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(54) **INFANT/TODDLER PREPARED MEAL KIT**

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(76) Inventors: **Maureen A. Ganey**, Philadelphia, PA (US); **Donald C. Kates**, Philadelphia, PA (US)

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Correspondence Address:

John A. Chionchio, Esquire
Synnestvedt & Lechner LLP
Suite 2600
1101 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107-2950 (US)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

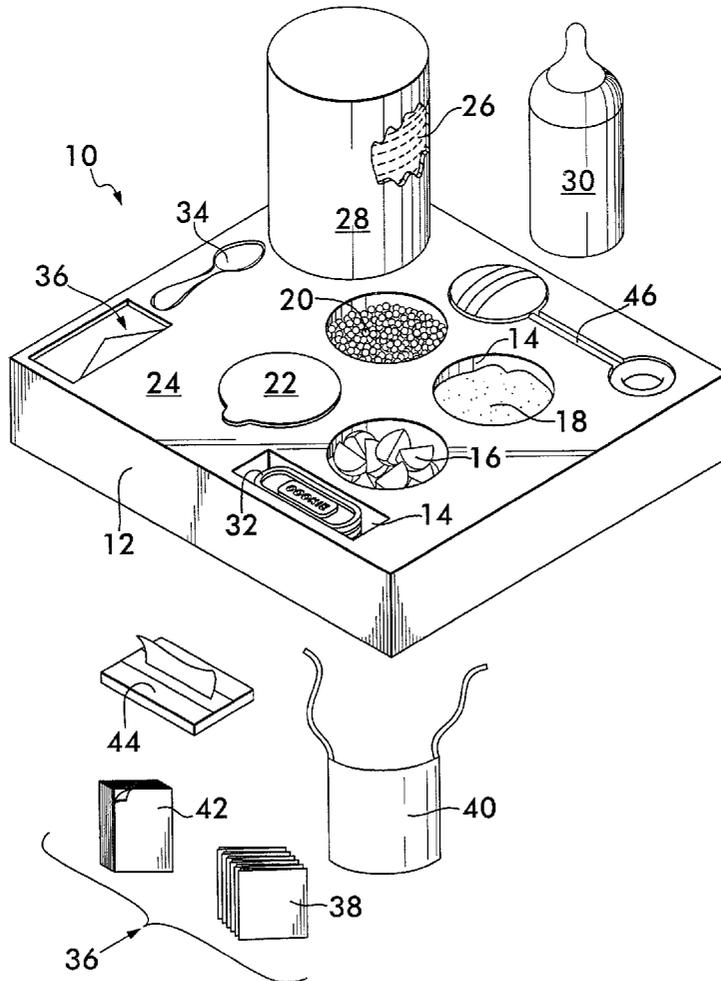
A prepared meal kit having foodstuffs suitable for feeding an infant or a toddler is disclosed. The foodstuffs include packaged and ready-to-eat baked items, fruit, vegetable and cereal servings, as well as a liquid serving of formula or juice in a container which also functions as a serving tray. The kit also includes ancillary items such as utensils, napkins, bibs and a toy. The container provides a means for advertisement and brand recognition and may be decorated with thematically-based graphics linked to a particular activity, character or event.

