

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau(43) International Publication Date
21 July 2011 (21.07.2011)(10) International Publication Number
WO 2011/086088 A1

(51) International Patent Classification:

A47J 31/44 (2006.01)

(21) International Application Number:

PCT/EP2011/050319

(22) International Filing Date:

12 January 2011 (12.01.2011)

(25) Filing Language:

English

(26) Publication Language:

English

(30) Priority Data:

10150841.4 15 January 2010 (15.01.2010) EP

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(81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BR, BW, BY, BZ,

CA, CH, CL, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KM, KN, KP, KR, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NL, NO, NZ, OM, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, RO, RS, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TH, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.

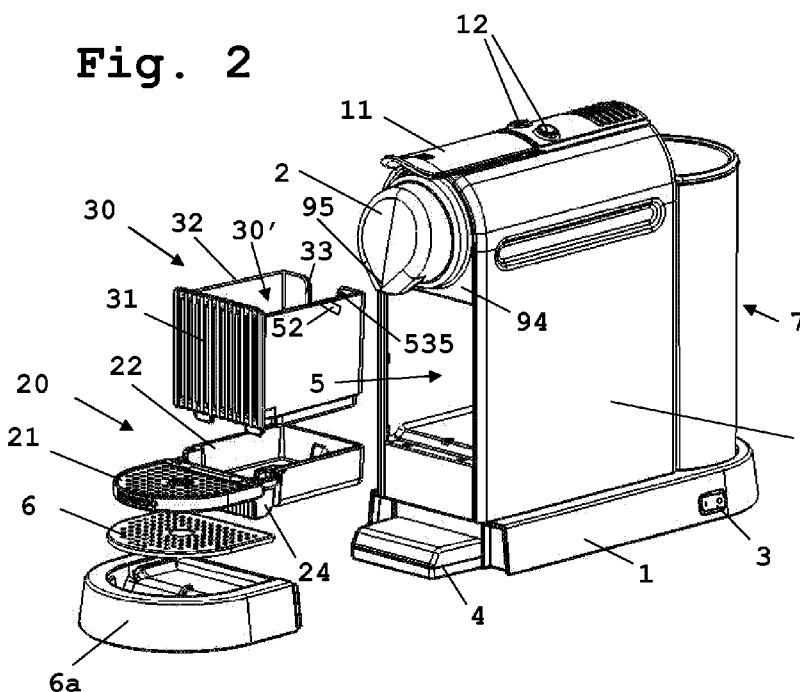
(84) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LR, LS, MW, MZ, NA, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European (AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, SM, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Declarations under Rule 4.17:

- as to applicant's entitlement to apply for and be granted a patent (Rule 4.17(ii))
- as to the applicant's entitlement to claim the priority of the earlier application (Rule 4.17(iii))
- of inventorship (Rule 4.17(iv))

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: ERGONOMIC INGREDIENT HOLDER AND SERVICE UNIT COORDINATION

Fig. 2

(57) Abstract: A beverage preparation machine comprising : a seat (5); an ingredient holder (13) that has a processing configuration and a transfer configuration; and a service unit (20, 30) having an operative position in the seat and being removable from the seat. A mechanical locking device (53) is provided to : mechanically detect a position of the service unit and mechanically prevent the ingredient holder from taking its processing configuration when the service unit is off its operative position; and/ or mechanically detect a configuration of the ingredient holder and mechanically prevent removal of the service unit from the seat when the ingredient holder is in its processing configuration.



Published:

— *with international search report (Art. 21(3))*

ERGONOMIC INGREDIENT HOLDER AND SERVICE UNIT COORDINATION

Field of the Invention

The field of the invention pertains to brewing units and service units for beverage preparation machines, in particular beverage preparation machines for preparing beverages from a pre-portioned ingredient of the beverage supplied within a capsule to the machine. The service unit may include an arrangement for collecting waste material generated during operation of the beverage preparation machine or supply an ingredient, in particular a liquid such as water.

