional view of the structures of Figure 8A taken along a line 8B-8B of the Figure 8A.

Figure 9A is a perspective view of the first embodiment of the food container with the lid removed and the key member inserted in the keyway.

Figure 9B is a cross-sectional view of the structures of Figure 9A taken along a line 9B-9B of the Figure 9A.

Figure 10A is a perspective view of the first embodiment of the food container with the lid positioned on the lower portion.

Figure 10B is a cross-sectional view of the structures of Figure 10A taken along a line 10B-10B of the Figure 10A.

Figure 11A is a perspective view of the first embodiment of the food container with the lid fully coupled to the lower portion.

Figure 11B is a cross-sectional view of the structures of Figure 11A taken along a line 11B-11B of the Figure 11A.

Figure 12 is an enlargement of a portion of Figure 8B.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0004] Like reference numerals have been used in Figures 1-12 to identify like components. Figure 1 is a perspective exploded view of a first embodiment of a food container 10A. Figure 2 is a perspective exploded view of a second embodiment of a food container 10B. The containers 10A and 10B each includes a removable lid 20, a lower portion 30, a seal 40, an optional removable liner or tray (e.g., a tray 50A illustrated in Figure 1, a tray 50B illustrated in Figure 2, and the like), and an optional removable freezer pack 60. The lid 20, the lower portion 30, the seal 40, the tray 50A, and the tray 50B may each be configured to withstand washing in a conventional household dishwasher (not shown). In other words, the lid 20, the lower portion 30, the seal 40, the tray 50A, and the tray 50B may each be dishwasher safe.

[0005] The containers 10A and 10B may each be used to transport one or more food items (e.g., a sandwich 70 illustrated in Figure 2). The containers 10A and 10B may each be configured for use as a lunch container. The containers 10A and 10B differ from one another with respect to the structure of the optional tray. Specifically, the container 10A includes the tray 50A, and the container 10B includes the tray 50B. Aside from the optional tray, the containers 10A and 10B are substantially identical to one another.

Lid

[0006] The lid 20 may be constructed from a flexible plastic material suitable for food storage. If desired, the lid 20 may be transparent or translucent. Figure 3 is perspective view of the container 10A with the lid 20 removed and positioned alongside the lower portion 30. The lid 20 has a body portion 200 with a peripheral edge portion 210, and a plurality of bendable or flexible flaps 212A-212D positioned along the peripheral edge portion 210. The peripheral edge portion 210 has a downward opening channel 211 formed therein configured to receive at least a portion of the seal 40 when the lid 20 is coupled to the lower portion 30.

[0007] In the embodiment illustrated, the lid 20 is generally square or rectangular in shape. Thus, the periph-

eral edge portion 210 has four substantially linear edges 214A-214D. In the embodiment illustrated, the flaps 212A-212D are positioned along the edges 214A-214D, respectively. However, this is not a requirement. In alternate embodiments, more than one flap may be positioned along one or more of the edges 214A-214D. Further, one or more of the edges 214A-214D may not have a flap positioned therealong. Additionally, the lid 20 may have shapes other than square or rectangular. For example, the lid 20 may have a shape this generally triangular, circular, trapezoidal, arbitrary, fanciful, and the like as may the portions of the lower portion 30 to which the lid is attached.

[0008] Each of the flaps 212A-212D is selectively rotatable (at or near where the flap connects to the peripheral edge portion 210) relative to the body portion 200 between an unlatched position (see Figures 1, 3, 8A, 8B, 9A, and 9B) and a latched position (see Figures 2, 11A, and 11B). In the unlatched position, the flaps 212A-212D may be characterized as being straight (or substantially coplanar) relative to the body portion 200 or at least extending laterally outward from the body portion 200. In the latched position, the flaps 212A-212D may be characterized as being bent relative to the body portion 200.

[0009] In the embodiment illustrated, each of the flaps 212A-212D is selectively bendable (at or near where the flap connects to the peripheral edge portion 210) relative to the body portion 200 between the unlatched and latched positions. In the embodiment illustrated, the flaps 212A-212D each have a thinner hinge portion 226 positioned adjacent the peripheral edge portion 210. In the illustrated embodiment, the hinge portion 226 is shown as a living hinge. However, other types of hinges may be used. The hinge portion 226 defines a bending location for each of the flaps 212A-212D. Each of the flaps 212A-212D has an inwardly facing surface 220 that faces the lower portion 30 when the flap is in the latched position (see Figures 2, 11A, and 11B) and the lid 20 is coupled to the lower portion 30 as illustrated in Figures 11A and 11B.

[0010] The flap 212A has a key member 230 positioned along the inwardly facing surface 220. The flaps 212B-212D without the key member 230, each have an inwardly projecting tab 240 positioned along the inwardly facing surface 220. Each of the flaps 212B-212D also has a gripable distal end portion 222 that curves outwardly away from the lower portion 30 when the lid 20 is coupled to the lower portion 30. In the embodiment illustrated, the inwardly projecting tab 240 is adjacent the gripable distal end portion 222.

[0011] Turning to Figures 4 and 5, the key member 230 projects from the inwardly facing surface 220 of the flap 212A. The key member 230 illustrated includes a support portion 250 having an end portion 252 spaced apart from the inwardly facing surface 220. An overhang portion 254 is positioned on the end portion 252 of the support portion 250. Thus, the key member 230 may be characterized as having a T-shaped cross-sectional shape.

[0012] Returning to Figure 3, the inwardly projecting tab 240 of each of the flaps 212B-212D extends at an angle away from the inwardly facing surface 220 toward the peripheral edge portion 210 of the lid 20. The inwardly projecting tab 240 has a distal end portion 260 with a lip 262 projecting therefrom toward the peripheral edge portion 210 of the lid 20. The inwardly projecting tab 240 is configured to be bent (or flexed) toward and away from the peripheral edge portion 210 of the lid 20. When the flaps 212B-212D are in the latched position (see Figures 2, 11A, and 11B) and the lid 20 is coupled to the lower portion 30 as illustrated in Figures 11A and 11B, the gripable distal end portion 222 of each of the flaps 212B-212D is positioned to be gripped and pulled.

Lower Portion

[0013] The lower portion 30 may be constructed from a flexible or rigid plastic material suitable for food storage. Turning to Figure 6, the lower portion 30 has a base portion 310 and an upwardly extending sidewall 312 that extends upwardly from the base portion 310. The base portion 310 and the sidewall 312 define an upwardly opening interior compartment 320 into which the optional freezer pack 60 (see Figures 1, 2, 8A, 9A, 10A, 11A, and 12) and the optional tray (e.g., the tray 50A illustrated in Figure 1 or the tray 50B illustrated in Figure 2) may be received. In the embodiment illustrated, the sidewall 312 is curved or tapered so that the interior compartment 320 narrows near the base portion 310. However, this is not a requirement.

[0014] The sidewall 312 has a distal portion 330 that has a shape that corresponds to the shape of the lid 20. In the embodiment illustrated in Figures 1-3 and 8A-11B, the lid 20 is generally rectangular or square in shape. Thus, the distal portion 330 is also generally rectangular or square in shape. A continuous projection 332 extends upwardly from the distal portion 330. The projection 332 is offset toward the interior compartment 320 to define an outer ledge 334 along the distal portion 330. As may be viewed in Figure 12, the seal 40 is positionable upon the distal portion 330 of the sidewall 312. The projection 332 is configured to be received by the seal 40 and when so received, to position the seal 40 to be received inside the downward opening channel 211 of the lid 20 when the lid is coupled to the lower portion 30. Thus, when the lid 20 is coupled to the lower portion 30, the peripheral edge portion 210 of the lid 20 rests upon the seal 40, which is positioned upon the distal portion 330 of the sidewall 312.

[0015] Returning to Figure 3, a different recess is formed in the exterior side of the sidewall 312 for each of the flaps 212A-212D. In the embodiment illustrated, recesses 340A, 340B, 340C (see Figures 1 and 2), and 340D (see Figure 6) correspond to the flaps 212A, 212B, 212C, and 212D, respectively. Each recess that corresponds to a flap having the key member 230 has a keyway formed therein. Thus, in the embodiment illustrated

in Figure 3, the recess 340A (which corresponds to the flap 212A) has a keyway 342 formed therein. Turning to Figure 8B, each recess (e.g., the recess 340C) that corresponds to a flap (e.g., the flap 212C) having the inwardly projecting tab 240 has a lip 344 formed therein. Thus, in the embodiment illustrated, the recesses 340B, 340C (see Figures 1 and 2), and 340D (see Figure 6) (which correspond to the flaps 212B, 212C, and 212D, respectively) each has the lip 344 formed therein.

[0016] Turning to Figure 3, the recess 340A has a lower portion 350 adjacent an upper portion 352. The lower portion 350 is configured to receive the key member 230 laterally but not to retain the key member 230 inside the recess 340A. The keyway 342 is formed in the upper portion 352 of the recess 340A. Turning to Figure 7, the keyway 342 has an overhang portion 354 that partially encloses a portion 356 of the recess 340A. The partially enclosed portion 356 is configured to receive the overhang portion 254 (see Figures 4 and 5) of the key member 230 (see Figures 4 and 5). The partially enclosed portion 356 has an opening 358 adjacent the lower portion 350 of the recess 340A. The opening 358 is configured to permit the overhang portion 254 to pass therethrough into the partially enclosed portion 356 of the recess 340A.