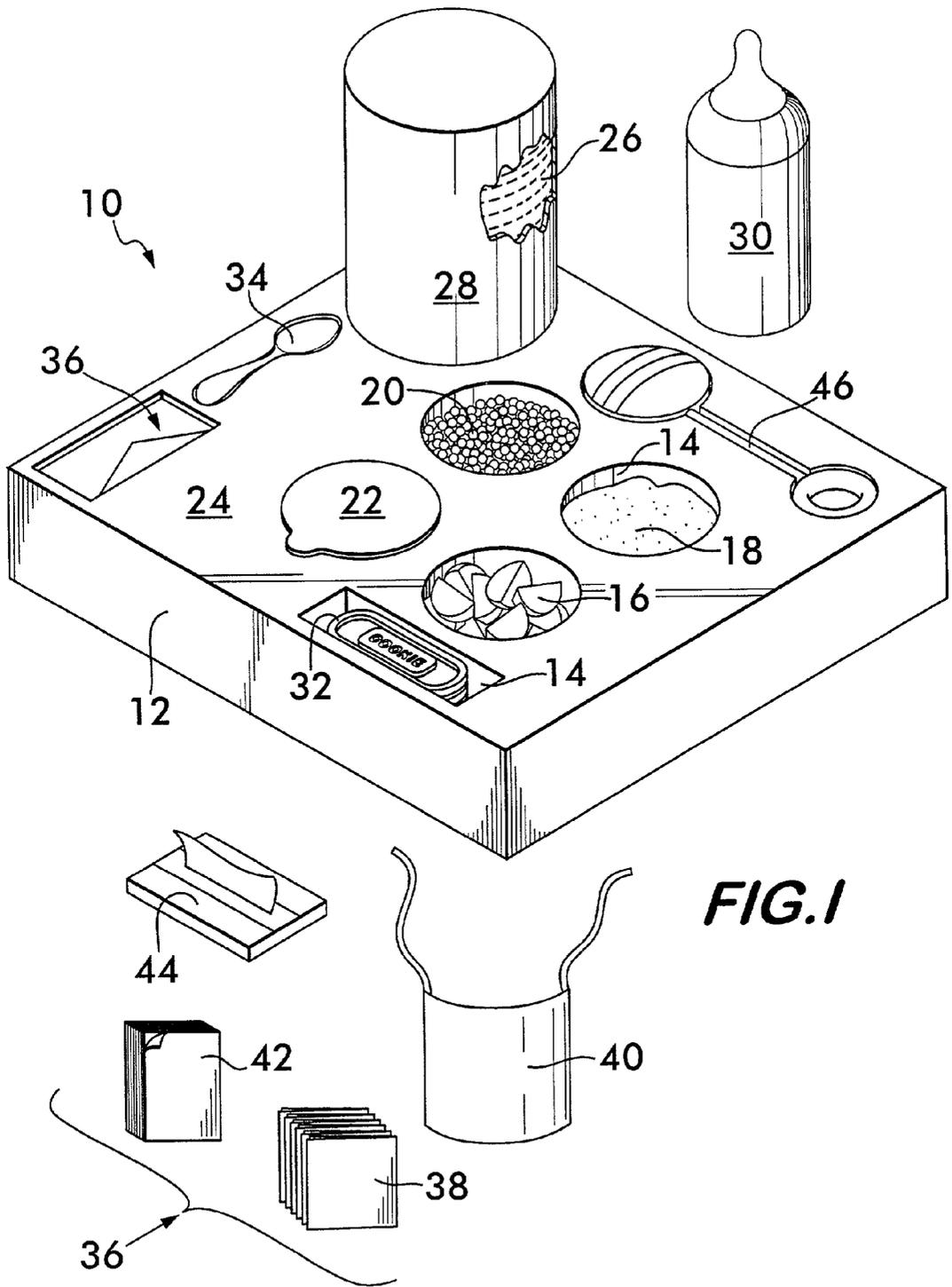
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Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 60/292,555, filed on May 22, 2001.





