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(54) **A FOOD CONTAINER AND A METHOD OF PACKAGING FOOD**

(57) The present invention provides a food container for receiving and storing food. A portion of the food container is moveable from a first configuration, in which the cavity has a first (greater) volume, to a second configuration, in which the cavity has a second (smaller) volume.

In use, the food container may allow its contents to be favourably presented. When the food container is filled with food, the food container may reduce the probability that food bounces out of the container.

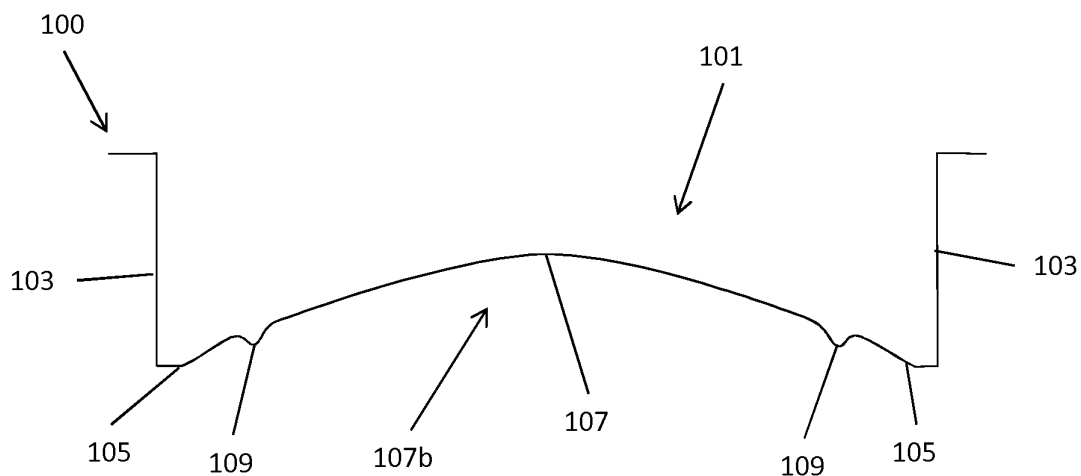


Fig 3c

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Description

Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention concerns a food container. More particularly, but not exclusively, this invention concerns a food container comprising a movable portion. The invention also concerns a method of packaging food into a food container.

Background of the Invention

[0002] Food containers are often configured to present their contents in a visually pleasing way. This is especially true for food containers that contain pre-prepared meals to be sold in shops. Accordingly, the food containers take on a variety of different forms and may be shaped to display their contents in a particular manner. For example, a food container containing a salad may take the form of a clear plastic dome such that a potential consumer has a greater sense of the salads size and composition.

[0003] A food container that contains high value foodstuffs, may be designed such that it displays as much of the foodstuff as is reasonably possible. This is because a consumer may perceive that the meal contains more of the high value foodstuff. This may be achieved, for example, by providing packaging which is shaped to display as much of the foodstuff as possible.

[0004] Known food containers may contain a concave base portion which is shaped so that food items are arranged around the concave base portion, close to the lateral side of the packaging. This has the effect of displaying more of the foodstuff close to the lateral sides of the packaging.

[0005] The applicant has discovered that problems may occur when filling such a container with foodstuffs. When food is packaged into such food containers it is typically dropped into the container from above. When solid foodstuffs, like prawns, are dropped into the container, and onto the concave portion, they may bounce off the concave portion and out of the container. This causes loss of produce and inconsistencies in the amount of food per container.

[0006] The present invention seeks to mitigate one or more of the above-mentioned problems. Alternatively or additionally, the present invention seeks to provide an improved food container and an improved method of packaging food.

Summary of the Invention

[0007] The present invention provides, according to a first aspect, a food container comprising: a cavity for storing food, wherein a portion of the container defining the cavity is movable from a first configuration in which the cavity has a first volume to a second configuration in which the cavity has a second volume, wherein the sec-

ond volume is less than the first volume.

[0008] An advantage of such a food container is that when a container is filled with food the food may be favourably presented. The first configuration may, for example, be a filling configuration in which food is introduced into the container. The higher volume of the first configuration may, for example, be less likely to lead to foodstuffs bouncing-out of the container during the filling process, and may facilitate filling at higher speeds. The second configuration may, for example, be a presentation configuration for favourably presenting the food.

[0009] In the first configuration, said portion of the food container may project outwards with respect to the cavity. In the second configuration, said portion of the food container may project inwards with respect to the cavity.

[0010] Said portion may be movable from the second configuration to the first configuration.

[0011] Said portion may be repeatably movable between the first and second configurations.

[0012] Said portion may be movable from the first configuration to the second configuration on the application of a threshold (or minimum) force to said portion. Likewise, said portion may be movable from the second configuration to the first configuration on the application of a threshold (or minimum) force to said portion. The threshold force required to move said portion from the first configuration to the second configuration may be the same as, or different from, the threshold force required to move said portion from the second configuration to the first configuration. Said portion may therefore be moved from a first stable configuration to a second stable configuration.

[0013] The threshold force required to move said portion from the second to the first configuration may be greater than the threshold force required to move said portion from the first to the second configuration. This may be of benefit in providing a container which provides greater resistance to deformation from a low volume configuration, which will generally be the configuration of the filled container.

[0014] Alternatively, the threshold force required to move said portion from the first to the second configuration may be greater than the threshold force required to move said portion from the second to the first configuration.