For the purpose of the present description, a "beverage" is meant to include any liquid food, such as tea, coffee, hot or cold chocolate, milk, soup, baby food, etc... A "capsule" is meant to include any pre-portioned beverage ingredient within an enclosing packaging of any material, in particular an airtight packaging, e.g. plastic, aluminium, recyclable and/or biodegradable packagings, and of any shape and structure, including soft pods or rigid cartridges containing the ingredient.

Background Art

Beverage preparation machines are becoming very popular whether at home or in offices. For instance, there are machines for the preparation of beverages such as coffee, tea, soup or other similar beverages, in which at least one ingredient of the desired beverage, for example ground coffee, is supplied within a capsule into a capsule extraction chamber of the machine.

The ingredient is typically extracted by a liquid, such as water, circulated in the beverage preparation machine from a source of liquid through the capsule extraction chamber. From the extraction chamber, the liquid containing the extracted ingredient is dispensed via a beverage outlet of the machine to a user, e.g. into a user-cup or user-mug appropriately placed underneath the outlet during the beverage preparation process.

The use of capsules, such as plastic and/or aluminium-based capsules, for the preparation of beverages has many advantages. Capsules, in particular aluminium-based capsules, are hermetic or gas tight and 5 thus can protect the beverage ingredient effectively during an extended period of time against the environment such as air, humidity or light, before use of the ingredient. Thus such capsules prevent premature degradation of the ingredient. Furthermore, capsules of a 10 beverage ingredient are easy to handle, hygienic, and their use involves less cleaning of the beverage preparation machine, in particular no significant part of the machine's extraction chamber comes into contact with the beverage ingredient contained in the capsule during 15 the extraction process. Moreover, upon use, any residual waste ingredient is largely confined within the capsule so that generally no loose waste ingredient has to be removed from the beverage preparation machine after use.

Capsules are usually inserted individually into the 20 machine's extraction chamber, manually or automatically from a capsule stack. Hot or cold water is then passed through the capsule for brewing or otherwise extracting the ingredient(s) contained within the capsule and form the desired beverage. The prepared beverage is supplied 25 via an outlet of the machine into a cup, mug or other receptacle to the user.

Upon extraction, the used capsules may either be removed individually from the beverage preparation machine after each preparation cycle. Alternatively, the 30 used capsules may be evacuated to a machine's used-capsule receptacle and collected therein.

The beverage preparation machines are advantageously provided with a service unit for handling waste materials generated during the beverage preparation process. The 35 waste materials include waste ingredients, such as ground coffee after extraction, and/or liquid such as liquid evacuated from the liquid circuit between the liquid source and the beverage outlet or excess beverage dispensed at the beverage outlet, e.g. in the form of 40 drips at the end of a beverage preparation process. For example, the service unit includes a waste liquid collect arrangement with at least one of a: user-recipient support provided with a liquid evacuation arrangement

such as a grid; and a waste ingredient holding arrangement. Typically, the user-recipient support and/or the waste ingredient holding arrangement are situated above the waste liquid collect arrangement so that waste 5 liquid may be evacuated by gravity from the user-recipient support and/or the waste ingredient holding arrangement to the waste liquid collect arrangement.

Advantageously, the used-capsule receptacle is located underneath the capsule chamber so that the 10 capsules may fall by gravity into the receptacle upon extraction. In the latter case, the receptacle has to be emptied by the user when full. The receptacle may be a removable receptacle located in the beverage preparation machine typically under the extraction chamber.

15 Service units of beverage preparation machines are for example disclosed in EP 1 095 605, EP 1 731 065, EP 1 867 260, WO 2009/013778, WO 2009/074559 and WO 2009/135869. Such service units are advantageously combined with a brewing unit arranged to evacuate 20 automatically any used capsules at reopening, for example as disclosed in EP 1 095 605, EP 1 646 305, EP 1 757 212, EP 1 859 713, EP 1 859 714, EP 2 103 236, EP 2 119 385, WO 2009/043630 and WO 2009/130099.

Usually, the beverage preparation machine has a seat 25 for receiving such a service unit. Typically, the seat is located inside the machine's housing and is so configured that the service unit can be slid in and out of the beverage preparation machine.