[0017] A passage 360 is formed in the overhang portion 354. The passage 360 is configured to receive the support portion 250 (see Figures 4 and 5) of the key member 230 (see Figures 4 and 5) and permit the support portion 250 to slide relative to the overhang portion 354. The passage 360 is further configured not to allow the overhang portion 254 (see Figures 4 and 5) of the key member 230 (see Figures 4 and 5) to pass through the passage 360. Thus, the overhang portion 354 of the keyway 342 prevents lateral disengagement of the overhang portion 254 of the key member 230 from the partially enclosed portion 356 of the keyway 342. However, the key member 230 may be disengaged from the partially enclosed portion 356 of the keyway 342 by sliding the key member 230 through the opening 358 in the partially enclosed portion 356 of the keyway 342 and into the lower portion 350 of the recess 340A. Once inside the lower portion 350, the key member 230 may be removed laterally from the recess 340A.

[0018] Returning to Figure 3, the key member 230 may be aligned with the lower portion 350, and inserted into the lower portion 350 by moving the lid 20 laterally in a direction indicated by an arrow "A." Once received inside the lower portion 350 of the recess 340A, the key member 230 is slidable within the recess 340A between the lower portion 350 and the upper portion 352. Thus, the key member 230 may be positioned in the lower portion 350 and slid upwardly therefrom into the opening 358 (see Figure 7) of the keyway 342. Further, the key member 230 may be slid downwardly from the keyway 342 into the lower portion 350 of the recess 340A.

[0019] To couple the lid 20 to the lower portion 30, the key member 230 is first positioned inside the lower portion 350 (see Figure 3) of the recess 340A as illustrated

in Figures 8A and 8B. Then, the lid 20 is lifted upward (in a direction indicated by an arrow "B") until the key member 230 (see Figure 3) slides into the opening 358 (see Figure 7) of the keyway 342 (see Figure 3) as illustrated in Figures 9A and 9B. Next, the lid 20 is rotated (in a direction indicated by an arrow "C") toward the lower portion 30, which bends the flap 212A toward the latched position as illustrated in Figures 10A and 10B. When the flap 212A is in the latched position, the flaps 212B, 212C, and 212D are bent (in directions indicated by arrows "D1" to "D3," respectively) toward the recesses 340B, 340C (see Figure 10B), and 340D (see Figure 6), respectively, of the lower portion 30 with sufficient force to push the inwardly projecting tabs 240 of the flaps 212B-212D inside the recesses 340B-340D, respectively, and into latching engagement with the lips 344. Inside each of the recesses 340B-340D, the inwardly projecting tab 240 grips the lip 344 to couple the lid 20 firmly to the lower portion 30. The lip 262 (see Figure 10B) on the distal end portion 260 (see Figure 10B) of the tab 240 may help grip or otherwise maintain engagement between the tab 240 and the lip 344.

[0020] Figures 11A and 11B illustrate the lid 20 fully coupled to the lower portion 30. Returning to Figures 10A and 10B, to uncouple the lid 20 from the lower portion 30, the flaps 212B-212D are bent away from the sidewall 312 of the lower portion 30 (in directions opposite those indicated by arrows "D1" to "D3," respectively) toward the unlatched position with sufficient force to disengage the inwardly projecting tabs 240 from the lips 344 and the recesses 340B-340D. Next, referring to Figures 9A and 9B, the lid 20 is rotated (in a direction opposite that indicated by the arrow "C") away from the lower portion 30, which bends the flap 212A toward the unlatched position (in which the flap 212A extends laterally from the body portion 200 of the lid but the key member 230 (see Figure 3) positioned inside the keyway 342 (see Figure 3)). Then, referring to Figures 8A and 8B, the lid 20 is pushed downwardly or lowered (in a direction opposite that indicated by the arrow "B") until the key member 230 (see Figure 3) slides out of the keyway 342 (see Figure 3) and into the lower portion 350 (see Figure 3) of the recess 340A. Then, referring to Figures 3, the lid 20 is separated from the lower portion 30 by removing the key member 230 from inside the lower portion 350 of the recess 340A (in a direction opposite that indicated by the arrow "A"). With the lid 20 removed, the lid and the lower portion 30 may be separately washed. Separation may also be convenient for placement of one or more food items, one of the optional trays 50A or 50B, and/or the optional freezer pack 60 inside the interior compartment 320 or for their removal therefrom.

[0021] Turning to Figure 6, one or more inwardly projecting tray supports 370 may be positioned on the sidewall 312 along the interior compartment 320. In the embodiment illustrated, the lower portion 30 has a different tray support 370 for each of the recesses 340A-340D that is positioned on the opposite side of the sidewall 312

from the recesses 340A-340D. However, those of ordinary skill in the art appreciate that the lower portion 30 may include a different number of tray supports. For example, a single continuous tray support may extend along the sidewall 312 and into the interior compartment 320.

Seal

[0022] The seal 40 may be constructed from a flexible or compressible material suitable for food storage. Turning to Figure 11B, the lid 20 is configured to be coupled to the lower portion 30 with the seal 40 positioned between the lid and the lower portion. Together the lid 20 and the lower portion 30 define a hollow interior 400 in which food items may be stored. The seal 40 may be configured to form a leak proof seal between the lid 20 and the lower portion 30 that maintains liquids inside the hollow interior 400. The seal 40 may be configured to form an airtight seal to help keep food items fresh inside the hollow interior 400.

Optional Trays

[0023] Returning to Figures 1 and 2, each of the optional trays 50A and 50B may be constructed from a flexible or rigid plastic material suitable for food storage. Each of the optional trays 50A and 50B has a bottom 510 and a sidewall 512 that extends upwardly from the bottom 510. The sidewall 512 has an upper edge portion 514 opposite the bottom 510.

[0024] An outwardly projecting portion 516 is positioned along the upper edge portion 514. In the embodiment illustrated, the outwardly projecting portion 516 extends continuously along the entire upper edge portion 514. However, this is not a requirement and embodiments in which the outwardly projecting portion 516 extends along less than the entire upper edge portion 514 and/or is discontinuous along the upper edge portion 514 are within the scope of the present teachings. The outwardly projecting portion 516 has a lower support surface 518 (see Figure 12). The outwardly projecting portion 516 is configured to rest upon and be supported by the tray supports 370. In the embodiment illustrated in Figure 12, the lower support surface 518 of the outwardly projecting portion 516 rests upon the tray supports 370. The tray supports 370 position the tray (e.g., the tray 50A, the tray 50B, and the like) relative to the base portion 310 of the lower portion 30.

[0025] In the embodiment illustrated, a gap 520 is defined between the tray (e.g., the tray 50A or the tray 50B) and the lower portion 30. Together the tray (e.g., the tray 50A or the tray 50B) and the lower portion 30 (with air in the gap 520) provide double-walled insulation for any food items stored in the tray. This double-walled insulation may be used to help maintain the temperature of warm (or heated) food items stored inside the container 10A or the container 10B. Alternatively, the double-

walled insulation may be used to help maintain the temperature of cool (or frozen) food items inside the container 10A or the container 10B. Further, the optional freezer pack 60 may be positioned inside the gap 520.

[0026] Returning to Figures 1 and 2, the bottom 510 and the sidewall 512 define an upwardly opening interior 530 configured to hold one or more food items (e.g., the sandwich 70 illustrated in Figure 2). Unlike the tray 50B illustrated in Figure 2, the tray 50A illustrated in Figure 1 includes dividers 540A-540D. The dividers 540A-540D divide the upwardly opening interior 530 into sub-compartments 542A-542D. If desired, one or more food items may be stored in each of the sub-compartments 542A-542D.

Optional Freezer Pack

[0027] Returning to Figure 11B, the optional freezer pack 60 is configured to be positioned inside the interior compartment 320 of the lower portion 30. In the embodiment illustrated, the freezer pack 60 is positioned on the base portion 310 of the lower portion 30. The optional tray 50A (or the optional tray 50B illustrated in Figure 2) may be positioned inside the interior compartment 320 directly above the optional freezer pack 60. In such embodiments, the freezer pack 60 may be positioned in the gap 520. In the embodiment illustrated, the tray 50A (or the tray 50B) rests upon the optional freezer pack 60. However, this is not a requirement. The optional freezer pack 60 may help cool the interior compartment 320 to help prevent food items stored in the interior compartment 320 from spoiling. While a single freezer pack has been illustrated, the container 10A and/or the container 10B may include two or more freezer packs. Further, the contents of the freezer pack 60 need not be frozen. In alternate embodiments, one or more warming elements or packs may be substituted for the freezer pack 60.

[0028] The invention includes, but is not limited to, the following aspects:

1. A container comprising:

a lower portion comprising a base portion and a sidewall extending away from the base portion, the sidewall comprising a distal portion opposite the base portion, the sidewall further comprising a keyway, the base portion and the sidewall defining a hollow interior having an opening defined by the distal portion of the sidewall; and a lid removably couplable to the sidewall of the lower portion, the lid comprising a body portion having a peripheral portion, a flap positioned on the peripheral portion, and a key member positioned on the flap, the key member being receivable inside the keyway, the body portion of the lid being configured to be pivoted relative to the flap when the key member is received inside the keyway to position the body portion adjacent to

the distal portion of the sidewall to close the opening of the hollow interior defined by the distal portion of the sidewall.