[0015] When the container is in the first configuration, the volume of the cavity may be at least 10% (optionally at least 20%, optionally at least 30% and optionally at least 40%) greater than the volume of the cavity when the container is in the second configuration. When the cavity is in the first configuration, the volume of the cavity may be no more than 70% (optionally no more than 60%, optionally no more than 50% and optionally no more than 40%) greater than the volume of the cavity when the container is in the second configuration.

[0016] The movement of said portion from the first configuration to the second configuration may comprise deformation of the said portion. Likewise, the movement of said portion from the second configuration to the first con-

figuration may comprise deformation of said portion.

[0017] The food container may comprise one or more of: a base, one or more walls and a lid. If the food container comprises a lid, the lid may be attached to the food container, or may be separate from the container. The container is typically provided with one or more openings suitable for filling and/or emptying the container. Such openings are closable by a lid, if a lid is provided.

[0018] If the container comprises a base, the base of the container may comprise said movable portion. The base of the container may have a generally circular, oval, square or polygonal shape. The movable portion may make up the majority of the base of the container. The movable portion may be centrally located relative to the base of the container.

[0019] The movable portion may have a boundary which is circular, oval, curved, stadium-shaped or polygonal. Stadium-shaped refers to a shape comprising a rectangle or square with semi-circular ends. The movable portion may be generally dome shaped, optionally in each of the first and second configurations. The movable portion may be in the form of tiered concentric shapes, in one or both of the first and second configurations. The movable portion may comprise polygonal shapes in one or both of the first and second configurations.

[0020] The movement of the movable portion from the first configuration to the second configuration (and optionally from the second configuration to the first configuration) typically causes no permanent marking associated with plastic deformation of the container. More preferably, the movement of the movable portion from the first configuration to the second configuration causes no marks or lines to become visible, by the naked eye, on the container (such marks as would be associated with plastic deformation of the container). An advantage of a container which does not crumple or mark when the deformable portion is moved, is that the look of the container may not be diminished, and the integrity of the container may not be diminished. As indicated above, the movable portion may be reversibly movable between the first configuration and the second configuration. It is preferred that repeated movement of the movable portion from the first configuration to the second configuration, and vice versa, causes no marks or lines associated with plastic deformation of the container.

[0021] The food container may comprise a boundary region, or rim, around the edge of the movable portion. The boundary region may be configured to deform during the transition of the moveable portion from the first configuration to the second configuration, and vice versa. The boundary region may be configured to narrow when the movable portion is moved from the first configuration to the second configuration and/or from the second configuration to the first configuration. The portion of the container abutting the boundary region (but not the movable portion) may not substantially deform during the movement of the movable portion from the first configuration to the second configuration. The boundary region may

facilitate movement of the movable portion and inhibit the container from crumpling and distorting when the deformable portion moves from the first configuration to the second configuration.

5 **[0022]** The boundary region may have an arch-shaped cross section. The boundary region may have a V-shaped cross section. The movable portion may have another arch shaped cross section when in the first and/or second configuration(s).

10 **[0023]** The boundary region may comprise a projection (such as an arch shaped cross section or otherwise). When the container is in the first configuration and the second configuration, said projection may project into the cavity. Alternatively, when the container is in the first configuration and the second configuration, said projection may project out of the cavity.

15 **[0024]** The container may comprise a peripheral portion around the boundary region. The peripheral portion may comprise a wall. The peripheral portion may comprise at least some of the base of the container. The peripheral portion may provide a projection, projecting away from the cavity. The container may therefore comprise at least two (optionally annular) projections peripheral to the movable portion, one provided by the boundary region and one provided by the peripheral portion. The projection provided by the peripheral portion may be symmetrically arranged relative to the projection provided by the boundary region. Said projections may optionally be substantially concentrically arranged. Each of said projections may optionally be continuous or may be broken (i.e. portions may be spaced apart by non-projecting portions).

20 **[0025]** Between the wall and the part of the movable portion adjacent the boundary portion, the cross-section of the container may comprise at least two and optionally at least three turning points in gradient (i.e. minima or maxima). There may be at least two turning points (and optionally at least three) when the movable portion is in the second configuration, and optionally there is at least three turning points (and optionally at least four) between the wall and midway across the movable portion when the movable portion is in the second configuration.

25 **[0026]** For the avoidance of doubt, it is hereby stated that the use of the term "first" in "first configuration" does not mean that said portion is initially provided in that first configuration. For example, said portion may initially be provided in the second (high volume) configuration.

30 **[0027]** The food container may be integrally formed. If the container comprises one or more walls and a base, the one or more walls and the base may be integrally formed. If the container comprises a lid, the lid may be integrally formed with the one or more walls and the base, or may be formed separately. The cavity-forming part of the container (typically comprising one or more walls and a base), including the movable portion, may be formed from a single piece of material. The movable portion of the surface that defines the cavity may be made from a different material to the rest of the surface that defines

the cavity. The movable portion may be made from plastic.

[0028] The food container may be made entirely from plastic. Alternatively, the food container may comprise pressed board. For example, the movable portion of the container may be made from plastic, with the majority of the rest of the container being made from pressed board. Alternatively, the movable portion may be made from pressed board. The packaging may comprise metal, for example. The packaging may comprise one or more reinforcing ribs. The food container may be manufactured by thermoforming plastic from a suitable mould. For example, the container may be formed using one or both of a male tool and a female tool. For example, the container may be made by the application of low-pressure in association with a female tool, or by pulling plastics material over a male tool. The food container may be constructed from a clear material. An advantage of making the container from plastic is that plastic is relatively cheap and light weight, this leading to cost advantages if producing and transporting the food containers.