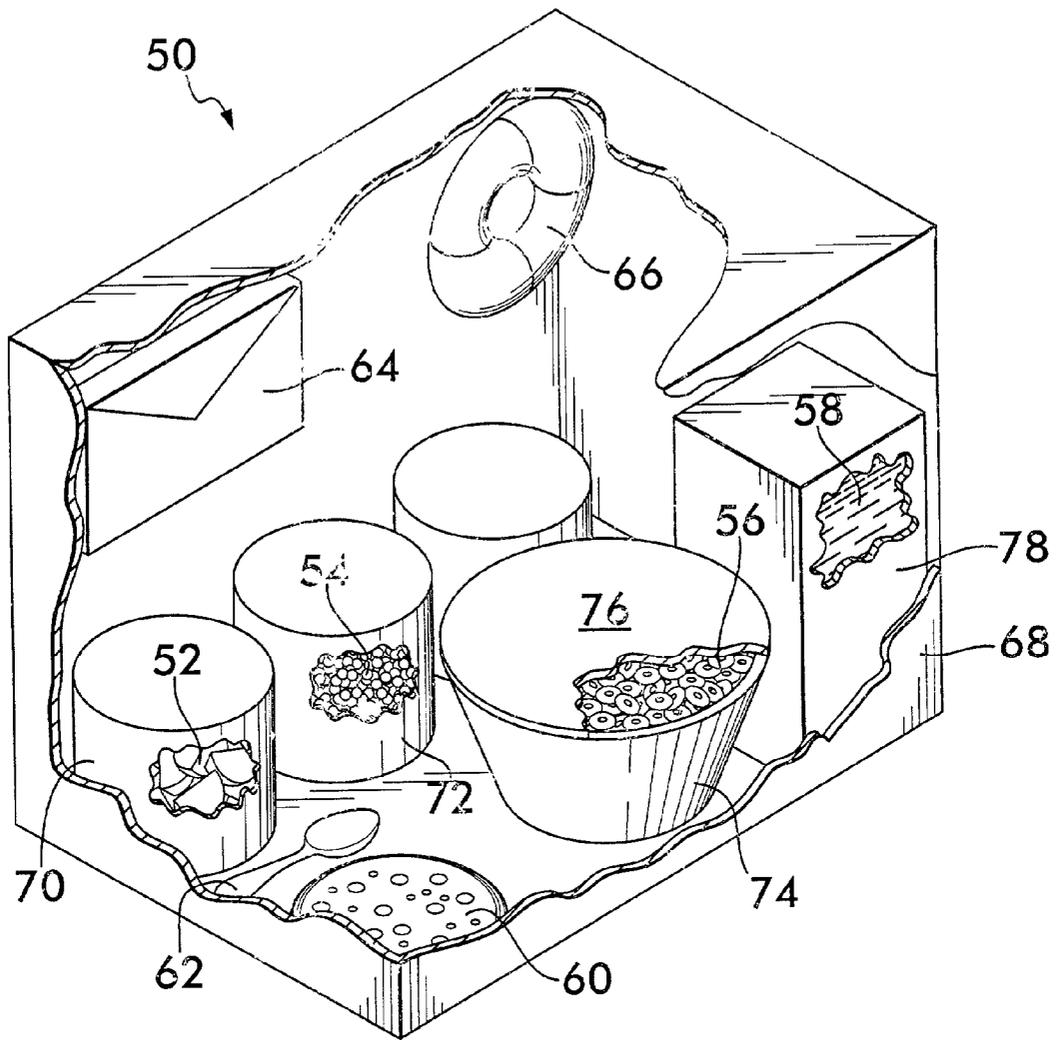


FIG. 2

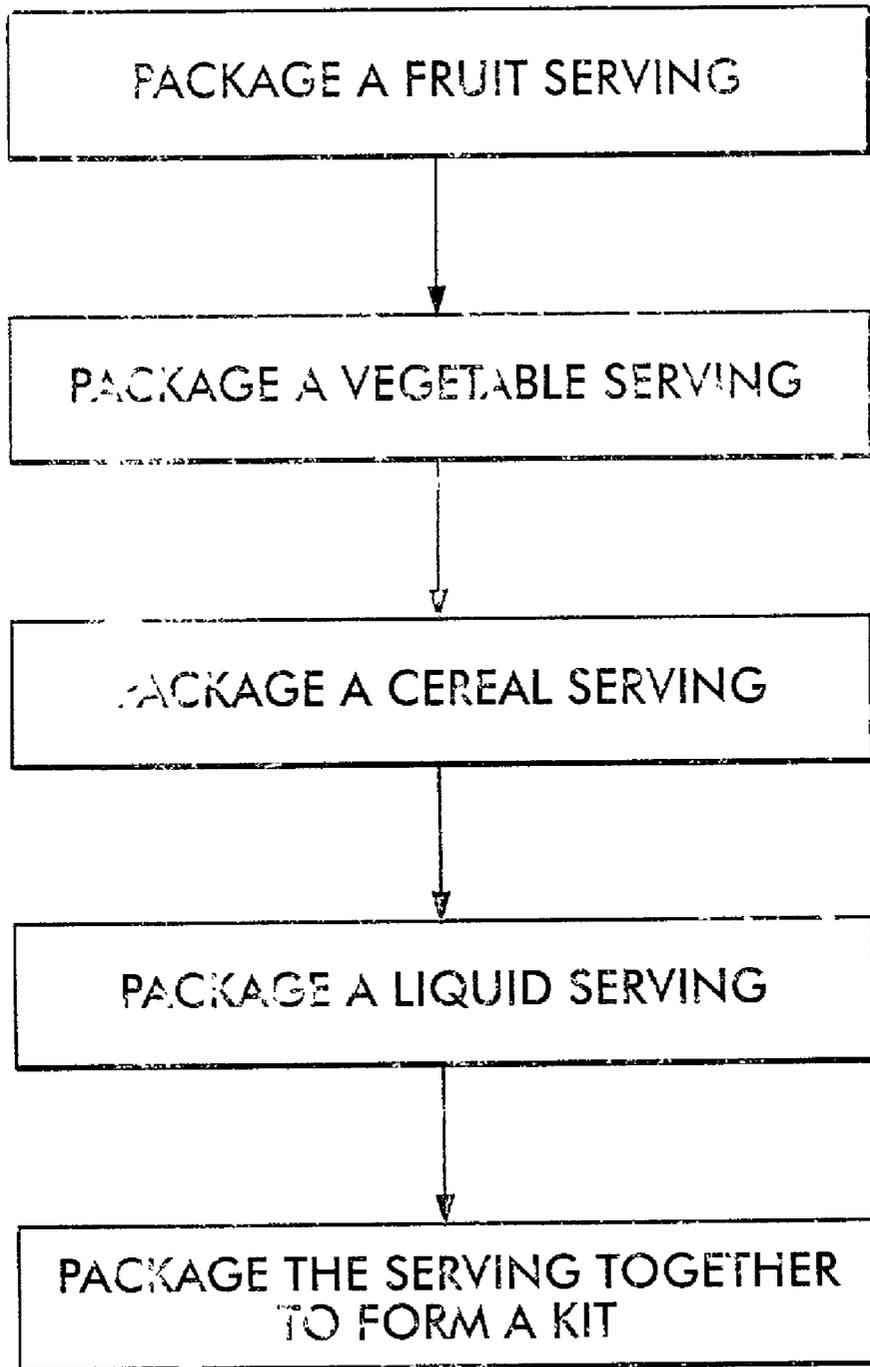


FIG. 3

INFANT/TODDLER PREPARED MEAL KIT

RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application is based on and claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/292,555, filed May 22, 2001.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] This invention concerns a kit of prepared foodstuffs suitable for consumption by infants and toddlers.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Infants, as well as toddlers, have special dietary needs which are not easily or conveniently met when traveling. While adults and older children are readily accommodated in restaurants, parents must often bring considerable supplies of suitable "baby" food with them for their infant or toddler. Bringing such extra supplies can be burdensome, especially when significant baggage is already being carried by the parents. Furthermore, there are no convenient facilities readily available while traveling where infant and toddler food may be prepared, refrigerated or heated if necessary. This can lead to significant wastage, requiring extra food be carried to compensate for the wasted portions.

[0004] Preparation of infant and toddler meals is also a task in daycare centers where meals are often served to groups of children. If the burden and time required for preparing such meals could be reduced, it would have beneficial consequences in that a more complete and balanced meal could be served faster to more children by a smaller staff.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The invention concerns a kit of prepared foodstuffs suitable for an infant's or toddler's meal. The kit contains a fruit serving, a vegetable serving, a cereal serving and a liquid serving. The servings are conveniently contained in packaging adapted for grouping the fruit, vegetable, cereal and liquid servings together.