2. The container of aspect 1, further comprising: 5

a seal extending along the distal portion of the sidewall of the lower portion, the seal being positioned between the peripheral portion of the body portion of the lid and the distal portion of the sidewall of the lower portion to form a leak proof seal therebetween when the body portion is adjacent the distal portion of the sidewall and closing the opening of the hollow interior defined by the distal portion of the sidewall. 10 15

3. The container of aspect 1, further comprising:

a removable tray positioned inside the hollow interior of the lower portion. 20

4. The container of aspect 3, further comprising:

a freezer pack positioned between the base portion of the lower portion and the tray. 25

5. The container of aspect 3, wherein the lower portion comprises at least one support projecting into the hollow interior from the sidewall, and the tray comprises an outwardly projecting portion configured to rest upon and be supported by the at least one support of the lower portion. 30

6. The container of aspect 5, wherein the tray comprises a base portion, and the at least one support of the lower portion is positioned such that when the outwardly projecting portion of the tray rests upon and is supported by the at least one support of the lower portion, a gap is defined between the base portion of the tray and the base portion of the lower portion. 35 40

7. The container of aspect 6, further comprising:

at least one freezer pack or at least one warming element sized to be positionable within the gap. 45

8. The container of aspect 1, further comprising:

a removable tray positioned inside the hollow interior of the lower portion, the tray comprising an upwardly opening interior divided into a plurality of sub-compartments each configured to hold one or more food items. 50

9. The container of aspect 1, wherein the sidewall of the lower portion comprises a first recess having an upper portion adjacent a lower portion, the keyway is formed in the upper portion of the first recess, 55

the lower portion of the first recess is configured to receive the key member, and

the key member is receivable inside the keyway by sliding the key member within the first recess from the lower portion into the keyway formed in the upper portion of the first recess.

10. The container of aspect 9, wherein the flap is a first flap,

the sidewall comprises a second recess having a lip portion,

the lid further comprises a second flap positioned on the peripheral portion of the body portion,

the second flap comprises a tab, and

the second flap is pivotable relative to the body portion to position the tab inside the second recess and into engagement with the lip when the body portion of the lid is positioned adjacent the distal portion of the sidewall and closes the opening of the hollow interior defined by the distal portion of the sidewall.

11. The container of aspect 9, wherein the key member has a support portion and an overhang portion that at least partially overhangs the support portion, the keyway has an overhang portion that partially encloses a portion of the upper portion of the first recess,

a passage is formed in the overhang portion of the keyway,

the support portion of the key member is configured to pass through the passage to position the overhang portion of the key member inside the partially enclosed portion of the keyway, and

the overhang portion of the keyway prevents lateral removal of the overhang portion of the key member from the keyway.

12. The container of aspect 1, wherein the flap is a first flap,

the sidewall comprises a recess having a lip portion, the lid further comprises a second flap positioned on the peripheral portion of the body portion,

the second flap comprises a tab, and

the second flap is pivotable relative to the body portion to position the tab inside the recess and into engagement with the lip when the body portion of the lid is positioned adjacent to the distal portion of the sidewall and closes the opening of the hollow interior defined by the distal portion of the sidewall.

13. A food container for storing one or more food items, the container comprising:

a lower portion having an opening into an interior compartment configured to receive and store the one or more food items, a keyway spaced apart from the opening, and a recess spaced apart from both the opening and the keyway; and a lid removably couplable to the lower portion to close the opening, the lid comprising a key member positioned on a first flap and a tab positioned on a second flap, the lid being coupled to the

lower portion when the key member is positioned inside the keyway and the tab is received inside the recess, the lid being selectively rotatable toward and away from the lower portion when the key member is inside the keyway, and the second flap being rotatable relative to the lower portion to selectively position the tab inside and outside the recess.

14. The container of aspect 13, wherein the first flap is bendable, and

the first flap bends when the key member is inside the keyway and the lid is rotated toward the lower portion.

15. The container of aspect 13, further comprising:

a seal positioned between the lid and the lower portion, the seal being configured to seal the opening into the interior compartment to prevent leaks therefrom.

16. The container of aspect 13 for use with the one or more food items having a temperature, the container further comprising:

a tray positionable inside the interior compartment of the lower portion configured to receive and store the one or more food items, an insulating air gap being defined between the tray and the lower portion when the tray is positioned inside the interior compartment of the lower portion, the insulating air gap helping to maintain the temperature of the one or more food items.

17. The container of aspect 13, further comprising:

a freezer pack; and
a tray positionable inside the interior compartment of the lower portion configured to receive and store the one or more food items, a gap being defined between the tray and the lower portion when the tray is positioned inside the interior compartment of the lower portion, the gap being sized to receive the freeze pack therein between the tray and the lower portion.

18. The container of aspect 13, wherein the lid and the lower portion are each dishwasher safe.

19. A container comprising:

a lid having a peripheral portion with a plurality of flaps positioned therealong, a key flap of the plurality of flaps having a key member, others of the plurality of flaps being locking flaps each having a tab, each of the plurality of flaps being rotatable relative to the peripheral portion; and
a lower portion having an interior compartment at least partially defined by a sidewall, the side-

wall having a plurality of recesses formed therein, a keyway recess of the plurality of recesses having a keyway formed therein, others of the plurality of recesses being locking recesses each having a lip formed therein, the key member of the key flap being receivable inside the keyway of the keyway recess, the peripheral portion of the lid being positionable adjacent the sidewall of the lower portion when the key member is received inside the keyway, the tab of each of the locking flaps being positioned to be received inside a corresponding different one of the locking recesses to engage with the lip formed therein to couple the lid to the lower portion when the peripheral portion of the lid is adjacent the sidewall of the lower portion.

20. The container of aspect 19, wherein each of the plurality of flaps is connected to the peripheral portion of the lid by a hinge portion that defines a bending location for the flap, each of the plurality of flaps being bendable at the bending location and thereby rotatable relative to the peripheral portion.

21. The container of aspect 19, wherein the keyway recess has an upper portion adjacent a lower portion, the keyway of the keyway recess is formed in the upper portion of the keyway recess, the lower portion of the keyway recess is configured to receive the key member of the key flap, the key member is receivable inside the keyway by sliding the key member within the keyway recess from the lower portion into the keyway formed in the upper portion of the keyway recess, the key member has a support portion and an overhang portion that at least partially overhangs the support portion, the keyway has an overhang portion that partially encloses a portion of the upper portion of the keyway recess, a passage is formed in the overhang portion of the keyway, the support portion of the key member is configured to pass through the passage to position the overhang portion of the key member inside the partially enclosed portion of the keyway, and the overhang portion of the keyway prevents lateral removal of the overhang portion of the key member from the keyway.

[0029] The foregoing described embodiments depict different components contained within, or connected with, different other components. It is to be understood that such depicted architectures are merely exemplary, and that in fact many other architectures can be implemented which achieve the same functionality. In a conceptual sense, any arrangement of components to achieve the same functionality is effectively "associated" such that the desired functionality is achieved. Hence,

any two components herein combined to achieve a particular functionality can be seen as "associated with" each other such that the desired functionality is achieved, irrespective of architectures or intermedial components. Likewise, any two components so associated can also be viewed as being "operably connected," or "operably coupled," to each other to achieve the desired functionality.

[0030] While particular embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that, based upon the teachings herein, changes and modifications may be made without departing from this invention and its broader aspects and, therefore, the appended claims are to encompass within their scope all such changes and modifications as are within the true spirit and scope of this invention. Furthermore, it is to be understood that the invention is solely defined by the appended claims. It will be understood by those within the art that, in general, terms used herein, and especially in the appended claims (e.g., bodies of the appended claims) are generally intended as "open" terms (e.g., the term "including" should be interpreted as "including but not limited to," the term "having" should be interpreted as "having at least," the term "includes" should be interpreted as "includes but is not limited to," etc.). It will be further understood by those within the art that if a specific number of an introduced claim recitation is intended, such an intent will be explicitly recited in the claim, and in the absence of such recitation no such intent is present. For example, as an aid to understanding, the following appended claims may contain usage of the introductory phrases "at least one" and "one or more" to introduce claim recitations. However, the use of such phrases should not be construed to imply that the introduction of a claim recitation by the indefinite articles "a" or "an" limits any particular claim containing such introduced claim recitation to inventions containing only one such recitation, even when the same claim includes the introductory phrases "one or more" or "at least one" and indefinite articles such as "a" or "an" (e.g., "a" and/or "an" should typically be interpreted to mean "at least one" or "one or more"); the same holds true for the use of definite articles used to introduce claim recitations. In addition, even if a specific number of an introduced claim recitation is explicitly recited, those skilled in the art will recognize that such recitation should typically be interpreted to mean *at least* the recited number (e.g., the bare recitation of "two recitations," without other modifiers, typically means *at least* two recitations, or *two or more* recitations).

[0031] Accordingly, the invention is not limited except as by the appended claims.

Claims

1. A container comprising:

a lower portion comprising a base portion and a sidewall extending away from the base portion, the sidewall comprising a distal portion opposite the base portion, the sidewall further comprising a keyway, the base portion and the sidewall defining a hollow interior having an opening defined by the distal portion of the sidewall; and a lid removably couplable to the sidewall of the lower portion, the lid comprising a body portion having a peripheral portion, a flap positioned on the peripheral portion, and a key member positioned on the flap, the key member being receivable inside the keyway, the body portion of the lid being configured to be pivoted relative to the flap when the key member is received inside the keyway to position the body portion adjacent to the distal portion of the sidewall to close the opening of the hollow interior defined by the distal portion of the sidewall.

2. The container of claim 1, further comprising:

a seal extending along the distal portion of the sidewall of the lower portion, the seal being positioned between the peripheral portion of the body portion of the lid and the distal portion of the sidewall of the lower portion to form a leak proof seal therebetween when the body portion is adjacent the distal portion of the sidewall and closing the opening of the hollow interior defined by the distal portion of the sidewall.

3. The container of claim 1, further comprising:

a removable tray positioned inside the hollow interior of the lower portion; and optionally, a freezer pack positioned between the base portion of the lower portion and the tray.