[0029] According to a second aspect of the invention there is also provided a method of packaging foodstuffs, the method comprising:

providing a container comprising a cavity for storing foodstuffs,
depositing foodstuffs into the cavity; and
moving a portion of the container so as to reduce the volume of the cavity, thereby moving at least some of the foodstuffs.

[0030] Prior to depositing the foodstuffs into the cavity, a portion of the container may project outwardly from the cavity. The portion of the container which projects outwardly may be the portion which is moved so as to reduce the volume of the container. Moving a portion of the container so as to reduce the volume of the cavity may comprise moving the portion so that it projects inwardly with respect to the cavity.

[0031] The method may comprise, prior to depositing foodstuffs into the cavity, moving said portion of the container so as to increase the volume of the cavity.

[0032] The container provided may be a container as set out above in the first aspect of the invention. The container may comprise any of the features described above in relation to the food container of the first aspect of the present invention. For example, the method may comprise providing a container in accordance with the first aspect of the present invention. The container may be in the first (higher volume) configuration to receive foodstuffs, and the method comprises depositing foodstuffs into the cavity with the container being in the first configuration. The method may comprise moving said portion of the container into the second (lower volume) configuration. The method may comprise providing a container according to the first aspect of the present invention initially in the second configuration, and moving

the portion of the container into the first (higher volume) configuration prior to depositing foodstuffs into the cavity.

[0033] An advantage of this method is that it is possible, in certain embodiments, to both: achieve a reduction in the amount of foodstuffs bouncing out of the container when the container is filled, and to display certain foodstuffs in a desirable manner. Furthermore, this method may facilitate filling at higher speeds.

[0034] The method may take place on a production line. The method may be automated. The method may include the production of the food container itself.

[0035] The step of depositing foodstuffs into the cavity may be carried out manually. Preferably, the step of depositing foodstuffs into the cavity may be carried out automatically. The foodstuffs may be deposited into the cavity from above. The foodstuffs may be deposited onto a base of the container, the base comprising the movable portion. The foodstuffs may enter the cavity under the influence of gravity. The foodstuff may be deposited so to evenly distribute the food over a lower surface of the cavity. The foodstuffs may be deposited into the cavity from a food deposition device. The food deposition device may comprise a hopper for foodstuffs. The foodstuffs may be deposited in a plurality of stages by a plurality of methods. For example, one food may be deposited into the cavity by being dropped from above, then another food may be deposited into the cavity by being manually placed over the first food. The deposition of the food may be in stages, between which the movement of the movable portion may be effected.

[0036] Movement of the portion of the container so as to reduce the volume of the cavity may be associated with movement of at least some of the foodstuffs towards a wall of the container. Movement of the portion of the container so as to reduce the volume of the cavity may be associated with movement of at least some of the foodstuffs generally outwards.

[0037] Movement of the portion of the container so as to reduce the volume of the container (and optionally so as to increase the volume of the container) may comprise applying a force greater than a threshold force for moving the portion of the container so as to reduce volume. Once the force is removed, the moved portion is in a stable configuration. The moved portion does not move back to its prior configuration without the application of a force greater than a threshold force. The food deposited into the cavity may be any applicable foodstuff or combination of foodstuffs. The foodstuffs may be cooked and/or uncooked. The foodstuffs may include seafood. The foodstuffs may include prawns (shrimp).

[0038] The method may include a step of closing at least one opening to the cavity. The at least one opening may be closed after food has been deposited into the cavity. An opening to the cavity may be closed by a lid. The lid may be already attached to the container. An opening to the cavity may be closed by providing a film over the opening, optionally a film of low permeability to gases, optionally a plastic film. An opening to the cavity

may be closed by heat sealing a plastic film over the opening. An opening may be automatically closed. An opening may be manually closed. All the openings to the cavity may be closed. Closing all the openings to the cavity may substantially isolate the cavity and its contents from the atmosphere surrounding the container.

[0039] The method may include providing the foodstuffs deposited into the cavity with an atmosphere for reducing the rate at which the foodstuffs spoil, oxidise, and/or otherwise no longer become suitable for sale and/or consumption. The atmosphere for reducing the rate at which the food spoils may be introduced by flushing gasses over the food products. The atmosphere for reducing the rate at which the food spoils may be introduced by removing the air from the container and then introducing a new atmosphere to the container. The gasses may include nitrogen. The gasses may include carbon dioxide. The gasses may include oxygen. The gas mixture may be, for example, 40% CO₂ and 60% N₂. The gas mixture may be another mixture of gasses suited to the preservation of the particular food which is packaged in the container.

[0040] The movement of the movable portion to the reduced-volume configuration (and optionally to the increased-volume configuration) may be effected using a mechanical pushing device. This movement may be effected automatically as a part of an automated production line. This movement may be effected by hand. This movement may take place before or after the cavity's opening or openings are sealed. Foodstuffs sealed in the container may uptake gases in the container. For example CO₂ may be absorbed by crustaceans. A reduction in the volume of gas in the cavity of a sealed container may help inhibit movement of the movable portion from the low-volume configuration to the high-volume configuration.