A problem may arise when the service unit is 30 improperly inserted into the machine or even not inserted at all into the machine when a user wishes to initiate a beverage preparation process. In such a situation, there is a risk of improper collection of waste ingredient or liquid during the beverage preparation process and 35 generation of a mess in the beverage preparation machine. Likewise, a user may by mistake interfere with the proper positioning of the service unit in the machine during a beverage preparation process which may lead to similar consequences.

40 A solution involves the implementation of sensor and electronically controlled locking systems for detecting the proper insertion of the service unit into the

beverage preparation machine and the loading state of the extraction chamber, and for electronically blocking the beverage preparation process when the service unit is not properly inserted into the machine and prevent servicing 5 of the service unit when the extraction chamber is still full. Such electronic sensor and locking systems are relatively expensive. Hence, these systems are usually not provided in beverage preparation machines of the entry or the middle commercial range.

10 There is still a need to provide an inexpensive simple solution for improving the coordination of the service unit and the extraction process.

Summary of the Invention

15 The invention thus relates to a beverage preparation machine that comprises:

- a seat;
- an ingredient holder, in particular a brewing unit, that has a processing configuration for processing an 20 ingredient contained in the holder and a transfer configuration for inserting this ingredient into the holder and/or for evacuating this ingredient from the holder; and
- a service unit having an operative position in the 25 seat for collecting consumed ingredient from the ingredient holder and/or for supplying consumable ingredient to the ingredient holder, the service unit being removable from the seat for emptying the consumed ingredient and/or refilling with consumable 30 ingredient.

Typically, the transfer configuration is suitable for loading the consumable ingredient in the ingredient holder before processing this ingredient to prepare a beverage and/or for unloading any residual consumed 35 ingredient from the ingredient holder after processing.

The ingredient holder can be arranged to receive, house and evacuate a capsule in which this ingredient is contained.

For instance, the machine is a coffee, tea, 40 chocolate or soup preparation machine, such as a self-

contained table-top machine that can be electrically connected to the mains, e.g. at home or in an office. In particular, the machine is arranged for preparing within the ingredient holder a beverage by passing hot or cold 5 water or another liquid through a capsule containing an ingredient of the beverage to be prepared, such as ground coffee or tea or chocolate or cacao or milk powder.

For example, the preparation machine comprises: an ingredient processing arrangement including one or more 10 of a liquid reservoir, a liquid circulation circuit, a heater, a pump and the ingredient holder arranged to receive ingredient capsules for extraction and evacuate capsules upon extraction; a housing having an opening leading into a seat to which capsules are evacuated from 15 the preparation unit; and a receptacle having a cavity forming a storage space for collecting capsules evacuated to the seat into the receptacle up to a level of fill. The receptacle is insertable into the seat for collecting capsules and is removable from the seat for emptying the 20 collected capsules. Examples of such ingredient processing arrangements are disclosed in WO 2009/074550, WO 2009/130099 and PCT/EP09/053139.

The beverage preparation module may include one or more of the following components:

25 a) the ingredient holder, such as a brewing unit, for receiving an ingredient of this beverage, in particular a pre-portioned ingredient supplied within a capsule, and for guiding an incoming flow of liquid, such as water, through this ingredient to a beverage outlet;

30 b) an in-line heater, such as a thermoblock, for heating this flow of liquid to be supplied to the ingredient holder;

35 c) a pump for pumping this liquid through the in-line heater;

d) one or more fluid connecting members for guiding this liquid from a source of liquid, such as a tank of liquid, to the beverage outlet;

40 e) an electric control unit, in particular comprising a printed circuit board (PCB), for receiving

instructions from a user via an interface and for controlling the in-line heater and the pump; and

5 f) one or more electric sensors for sensing at least one operational characteristic selected from characteristics of the ingredient holder, the in-line heater, the pump, a liquid reservoir, an ingredient collector, a flow of this liquid, a pressure of this liquid and a temperature of this liquid, and for communicating such characteristic(s) to the control unit.

10

The heater may be a thermoblock or an on demand heater (ODH), for instance an ODH type disclosed in EP 1 253 844, EP 1 380 243 and EP 1 809 151.