4. The container of claim 1, wherein the lower portion comprises at least one support projecting into the hollow interior from the sidewall, the container further comprises a removable tray positioned inside the hollow interior of the lower portion, the tray comprises an outwardly projecting portion configured to rest upon and be supported by the at least one support of the lower portion, optionally, the tray comprises a base portion and the at least one support of the lower portion is positioned such that when the outwardly projecting portion of the tray rests upon and is supported by the at least one support of the lower portion, a gap is defined between the base portion of the tray and the base portion of the lower portion, and optionally, the container further comprises at least one freezer pack or at least one warming element sized to be positionable within the gap.

5. The container of claim 1, further comprising:

a removable tray positioned inside the hollow interior of the lower portion, the tray comprising an upwardly opening interior divided into a plurality of sub-compartments each configured to hold one or more food items.

6. The container of claim 1, wherein the sidewall of the lower portion comprises a first recess having an upper portion adjacent a lower portion, the keyway is formed in the upper portion of the first recess, the lower portion of the first recess is configured to receive the key member, and the key member is receivable inside the keyway by sliding the key member within the first recess from the lower portion into the keyway formed in the upper portion of the first recess.

7. The container of claim 1, wherein the flap is a first flap, the sidewall comprises a second recess having a lip portion, the lid further comprises a second flap positioned on the peripheral portion of the body portion, the second flap comprises a tab, and the second flap is pivotable relative to the body portion to position the tab inside the second recess and into engagement with the lip when the body portion of the lid is positioned adjacent the distal portion of the sidewall and closes the opening of the hollow interior defined by the distal portion of the sidewall.

8. The container of claim 1, wherein the key member has a support portion and an overhang portion that at least partially overhangs the support portion, the keyway has an overhang portion that partially encloses a portion of the upper portion of the first recess, a passage is formed in the overhang portion of the keyway, the support portion of the key member is configured to pass through the passage to position the overhang portion of the key member inside the partially enclosed portion of the keyway, and the overhang portion of the keyway prevents lateral removal of the overhang portion of the key member from the keyway.

9. The container of claim 1, wherein the flap is a first flap, the sidewall comprises a recess having a lip portion, the lid further comprises a second flap positioned on the peripheral portion of the body portion, the second flap comprises a tab, and the second flap is pivotable relative to the body portion to position the tab inside the recess and into

engagement with the lip when the body portion of the lid is positioned adjacent to the distal portion of the sidewall and closes the opening of the hollow interior defined by the distal portion of the sidewall.

10. The container of claim 1, wherein the hollow interior is configured to receive and store one or more food items having a temperature, and optionally, the container further comprises a tray positioned inside the hollow interior of the lower portion configured to receive and store the one or more food items, an insulating air gap being defined between the tray and the lower portion when the tray is positioned inside the interior compartment of the lower portion, the insulating air gap helping to maintain the temperature of the one or more food items.

11. The container of claim 1, wherein the flap is a first flap, the sidewall comprises a recess spaced apart from both the opening and the keyway, the lid comprises a tab positioned on a second flap, the lid is coupled to the lower portion when the key member is positioned inside the keyway and the tab is received inside the recess, and the second flap is rotatable relative to the lower portion to selectively position the tab inside and outside the recess.

12. The container of claim 1, wherein the lid and the lower portion are each dishwasher safe.

13. The container of claim 1, wherein the flap is a key flap, a plurality of locking flaps are positioned along the peripheral portion of the lid, each of the plurality of locking flaps has a tab, each of the plurality of flaps is rotatable relative to the peripheral portion, the sidewall has a plurality of recesses formed therein, a keyway recess of the plurality of recesses has the keyway formed therein, others of the plurality of recesses are locking recesses each having a lip formed therein, and the tab of each of the locking flaps is positioned to be received inside a corresponding different one of the locking recesses to engage with the lip formed therein to couple the lid to the lower portion when the body portion is adjacent to the distal portion of the sidewall of the lower portion.

14. The container of claim 13, wherein each of the plurality of flaps is connected to the peripheral portion of the lid by a hinge portion that defines a bending location for the flap, each of the plurality of flaps being bendable at the bending location and thereby rotatable relative to the peripheral portion.

15. The container of claim 13, wherein the keyway recess has an upper portion adjacent a lower portion, the keyway of the keyway recess is formed in the upper portion of the keyway recess,
the lower portion of the keyway recess is configured to receive the key member of the key flap,
the key member is receivable inside the keyway by sliding the key member within the keyway recess from the lower portion into the keyway formed in the upper portion of the keyway recess,
the key member has a support portion and an overhang portion that at least partially overhangs the support portion,
the keyway has an overhang portion that partially encloses a portion of the upper portion of the keyway recess,
a passage is formed in the overhang portion of the keyway,
the support portion of the key member is configured to pass through the passage to position the overhang portion of the key member inside the partially enclosed portion of the keyway, and
the overhang portion of the keyway prevents lateral removal of the overhang portion of the key member from the keyway.

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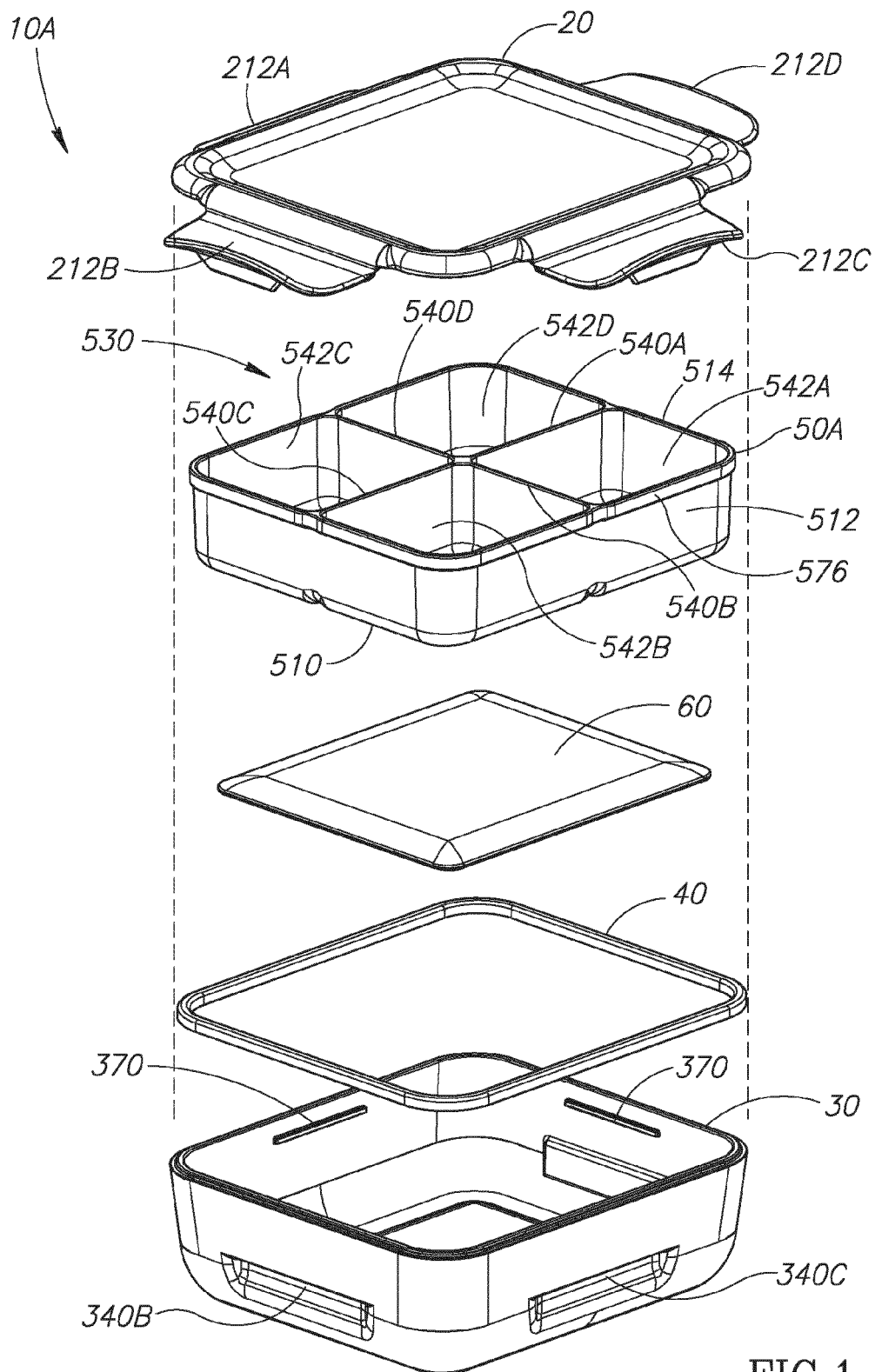