[0041] The movement of the movable portion to the reduced-volume configuration may be effected by providing a gas pressure inside the sealed cavity which is lower than ambient (atmospheric) pressure. This may be done, for example, by providing the sealed cavity comprising a gas (such as carbon dioxide) which is absorbed by the contents of the container.

[0042] It will of course be appreciated that features described in relation to one aspect of the present invention may be incorporated into other aspects of the present invention. For example, the method of the second aspect of the invention may incorporate any of the features described with reference to the container of the first aspect of the invention and *vice versa*.

Description of the Drawings

[0043] Embodiments of the present invention will now be described by way of example only with reference to the accompanying schematic drawings of which:

Figure 1a shows a perspective view of a food container according to a first embodiment of the inven-

tion, a movable portion of the container projecting away from the cavity of the container;

Figures 1b shows a perspective view of the food container of Fig. 1a, but with the movable portion of the container projecting into the cavity of the container; Figure 2a shows a side view of the food container of Fig. 1a, with the movable portion of the container projecting away from the cavity of the container;

Figure 2b shows a side view of the food container of Fig. 1a, with the movable portion of the container projecting into the cavity of the container;

Figure 3a shows a cross-sectional view of the food container of Fig. 1a, with the movable portion of the container projecting outwardly with respect to the cavity,

Figures 3b shows a cross-sectional view of the food container of Fig. 1a, with the movable portion in transition from projecting outwardly with respect to the cavity to projecting inwardly with respect to the cavity; and

Figure 3c shows a cross-sectional view of the food container of Fig. 1a, with the movable portion of the container projecting inwardly with respect to the cavity

Detailed Description

[0044] Figures 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b and 3c show a food container 100 according to a first embodiment of the invention. The food container 100 comprises a cavity for storing food 101 and a surface that defines the cavity. The surface that defines the cavity comprises a wall 103, a base 105 comprising a deformable portion 107, and a boundary region 109 that borders the deformable portion 107.

[0045] The cavity 101 is defined by the base 105 which is generally rectangular and the wall 103 which comprises four generally rectangular sides. The base 105 comprises dome-shaped deformable portion 107. The deformable portion 107 has a stadium-shaped boundary and is located centrally relative to base 105.

[0046] Figures 1a, 2a and 3a show the food container 100 in a first configuration. In the first configuration, the deformable portion 107 is in a first position in which the dome-shaped portion projects generally outwards relative to the cavity 101.

[0047] The deformable portion 107 is movable from the first configuration to a second configuration shown in Figs. 1b, 2b and 3c in which the deformable portion projects generally inwards relative to the cavity 101. In the second configuration, the deformable portion 107 has a convex shape with respect to the cavity and thereby reduces the volume of the cavity 101. The deformable portion 107 does not extend further away from the perimeter of the base 105, in a direction perpendicular to the base, than the upper edge of the wall 103. This is so that a flat lid can be applied over the opening to the cavity and will not interact with the deformable portion. The vol-

ume of the cavity in the first configuration is greater than the volume of the cavity in the second configuration. The benefit of this will be discussed below.

[0048] In order to facilitate the transition from the first to the second configurations, the container 100 is provided with a boundary region 109 which borders the deformable portion 107. The boundary region 109 links the deformable portion 107 to the rest of the base 105. The rest of the base 105 and the wall 103 provide a peripheral portion around the boundary region 109. The outer edge of the deformable portion 107 and the inner edge of the base 105 are approximately in the same plane. The boundary region 109 is shaped into a relatively narrow ridge, having an arch shaped cross section, which extends away from the cavity 101, as is best seen in Figs. 3a, 3b and 3c. In an alternative embodiment, the arch may project into the cavity.

[0049] The boundary region 109 is positioned slightly above the lowermost extent of the base 105 and forms an outwardly-projecting annular arch-shaped feature. The peripheral portion around the boundary region 109 projects outwardly from the cavity 101. The container therefore effectively comprises two annular projections peripheral to the deformable portion 107.

[0050] As can be seen from Figures 3a to 3c, between the wall 103 and the deformable portion 107, the cross-section of the container shows at least three gradient turning points (maxima/minima). Fig. 3a shows that when the container is in the first configuration there are four gradient turning points (a minimum between wall 103 and the where the line from ref. no. 105 contacts the base, and, from left to right, a maximum, minimum and maximum which defines the arch-shape of region 109). Fig. 3c shows that when the container is in the second configuration there are three gradient turning points (a minimum between wall 103 and the where the line from ref. no. 105 contacts the base, and, from left to right, a maximum and a minimum which defines the arch-shape of region 109). When the deformable portion 107 is moved from the first position 107a to the second position 107b, it may flatten in one or more directions. The deformable portion will thus temporarily require more lateral space. The boundary region 109 will narrow and provide extra space for the deformable portion to temporarily extend into. The boundary region will comprise a sufficiently wide and flexible ridge that the surface of the container, not including the deformable portion, abutting the boundary region does not substantially deform during the transition from the first position to the second position.

[0051] The deformable portion 107 is movable between the first and second configurations without damaging the container. Furthermore, the deformable portion is in a stable configuration in both the first and second positions i.e. a force greater than a threshold force has to be applied to move the deformable portion between the first and second positions.