In accordance with the invention, a mechanical locking device is provided to:

15 - mechanically detect a position of the service unit and mechanically prevent the ingredient holder from taking its processing configuration when the service unit is off its operative position, in particular when the service unit is removed from the seat; and/or

20 - mechanically detect a configuration of the ingredient holder and mechanically prevent removal of the service unit from the seat when the ingredient holder is in its processing configuration, in particular when the ingredient holder is off its transfer configuration.

25

Hence, instead of the prior art electronic sensing, electronic locking and control arrangements, a simple all-mechanical locking device can be provided to prevent: initiation of a beverage preparation when the machine is not in a configuration to do so because a service unit is not properly positioned in the machine, e.g. when the waste material collector or ingredient supply such as a water tank is not in its operative position; and/or to prevent early removal of such a service unit, e.g. while the machine is still in the process or in a configuration to prepare a beverage.

Before the service unit is withdrawn from the seat, the user may be invited to make sure that the ingredient holder is emptied before emptying the service unit, in particular that no capsule remains in the ingredient holder and that the last used capsule has been properly

evacuated to the service unit. To avoid clogging of the service unit, in particular with used ingredient capsules, the service unit may incorporate an anti-clogging system, for example as disclosed in WO 5 2009/074559 and in WO 2009/135869, the contents of which are hereby incorporated by way of reference.

The locking device may be of the type known in the field of cabinets with several drawers so configured that the ability to move one drawer depends on the position of other drawers. This kind of technology is well known in the field of office and home furniture for storing documents, clothes and other items, for example as disclosed in US 4,960,309, US 5,056,876, etc.... This type of locking device can be adapted and transferred to the field of beverage preparation machines. In the context of the present invention, the prior art openable and closable drawers are notionally substituted by the ingredient holder that can be brought from a processing to a transfer configuration and vice versa, and the insertable and removable service unit. Of course, other configurations of the same type can provide this locking functionality.

The ingredient holder typically has a first part and a second part delimiting an ingredient chamber for receiving the ingredient, the first part being movable to the second part into the processing configuration and away from the second part into the transfer configuration. Examples of suitable ingredient holders are disclosed in EP 1 095 605, EP 1 646 305, EP 1 757 312, EP 1 859 713, EP 1 859 714, EP 2 103 236, EP 2 119 385, WO 2009/043630 and WO 2009/130099.

For instance, the mechanical locking device comprises a first linkage member linked to the movable first part, the first linkage member being arranged to:

- 35 - block the movable first part from reaching the processing configuration when the service unit is detected off its operative position by the locking device; and/or
- detect when the movable first part is in its processing configuration so as to block the service unit in its operative position by the locking device.

Normally, the movable first part has a cooperating first linkage arrangement that is connected to the first linkage member of the locking device. The cooperating first linkage arrangement may be in the form of a member 5 assembled to the movable first and/or integrally formed therewith. For example, the first linkage member is linked to the movable first part by a cam and cam-follower arrangement

The mechanical locking device may comprise a second 10 linkage member linked or linkable to the service unit, the second linkage member can be arranged to:

- block the service unit in its operative position when the movable first part is in its processing configuration; and/or
- 15 - detect when the service unit is off its operative position so as to block the movable first part from reaching the processing configuration by the locking device.

Typically, when the service unit is situated in the 20 machine's seat, the second linkage member is linked to the service unit, the linkage member being unlinked from the service unit when removed from the seat but linkable thereto by reinsertion of the service unit into the seat.

Normally, the service unit has a cooperating second 25 linkage arrangement that is connected (or connectable) to the second linkage member of the locking device. The cooperating second linkage arrangement may be in the form of a member assembled to the service unit and/or integrally formed therewith. For example, the second linkage member is linked to the removable service unit by 30 a cam and cam-follower arrangement.

In one embodiment, the mechanical locking device comprises mechanically interconnected first and second 35 linkage members, the first linkage member being mechanically linked to the ingredient holder, in particular by a cam and cam-follower first arrangement, the second linkage member being mechanically linkable to the service unit, in particular by a cam and cam-follower second arrangement. The first linkage member may be so 40 mechanically linked to the ingredient holder that changing the ingredient holder from its processing

configuration to its transfer configuration and vice versa causes motion of the first and second linkage members. The second linkage member can be so mechanically linked or linkable to the service unit that moving the 5 service unit to and from its operative position in the seat causes motion of the second and first linkage members. The first and second linkage members are generally rigidly interconnected, possibly allowing small deflections between the linkage members in particular 10 resilient deflections. Optionally, the mechanical locking device is formed of a single component with which the first and second linkage members are integral.