FIG.1

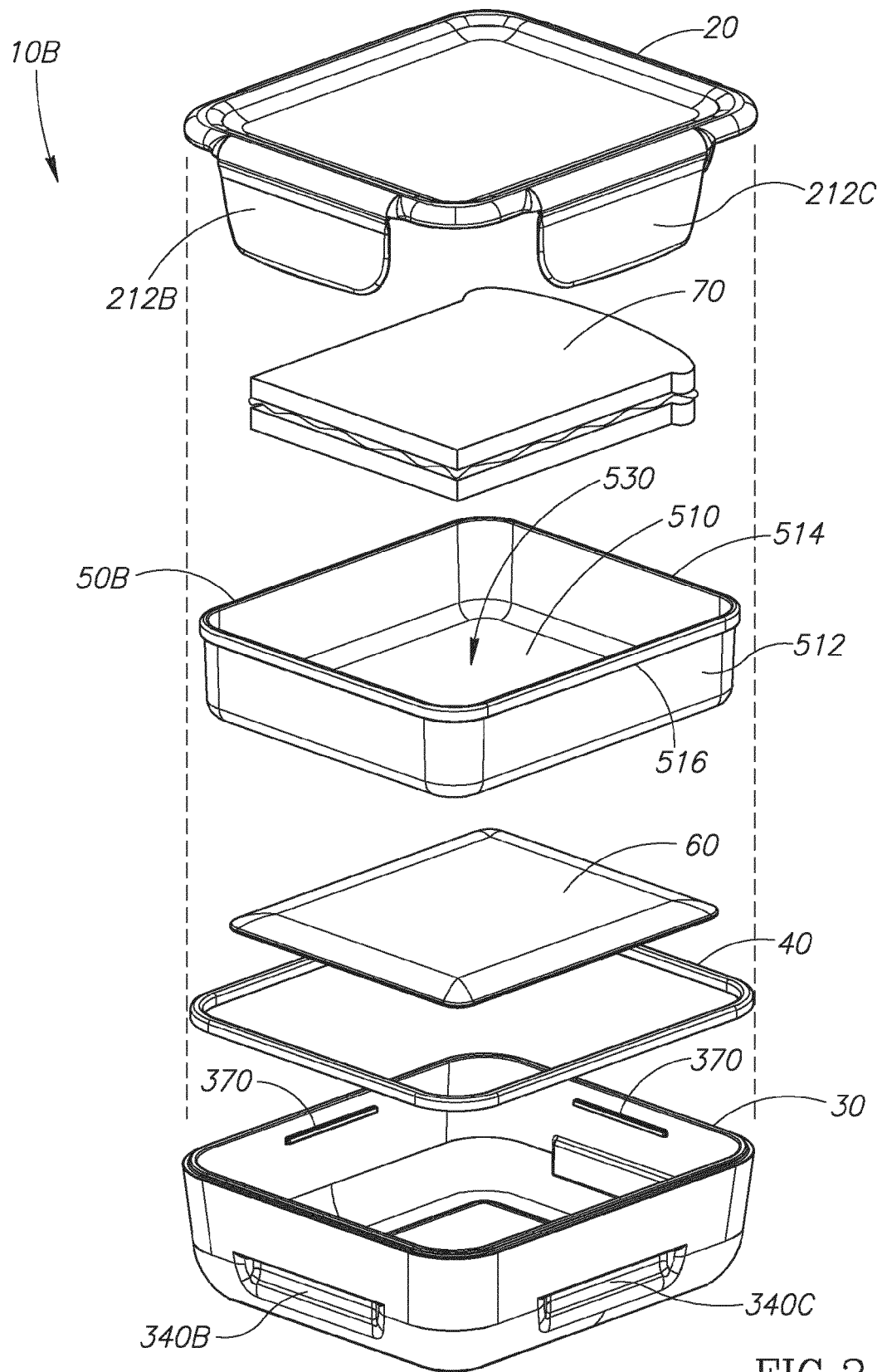


FIG.2

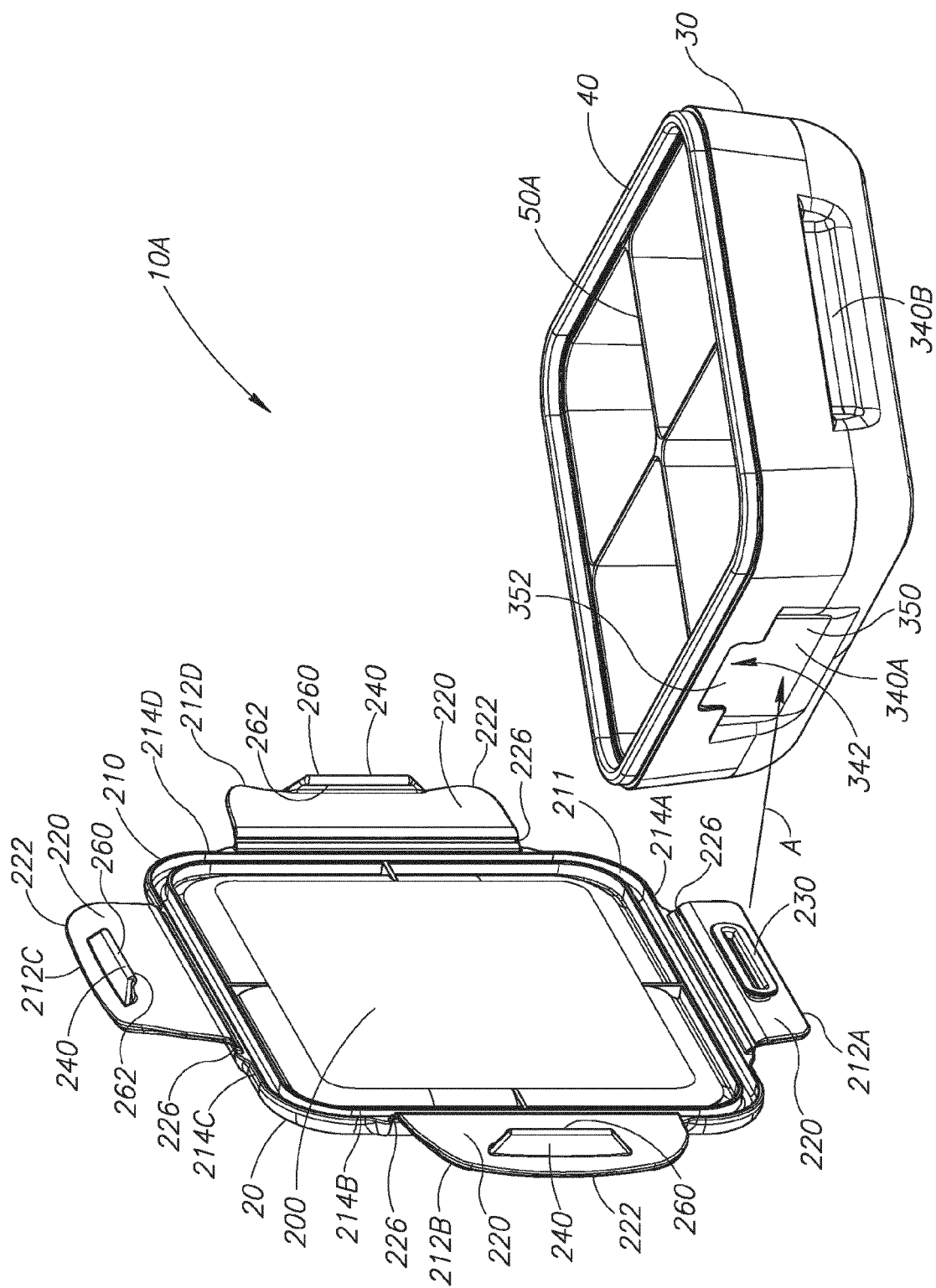


FIG. 3

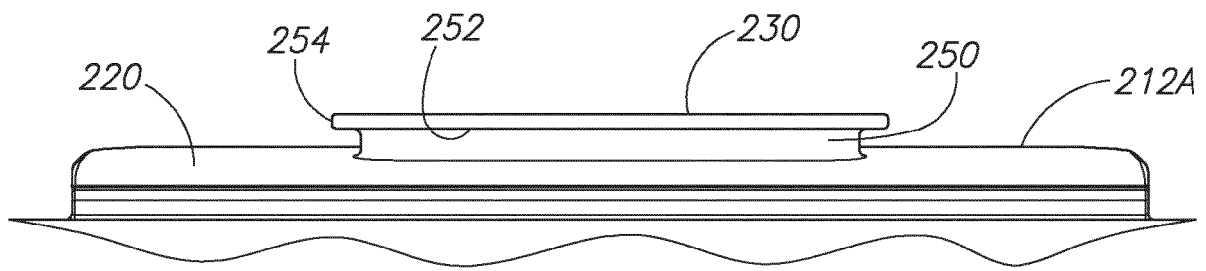


FIG. 4

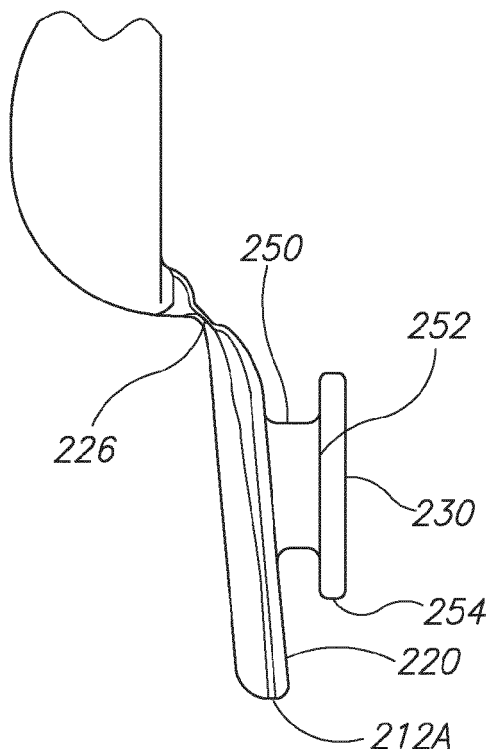