[0006] The invention also concerns a method of providing a kit of prepared foodstuffs suitable for an infant's or toddler's meal. The method includes the steps of packaging a fruit serving, packaging a vegetable serving, packaging a cereal serving and packaging a liquid serving and including the servings together in packaging to form a kit.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a prepared meal kit according to the invention;

[0008] FIG. 2 is a cut-away perspective view of another embodiment of a prepared meal kit according to the invention; and

[0009] FIG. 3 is a flow chart describing a method for providing a meal kit according to the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTLY PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0010] FIG. 1 shows a prepared meal kit 10 according to the invention. Meal kit 10 is designed to provide a complete

infant's meal and is packaged using a tray 12 having a plurality of wells 14 holding various foodstuffs. The tray may be comprised of a variety of materials, including paper, metal foil or plastic and is preferably made of molded plastic of sufficient rigidity and robustness to allow the kit to endure rough handling and be conveniently used to serve the meal, yet also be inexpensive enough to be disposable. The foodstuffs preferably include a fruit serving 16, a vegetable serving 18 and a cereal serving 20. For infants, the fruit and vegetable servings are preferably pureed, sized between 2-4 ounces and may be such baby food staples as apple sauce, pears, peas, carrots or sweet potatoes to cite a few examples. The cereal serving, also preferably 2-4 ounces, is preferably a rice-based cereal but could also be oatmeal or some other grain-based foodstuff.

[0011] Preferably, the wells 14 are capped by lids 22 which seal the contents against moisture, air and other contaminants. The lids are readily removable by hand and may take many forms but are preferably heat sealed membranes, such as metal foil or flexible plastic which are removably adhered to the tray surface 24.

[0012] In addition to the pureed food servings 16 through 20, a liquid serving 26 is also included in the meal kit. For infants, the liquid serving 26 is preferably infant formula, which may be provided in powdered form and mixed with water provided in a container 28. Alternately, liquid formula may be packaged in container 28, the formula being poured into a baby bottle supplied by the parents. The liquid serving may also be prepackaged in a disposable baby bottle 30 included with the kit. The liquid serving is preferably 4-6 ounces.

[0013] A baked food item, such as a teething biscuit 32, may also be included in the kit. Like the pureed servings, the baked food item is preferably contained in its own sealed well 14 within the tray 12.

[0014] The meal kit 10 may also include utensils such as spoon 34 for serving the pureed food items. Such utensils are also preferably made of molded plastic and are disposable with the tray after the meal has been consumed. For further convenience, clean-up items 36 are provided with the kit. The clean-up items may include napkins 38, a bib 40, pre-moistened towels 42, tissues 44 and various other products useful for handling the inevitable mess which is part of an infant's feeding. Lastly, a toy, such as a rattle 46, may also be part of the meal kit according to the invention. Other examples of a toy might be a book, a puzzle, a plush toy, an action figure, any of which may serve as a thematic or promotional advertisement or tie-in to other products, events or services including television programs, motion pictures, special occasions such as holidays, birthdays or charitable events or causes.

[0015] FIG. 2 shows another embodiment of a prepared meal kit 50 according to the invention. Kit 50 is an example of a toddler's meal and illustrates an alternate form of packaging for organizing the kit contents. It is understood that the embodiments of both the infant's and toddler's meal kits described are examples only and are not indicative of any preferred packaging arrangement associated with either meal kit.

[0016] Kit 50 differs little in its contents from kit 10 and includes a fruit serving 52 (preferably 4-6 ounces), a veg-

etable serving **54** (preferably 4-6 ounces), a cereal **56** (preferably 4-6 ounces) and a liquid serving **58** (preferably 4-8 ounces). The servings are, however, adapted to an older child in that the fruit and vegetable servings may comprise chunk or whole fruit and vegetable items, the cereal serving may be a commercially available dry grain-based product such as toasted oats and the liquid serving may be a fruit juice or milk. In certain embodiments, a pasta serving may be substituted for one of the servings or provided as an additional serving. The meal kit **50** may also include a baked item **60** in the form of a cookie or cracker, utensils such as a spoon **62**, clean-up products **64** including napkins, a bib, pre-moistened towels and the like and a toy **66**.