The mechanical locking device can be pivotally and/or translationally mounted in the seat, in particular 15 by a cam cam-follower arrangement between the locking device and a wall, such as a sidewall, of the seat.

The service unit may be arranged to lock the locking device in a position for locking the ingredient holder in its transfer configuration when the service unit is 20 removed from the seat and until reinsertion into the seat. For instance, the machine comprises a retainer, in particular fixed to the seat, for holding the locking device in the position locking the ingredient holder in its transfer configuration. Optionally, the service unit 25 has a guide member for driving the locking device to the retainer when the service unit is withdrawn from the seat and/or for driving the locking device away from the retainer by reinsertion of the service unit into the machine's seat.

30 Usually, the service unit is manually movable into the operative position and manually removable from the seat. Likewise, the ingredient holder can be arranged to be manually brought from its processing configuration to its transfer configuration and vice versa. For example, 35 the ingredient holder is associated with a user-handle for bringing the holder from its processing configuration to its transfer configuration and vice versa.

The service unit and/or the ingredient holder may be 40 automatically driven, in particular by using one or more motors.

The service unit can be arranged to: collect waste liquid and/or solid ingredient; and/or supply consumable liquid and/or solid ingredient.

For instance, the service unit includes an 5 arrangement for collecting at least one of:

- waste beverage liquid ingredient, such as water, e.g. from a machine internal liquid evacuation arrangement as disclosed in EP 1 900 312 or EP 1 913 851;
- waste beverage solid ingredient, such as a used 10 beverage flavouring ingredient in particular ground coffee, optionally contained in a pre-portioned capsule, for example a used coffee capsule; and
- waste beverage, such as drips from a beverage 15 dispensing outlet or draining from the ingredient holder when brought into its transfer configuration after processing the ingredient.

Examples of service units providing such collecting features are disclosed in EP 1 095 605, EP 1 731 065, EP 1 867 260, WO 2009/135869 and WO 2009/074559, the 20 contents of which are hereby incorporated by way of reference.

The service unit may be arranged to supply to the ingredient holder consumable liquid and/or solid ingredient such as water, milk, tea leafs, ground or 25 instant coffee, concentrate or dry soup, syrup and powder chocolate. For instance, the service unit comprises a water or milk supply reservoir or an ingredient supply system, e.g. as in EP 1 447 034 and EP 1 943 931.

30

Brief Description of the Drawings

The invention will now be described with reference to the schematic drawings, wherein:

- Figure 1 is an overall view of a beverage preparation machine according to the invention;
- Figure 2 is an overall view of a similar beverage preparation machine according to the invention;
- Figures 3a to 3c schematically illustrate side views of different positions of a service unit and an

ingredient chamber with a locking device of a beverage preparation machine according to the invention; and

- Figures 4a to 4c schematically illustrate front views of a locking device of the beverage preparation machine shown in Figs 3a to 3c in the corresponding configurations.

Detailed description

Figure 1 shows a beverage preparation machine according to the invention. The machine has a beverage preparation unit 2 in a housing 9. Unit 2 is arranged for receiving an ingredient capsule in an extraction chamber and for feeding a liquid such as water to the capsule. Unit 2 is mounted on a platform 1 and extends along a lateral side 1' thereof. A beverage outlet 95 for dispensing beverage from unit 2 extends through a front face 94 of housing 9.

Unit 2 includes a brewing module that comprises an opening and closure handle 11 and a ingredient holder (not shown) for holding the substance-containing capsule, e.g., a coffee capsule, and a beverage delivery means such as a beverage duct 95. The ingredient holder typically comprises a capsule holder and a brewing cage delimiting the extraction chamber, a fluid injection system for injecting water in the capsule and a closure device such as a lever and a knee joint mechanism. Suitable extraction modules are for example described in EP 1 859 713. Further possible features of unit 2 are discussed in greater details in co-pending application EP 2 070 454, the content of which is hereby incorporated by way of reference.