FIG. 5

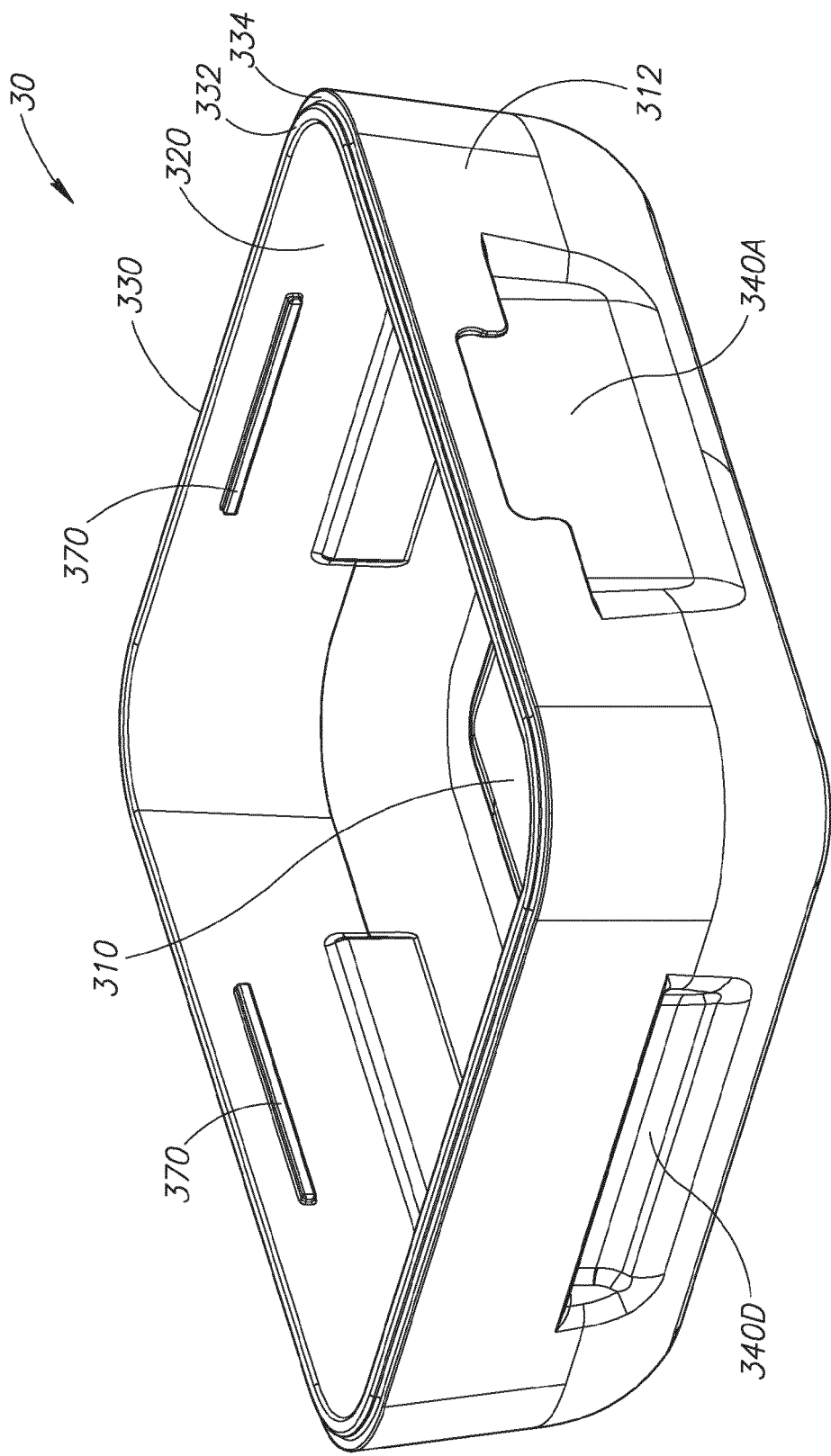


FIG. 6

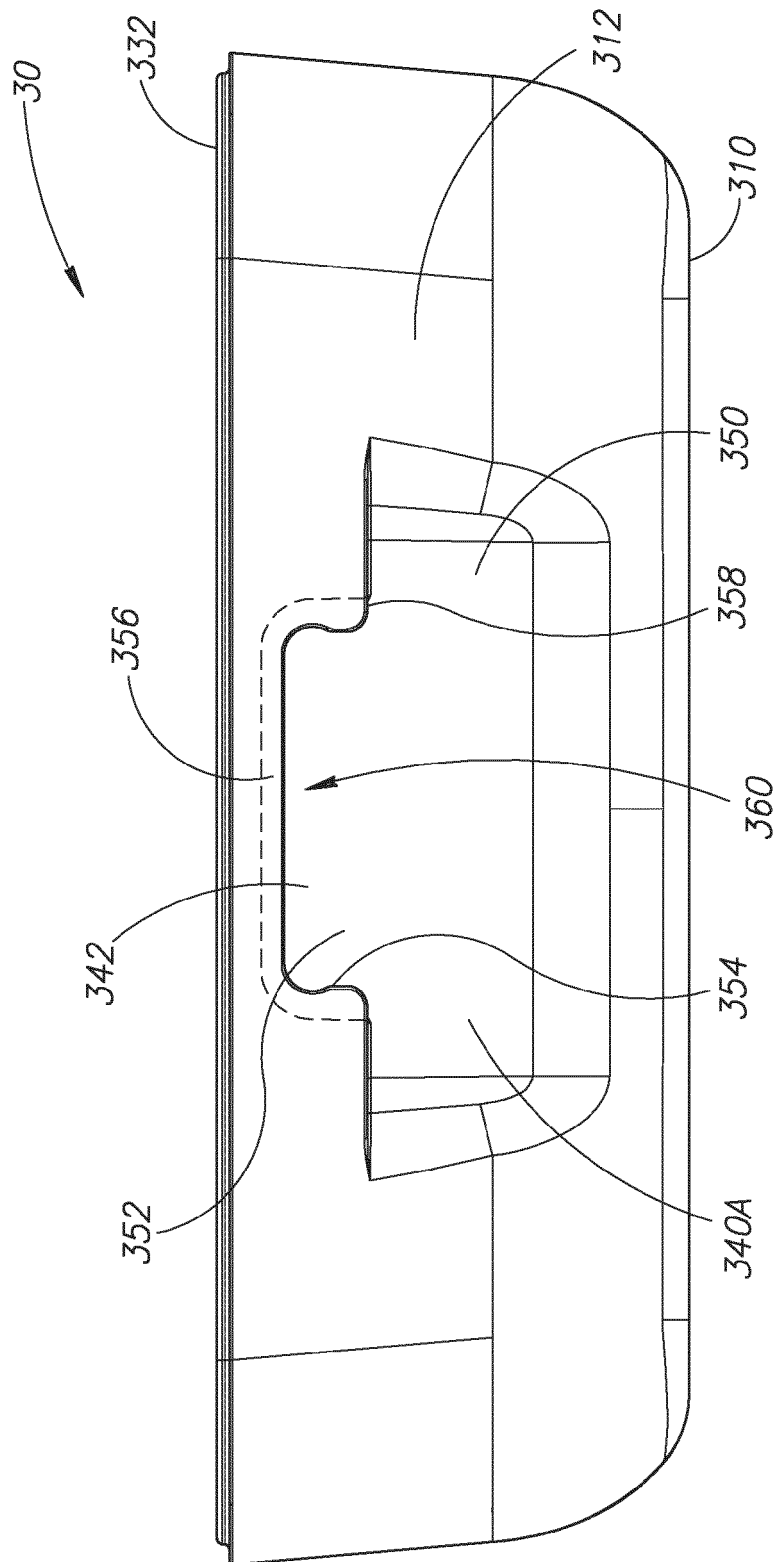


FIG. 7

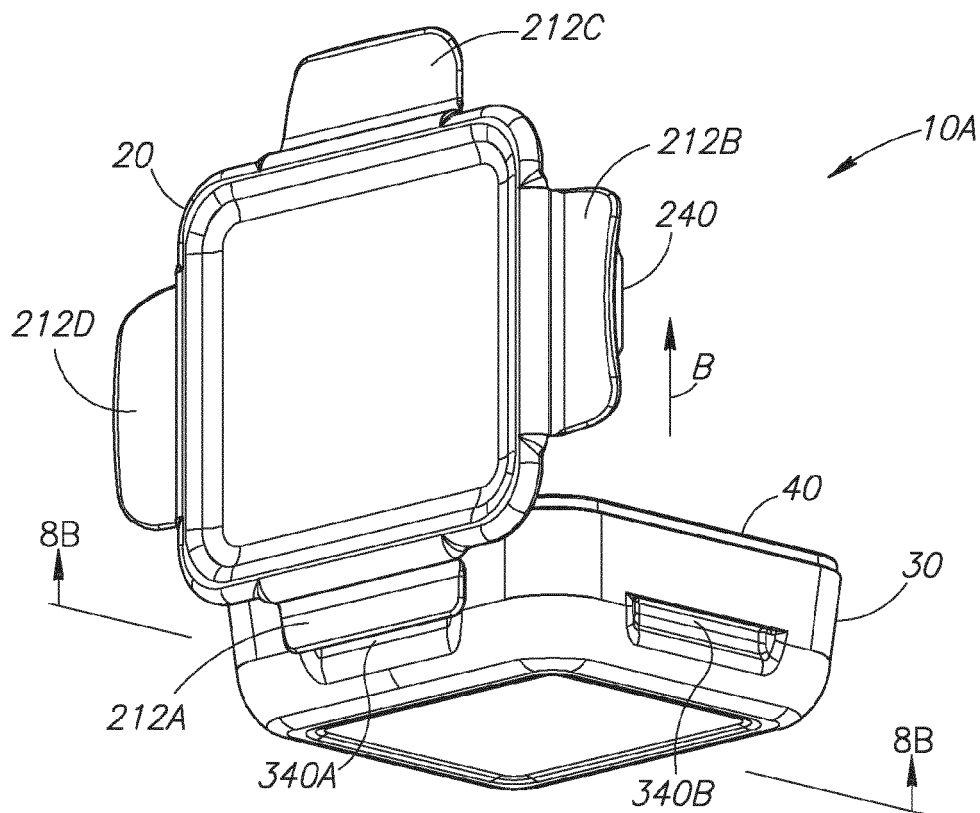


FIG. 8A

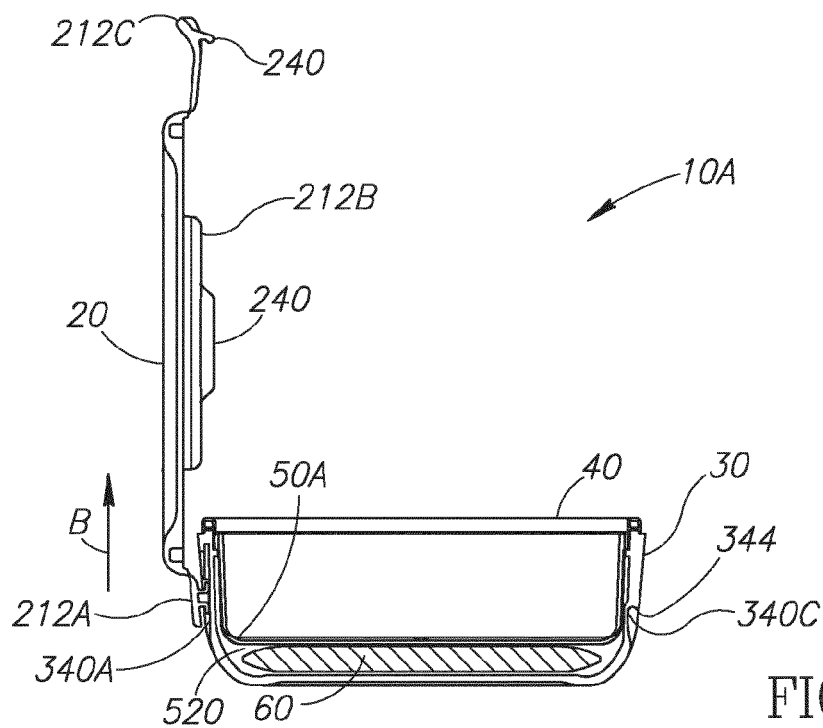