[**0017**] Meal kit **50** is packaged in a box **68**, and the servings of fruit, vegetables and cereal **52**, **54** and **56** respectively, are preferably provided in individual respective containers **70**, **72** and **74**. Containers **52** and **54** holding the fruit and vegetable servings may be jars, cans or membrane sealed containers or pouches. Container **74**, holding the cereal serving **56**, is preferably a disposable paperboard or plastic bowl sealed with a membrane **76** to keep its contents fresh and uncontaminated. The liquid serving **58**, juice or milk being preferred, is held in a convenient box or carton container **78**.

[**0018**] **FIG. 3** is a flow diagram showing the steps for providing a kit of prepared foodstuffs suitable for an infant's or toddler's meal. The steps include packaging a fruit serving, packaging a vegetable serving, packaging a cereal serving, packaging a liquid serving and then packaging the servings together to form the kit. The packaging need only meet the requirements that it be inexpensive, disposable and seal the food contents to keep them fresh and uncontaminated. However, it is preferred that the packaging also serve an eye-catching, advertising, brand-identifying function and, thus, be a suitable vehicle for the display of indicia and other graphic devices such as company trademarks, logos and images such as cartoon characters, thematic scenes or symbols, as well as for the display of educational presentations. Thus, the packaging may also be used to strengthen any promotional aspects or tie-ins which are associated with the meal kit. Such promotional or display functions may also be extended to the clean-up items wherein the napkins, bibs and other items may be similarly used to display graphics or indicia consistent with the themes displayed on the packaging.

[**0019**] The prepared meal kit according to the invention provides convenience and advantage to parents traveling with children as well as institutions, such as daycare centers, where significant numbers of meals need to be prepared for infants and toddlers. The kit provides a complete, balanced, nutritional meal which requires no preparation other than opening of the packaging. The portion sizes are tailored for a single meal, thus, reducing waste. The packaging is disposable, eliminating significant clean-up chores. The kit can be packaged to have a relatively long shelf life without

the need for refrigeration and, thus, can be easily stocked by restaurants, supermarkets and convenience stores.

What is claimed is:

1. A kit of prepared foodstuffs suitable for an infant's and a toddler's meal, said kit comprising:

a fruit serving;

a vegetable serving;

a cereal serving;

a liquid serving; and

packaging adapted for grouping said fruit, vegetable, cereal and liquid servings together.

2. A kit according to claim 1, wherein said packaging comprises a tray having a plurality of compartments, each compartment adapted for holding one of said servings.

3. A kit according to claim 1, further comprising:

a first container for holding said fruit serving;

a second container for holding said vegetable serving;

a third container for holding said cereal serving; and

a fourth container for holding said liquid serving, said packaging holding said containers.

4. A kit according to claim 1, wherein said liquid serving is infant formula.

5. A kit according to claim 1, further comprising a baked food item.

6. A kit according to claim 5, wherein said baked food item is a biscuit.

7. A kit according to claim 1, further comprising a pasta food item.

8. A kit according to claim 1, further including a napkin and a bib.

9. A kit according to claim 1, further including a toy.

10. A kit according to claim 9, wherein said toy has characteristics associated with a particular activity and provides a promotional link to said activity for promoting said activity via said kit.

11. A method of providing a kit of prepared foodstuffs suitable for an infant's and a toddler's meal, said method comprising the steps of:

packaging a fruit serving;

packaging a vegetable serving;

packaging a cereal serving;

packaging a liquid serving; and

packaging said servings together thereby forming a kit.

12. A method according to claim 10, further comprising the steps of first packaging said servings individually thereby forming individual servings, and then packaging said individual servings together to form said kit.

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