[0052] In the present example, the threshold force required to move the deformable portion from the first to

the second configuration is greater than the threshold force required to move the deformable portion from the second to the first configuration.

[0053] The food container 100 is made from one piece of clear plastic. The food container 100 is manufactured by vacuum-thermoforming the plastic using a corresponding female mould. The food container's plastic is sufficiently flexible that the deformable portion 107 can transition reversibly from the first position 107a to the second position 107b without crumpling or undergoing plastic deformation. Yet the food container's plastic is sufficiently strong that the deformable portion cannot transition from the first position 107a to the second position 107b, and vice versa, without a pushing force being applied. Additionally, the food container's plastic is sufficiently rigid to protect its contents during the normal storage and transportation required of a food container.

[0054] A method of packaging foodstuffs will now be described, with reference to the enclosed figures.

[0055] Container 100 is provided in the first configuration as shown in Figs. 1a, 2a and 3a. The container 100 is oriented as shown in Fig. 3a.

[0056] Foodstuffs, in this case, prawns are deposited into the cavity 101 from a hopper (not shown). The food container 100 receives the prawns with no or little "bounce back" of the prawns outside the container 100.

[0057] Once the foodstuffs have been deposited into the container 100, a thin film of low permeability to gases is sealed over the top of the container, thereby forming a sealed cavity containing the foodstuff. A pushing member (not shown) then engages with the centre of the concave side of the deformable portion 107 and pushes the deformable portion 107 such that it moves from the first position 107a (as shown in Figs. 1a, 3a and 3a) to the second position 107b (as shown in Figs. 1b, 2b and 3c). This has the effect of moving at least some of the prawns away from the centre of the container 100, outwards towards the walls 103. This has the effect of making the foodstuff more visible and making the container appear to be more full.

[0058] Prior to the application of the film, a gas mixture suitable for preserving foodstuffs may be flushed over the foodstuffs within the cavity 101, replacing most of the air by the gas mixture. As mentioned above, the film has a low permeability to gases and the film seals the preserving gas inside the cavity and inhibits contaminants from entering the cavity from outside the container. The gas provided may be absorbed by the foodstuff, thereby reducing the pressure inside the sealed container, thereby inhibiting movement of the deformable portion from the second position back to the initial first position. Furthermore, the absorption of the gas into the foodstuffs helps to reduce any overpressure in the sealed cavity which may have occurred when the deformable portion is moved so as to reduce the volume of the cavity. This reduces any stress on the seal between the film and the rest of the packaging.

[0059] Whilst the present invention has been de-

scribed and illustrated with reference to particular embodiments, it will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art that the invention lends itself to many different variations not specifically illustrated herein. By way of example only, certain possible variations will now be described.

[0060] The surface may, for example, comprise further structure to reduce the probability that the container will become misshape when a deformable portion transitions from a first position to a second position. In this case, a wall which defines the cavity may taper outward from a base which defines the bottom of the cavity; and the base of the cavity is angled, between the walls and a central deformable portion, such that a boundary region around the deformable portion is not in the same plane as the plane in which the walls meet the base. The purpose of this is to provide an inherently more rigid food container.

[0061] The deformable portion may be moved from the first position to the second position after sealing of the container, for example, mechanically or by using a reduction in pressure inside the sealed cavity of the container. This may be achieved, for example, by providing the container with a gas which is absorbed by the contents of the container.

[0062] The packaging of the example above requires a greater force to move the deformable portion from the first to the second configuration. This need not be the case. Packaging may be provided in which the force required to move the deformable portion from the first to the second configuration is lower than the force required to move the deformable portion from the second to the first configuration.

[0063] The example above illustrates how the container is initially provided with the deformable portion in the first (high volume) configuration. This need not be the case. For example, the container may initially be provided with the deformable portion in the second (low volume) configuration, the deformable portion being moved to the first (high volume) configuration prior to filling the container.

[0064] Those skilled in the art will realise that the container need not be transparent. The container may be opaque or translucent, for example. The container may be coloured or uncoloured.

[0065] For display in a shop the container may be turned over such that the deformable portion is on top and the film acts as a base. This arrangement may be advantageous because, if the container is sufficiently full, the prawns may distribute across the deformable portion and it may therefore appear the prawns are abundant inside the container.

[0066] The examples above show that the deformable portion which moves between the two configurations is deformable to enable movement of said portion. While this is desirable, it need not be the case, and the portion may be movable between the two configurations without deforming said portion.

[0067] Where in the foregoing description, integers or

elements are mentioned which have known, obvious or foreseeable equivalents, then such equivalents are herein incorporated as if individually set forth. Reference should be made to the claims for determining the true scope of the present invention, which should be construed so as to encompass any such equivalents. It will also be appreciated by the reader that integers or features of the invention that are described as preferable, advantageous, convenient or the like are optional and do not limit the scope of the independent claims. Moreover, it is to be understood that such optional integers or features, whilst of possible benefit in some embodiments of the invention, may not be desirable, and may therefore be absent, in other embodiments.

Claims

1. A food container comprising:

a cavity for storing food, wherein a portion of the container defining the cavity is movable from a first configuration in which the cavity has a first volume, to a second configuration in which the cavity has a second volume, wherein the second volume is less than the first volume.

2. A food container according to claim 1 wherein said portion is repeatably movable between the first and second configurations.