FIG. 8B

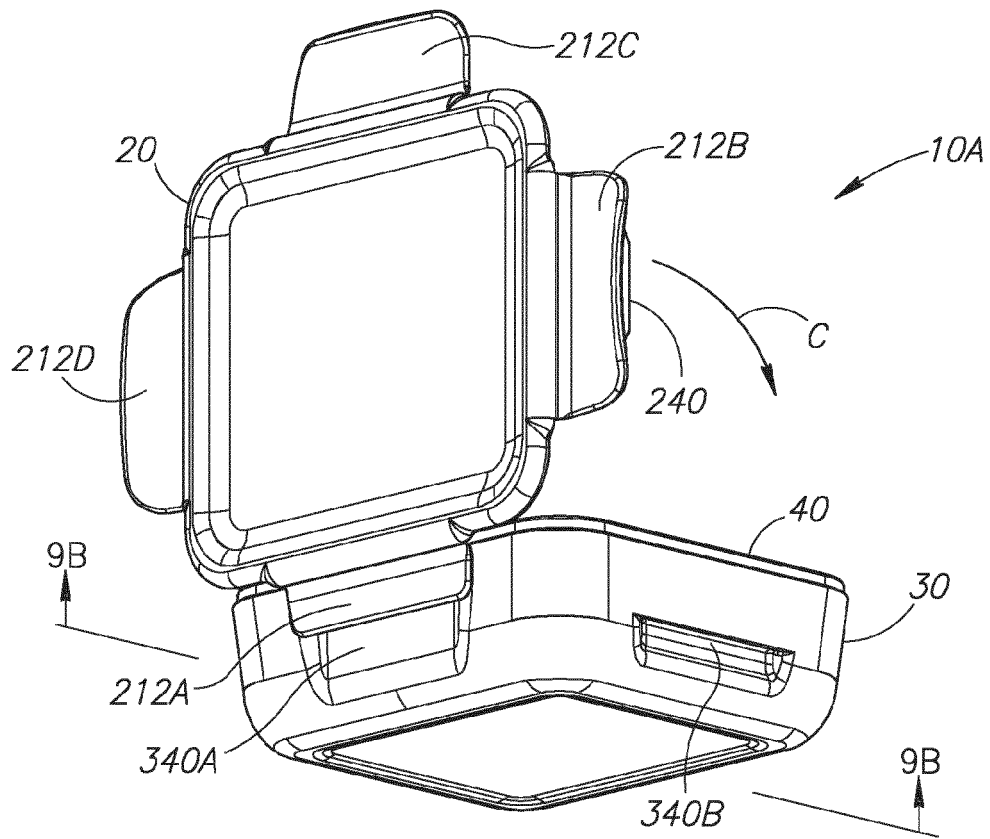


FIG. 9A

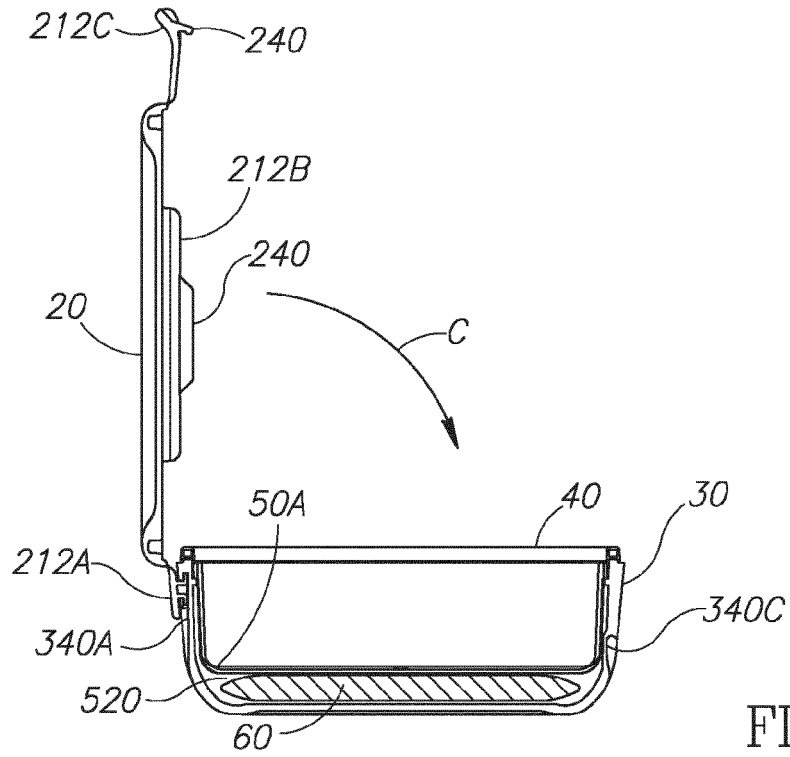


FIG. 9B

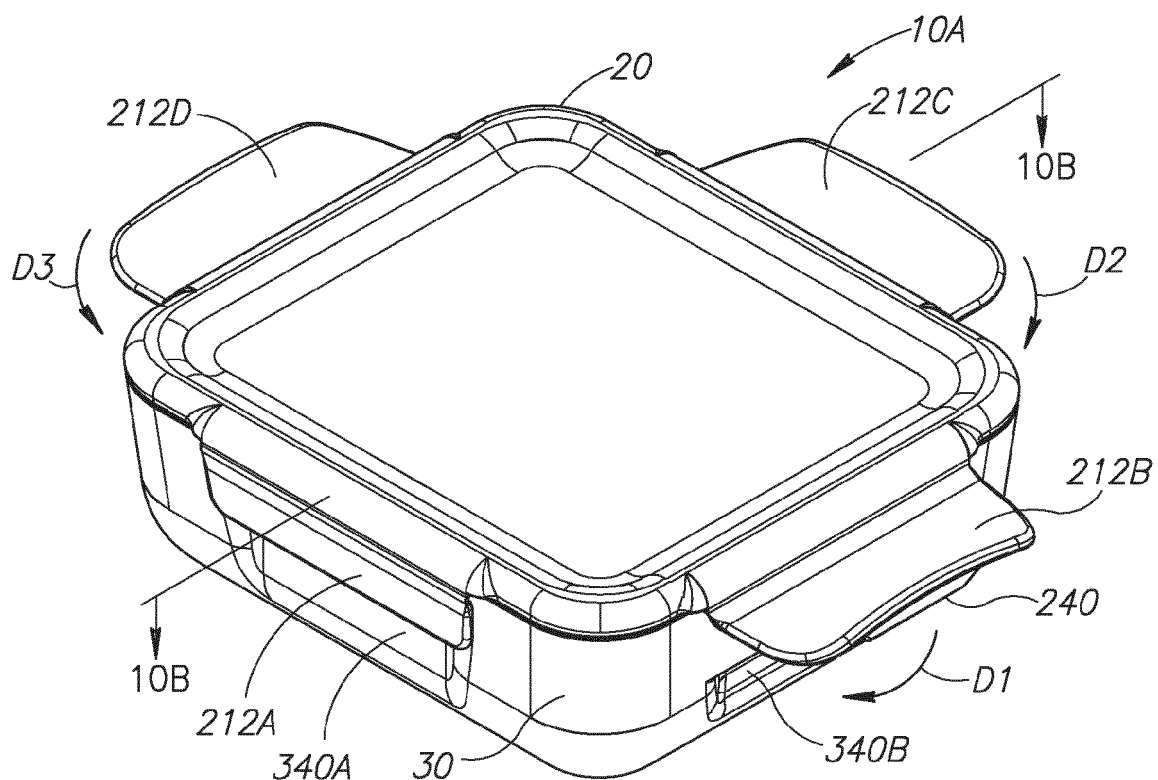


FIG. 10A

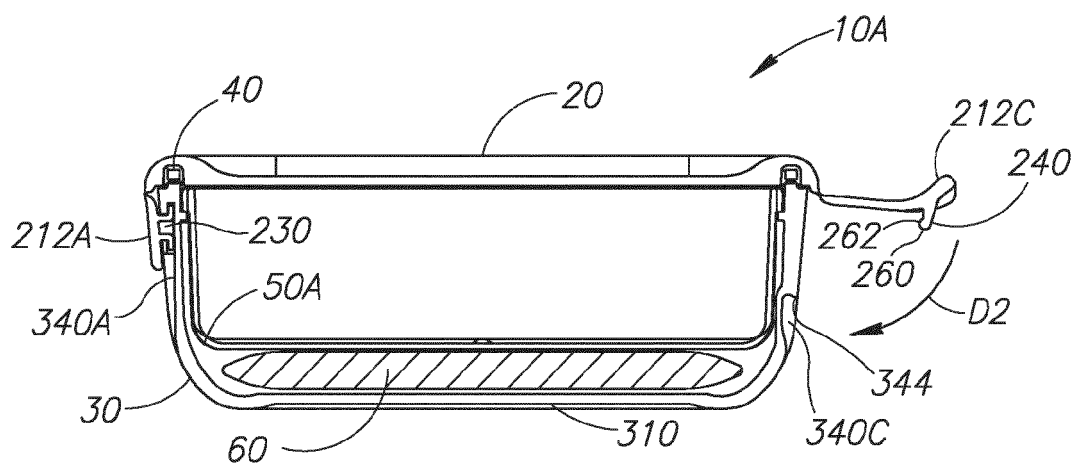


FIG. 10B

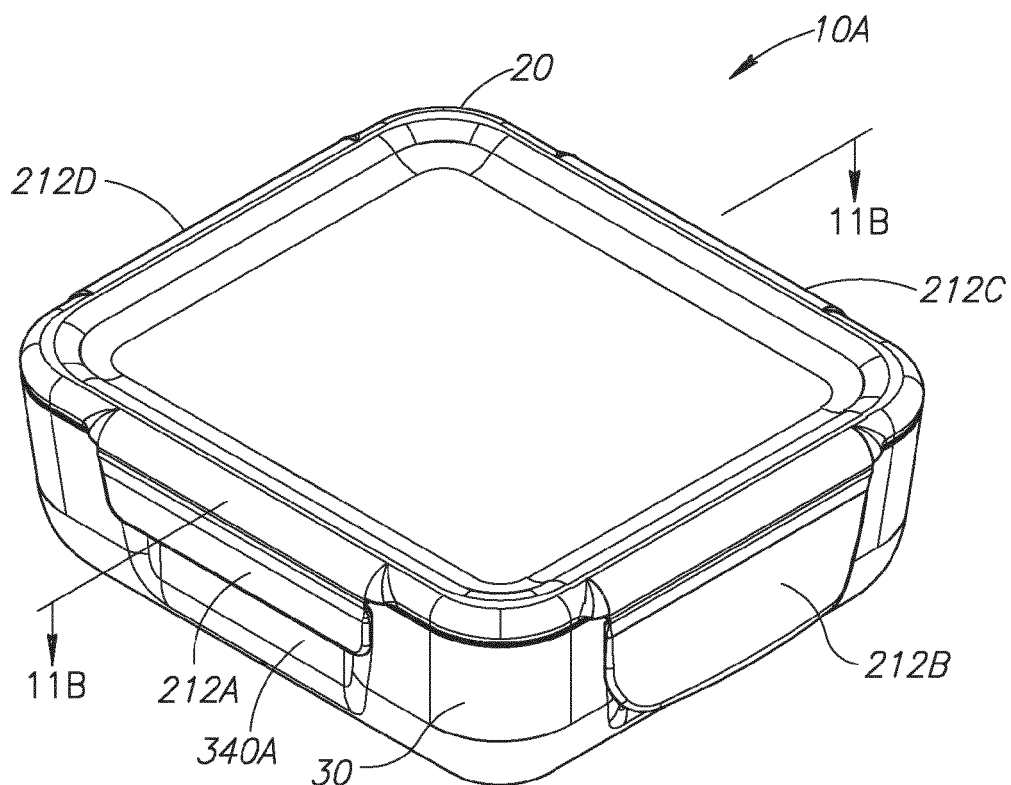


FIG.11A

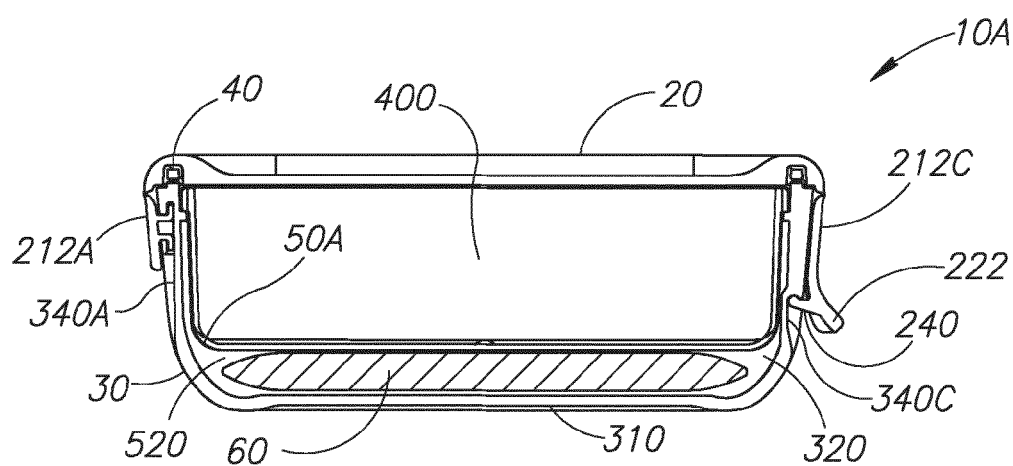


FIG.11B

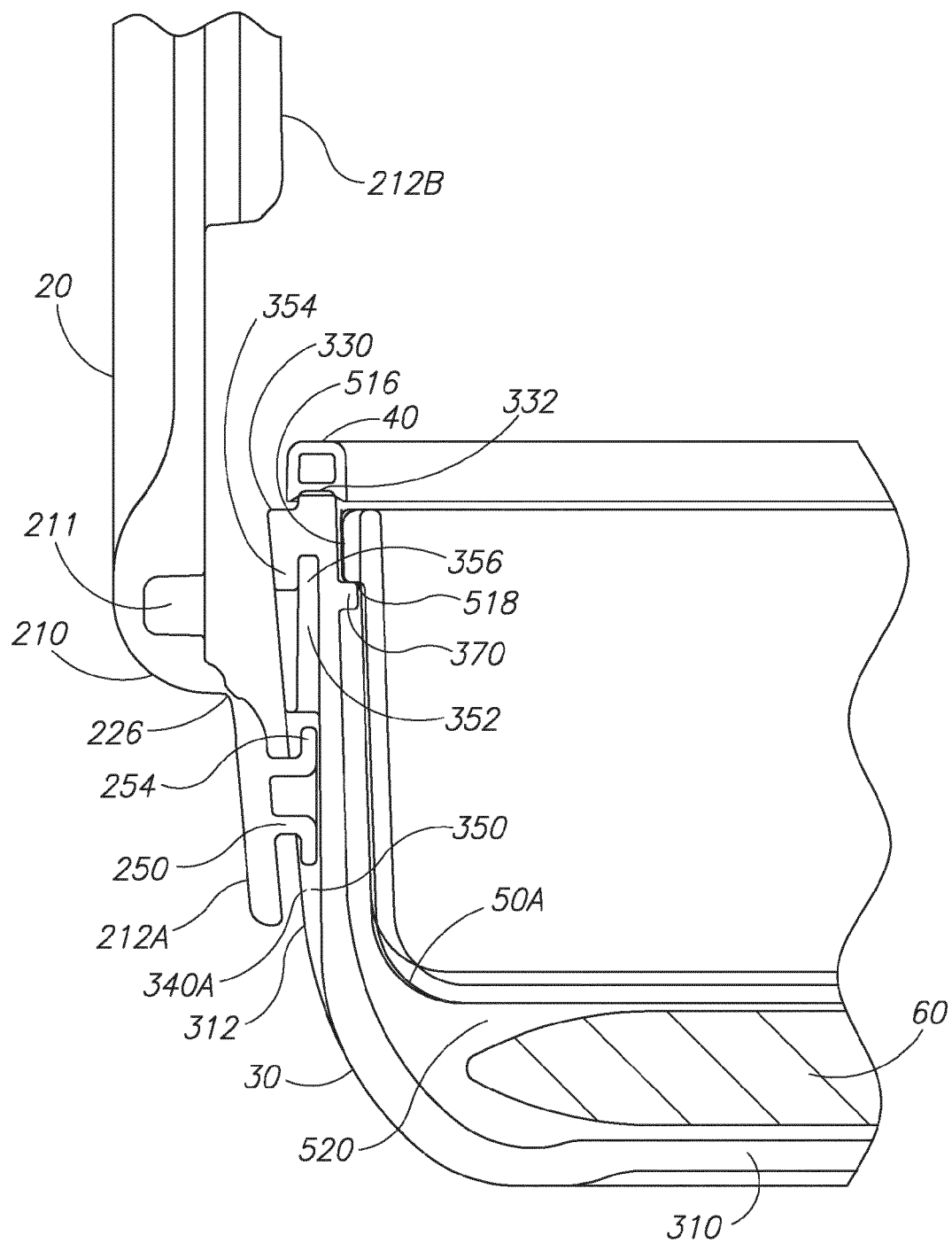


FIG.12