3. A food container according to claim 1 or claim 2 wherein said portion is movable from the first configuration to the second configuration on the application of a threshold (or minimum) force to said portion, and said portion is movable from the second configuration to the first configuration on the application of a threshold (or minimum) force to said portion.

4. A food container according to any preceding claim wherein, in the first configuration said movable portion of the food container projects outwards with respect to the cavity, and in the second configuration said moveable portion of the food container projects inwards with respect to the cavity.

5. A food container according to any preceding claim, wherein in the first configuration and second configuration said moveable portion is dome shaped.

6. A food container according to any preceding claim, wherein the container comprises a base, wherein the base of the container comprises said movable portion.

7. A food container according to any preceding claim, wherein movement of said moveable portion from

the first configuration to the second configuration causes no permanent marking of the container.

8. A food container according to any preceding claim, wherein the food container comprises a boundary region arranged around the edge of the movable portion, the boundary region being configured to deform when the moveable portion moves from the first position to the second position. 5
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9. A food container according to claim 8, wherein the portion of the container abutting the boundary region (but not the movable portion) does not substantially deform during the movement of the movable portion from the first configuration to the second configuration. 15
10. A food container according to any preceding claim, wherein the boundary region has an arch-shaped cross section. 20
11. A food container according to any preceding claim, the food container comprising a peripheral portion around the boundary region, the peripheral portion projecting out of the cavity. 25
12. A method of packaging foodstuffs, the method comprising steps of:
 - providing a container comprising a cavity for storing foodstuffs, 30
 - depositing foodstuffs into the cavity; and
 - moving a portion of the container so as to reduce the volume of the cavity, thereby moving at least some of the foodstuffs. 35
13. A method of packaging foodstuffs according to claim 11 wherein, the container so provided is a container as set out in any of claims 1 to 11. 40
14. A method of packaging foodstuffs according claims 12 or 13 wherein, following the step of moving a portion of the container so as to reduce the volume of the cavity, the moveable portion of the container is in a stable position and does not move back to its initial position without the application of a force greater than a threshold force. 45
15. A method of packaging foodstuffs according to any of claims 12 to 14, wherein the method includes a step of providing the foodstuffs deposited into the cavity with an atmosphere for reducing the rate at which the foodstuffs spoil. 50

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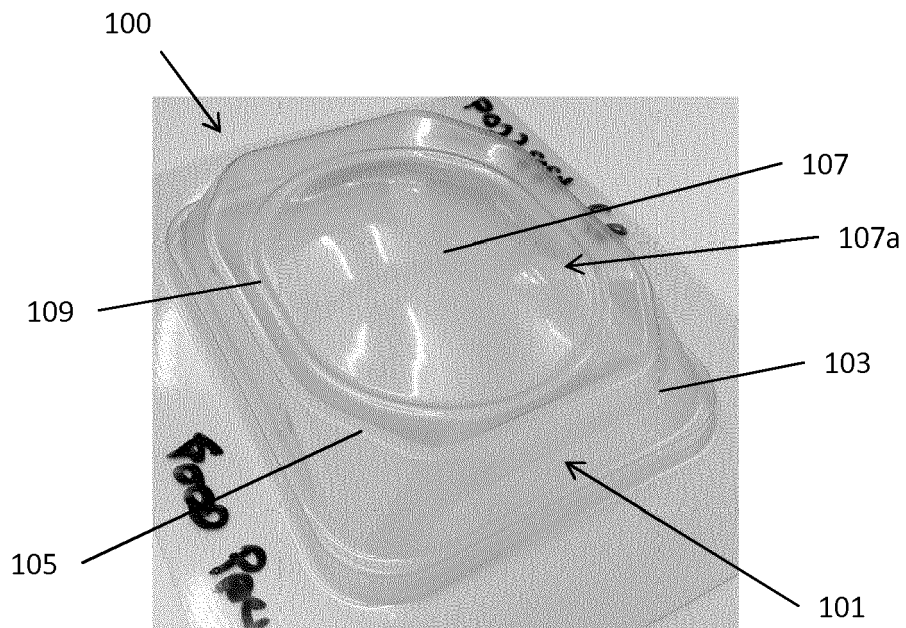


Fig 1a

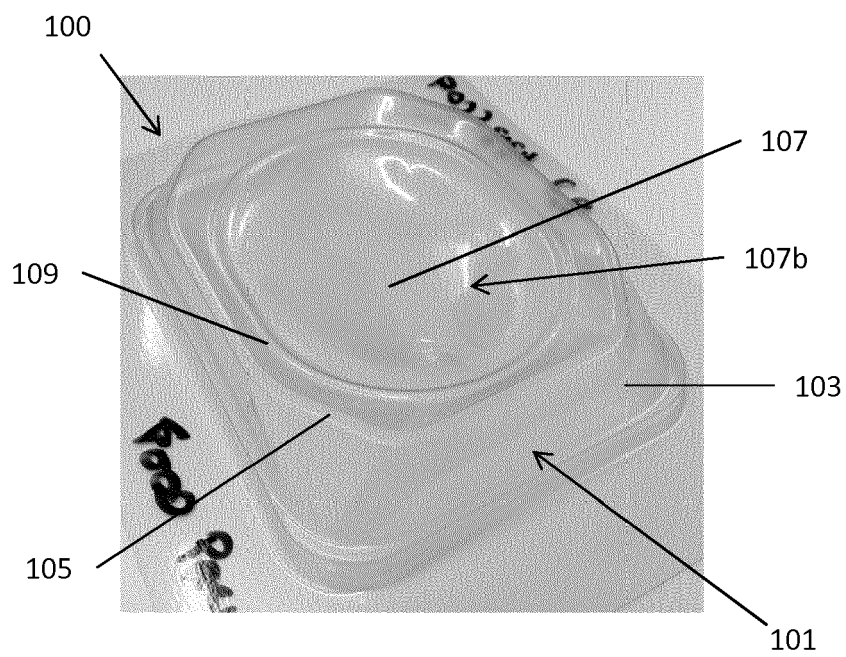


Fig 1b

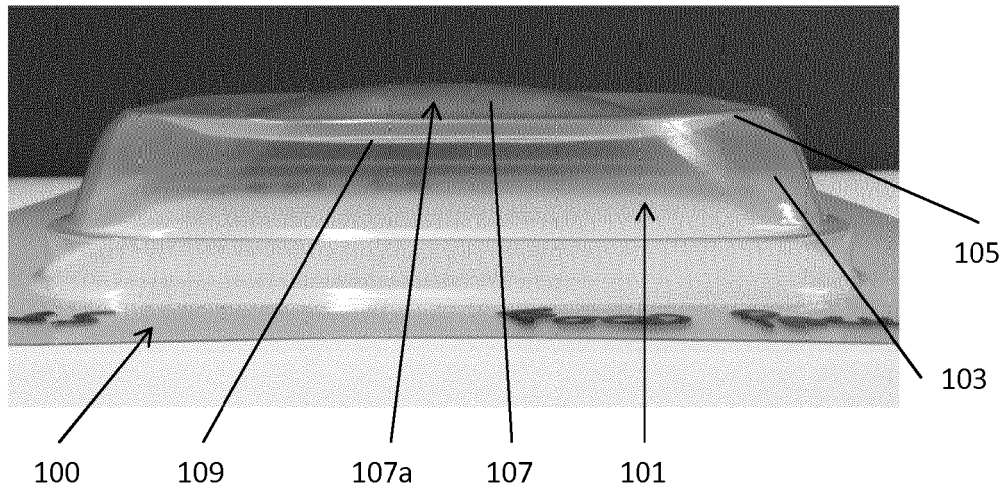


Fig 2a

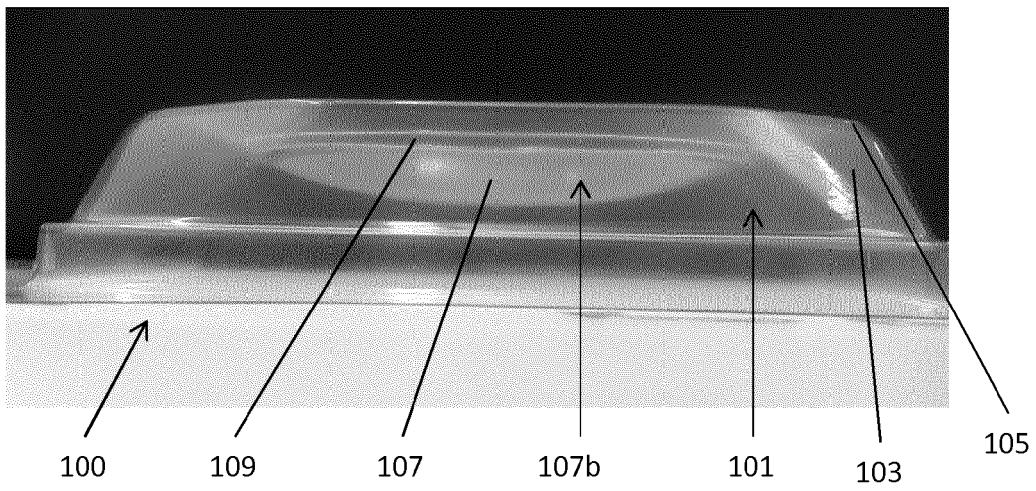


Fig 2b

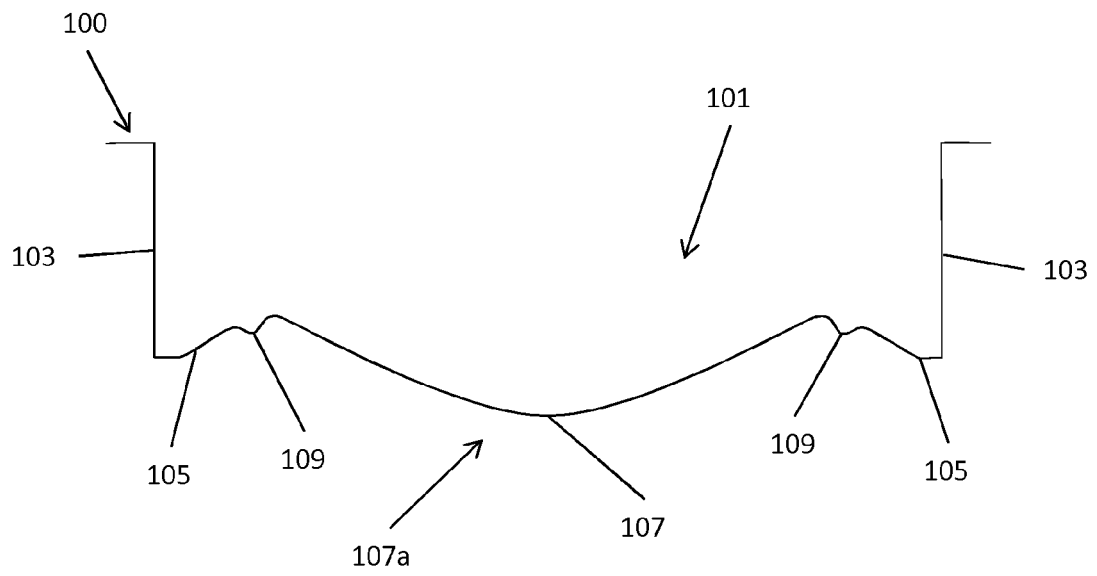


Fig 3a

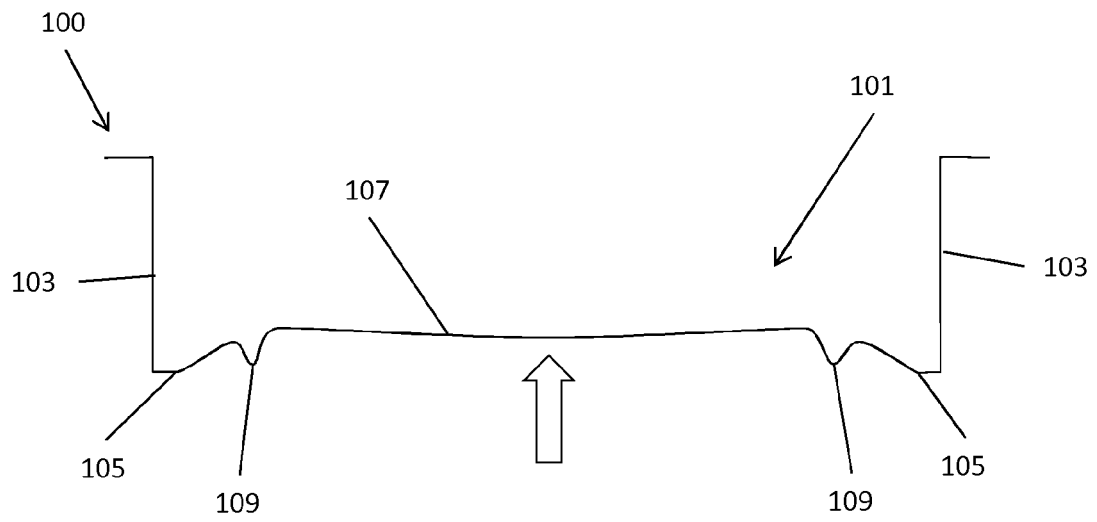


Fig 3b

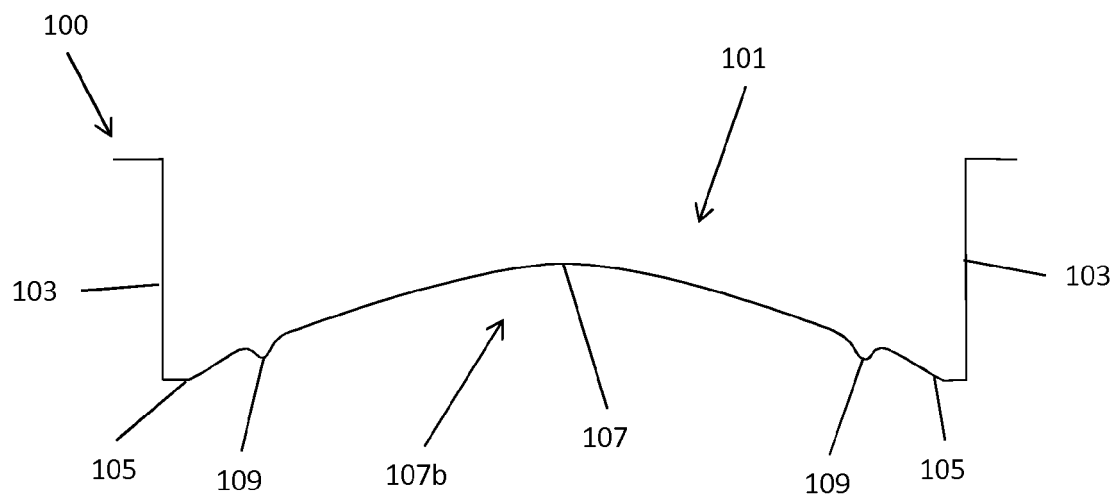


Fig 3c



EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 15 17 9877

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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)
X	US 3 426 939 A (YOUNG WILLIAM E) 11 February 1969 (1969-02-11) * column 1, line 42 - line 50 * * column 2, line 16 - line 30 * * column 3, line 2 - line 10 * * column 3, line 25 - line 42 * * column 6, line 31 - line 34 * * figure 1 * -----	1-15	INV. B65D21/08
X	EP 1 870 344 A1 (IMPRESS GROUP BV [NL]) 26 December 2007 (2007-12-26)	1-11	
A	* paragraph [0017] - paragraph [0019] * * paragraph [0021] * * figures 3, 4 * -----	12	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (IPC)
			B65D
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search The Hague		Date of completion of the search 1 December 2015	Examiner Bridault, Alain
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS 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 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			

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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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US 3426939	A	11-02-1969	NONE
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For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82