Furthermore, housing 9 houses within a seat 5 a service unit 20,30 for collecting waste materials such as waste liquid and/or a waste beverage ingredient. Service unit 20,30 is manually insertable into seat 5 to reach a collection position for collecting waste materials (as shown in Fig. 1); and removable from seat 5 for emptying the waste materials upon collection thereof (as shown in Fig. 2). Service unit 20,30 may slide into and out from seat 5.

This service unit includes a used capsule receptacle 30 that has a front face 31 and that is removably inserted under the brewing unit and outlet 95. Further details of service unit 20,30 and its seat in housing 9 5 will be discussed in relation with Figs 2 to 4c.

Platform 1 bears beverage unit 2, a water tank 7 attached to the base platform externally to housing 9 and adjacent to the rear wall of housing 9, a fluid connection therebetween, and an electric power connection 10 to the mains.

A master switch 3 is mounted on platform 1 for shutting on and off the machine. Two user-buttons 12, typically for selecting a small or large quantity of beverage to be prepared, are located above unit 2.

15 Upper face 34 of platform 1 has means in the form of a STRIX™ connector (not shown) for connecting a milk frothing device 8. Such disconnectable connectors for such a platform 1 and frothing device 8 are for example disclosed in greater detail in WO 03/075629, WO 20 2008/046837 and in WO 2008/142154, the contents of which are hereby incorporated by way of reference.

25 Upper face 34 is adjacent neighbouring front face 35 that can be associated with a heating system, in particular integrated in platform 1, and that may be arranged to support one or more cups or mugs for pre-heating thereof prior to use.

As mentioned above, beverage unit 2 generally extends upwards within housing 9 adjacent a first lateral edge 1' of platform 1. Frothing device 8 is generally 30 located adjacent a second lateral edge of platform 1 opposite the first edge 1'', so that housing 9 and platform 1 generally form in cross-section an L-shape that supports frothing device 8.

The beverage preparation machine also includes a 35 support device 6 for supporting mugs that is located under beverage outlet 95 and that is in the shape of a perforated plate for evacuating liquid. A collector 6a in the form of a shallow reservoir is located underneath support device 6 for collecting the evacuated liquid. 40 Collector 6a does not require a high capacity for

collecting liquid. Most of the time, collector 6a will only have to collect drips and spills.

Support device 6 and collector 6a are separable en bloc from platform 1, for instance for emptying collector 5 6a and/or for cleaning.

Furthermore, service unit 20,30 has a cup support device 20 that includes, above support device 6, a second support plate 21 for supporting recipients, such as cups, of smaller size underneath outlet 95. Like main support 10 device 6, second support plate 21 comprises a perforated plate for the evacuation of liquid, in particular to collector 6a, optionally via support device 6. Second support plate 21 is movable into a generally horizontal operative position between the outlet 95 and support 15 device 6, as illustrated, and is movable into a generally upright or vertical rest position away therefrom so that a larger recipient is placeable on support device 6 under outlet 95. Second support plate 21 is in particular rotatable and/or slidable from its operative position 20 into its rest position. Further details of possible features of such second support device are for example disclosed in EP 1 867 260.

Figure 2, in which the same numeric references generally designate the same elements, generally shows 25 another beverage preparation machine according to the invention.

The preparation machine shown in Fig. 2 has the same features as the machine of Fig. 1 except for the absence of the lateral platform extension supporting a milk 30 frothing device.

This machine has a seat 5 for receiving service unit 20,30 that includes cup support device 20 which bears receptacle 30 having a cavity 30' that forms a storage space for collecting used capsules underneath the brewing 35 unit with the extraction chamber.

Receptacle 30 may be assembled to cup support device 20 which includes cup support member 21 that is pivotally mounted onto a reservoir 22 supporting receptacle 30. Support member 21 is assembled to or integral with a stop 40 member 24 that is rotatable with support member against a front face of reservoir 22 to stop the downward rotation

of support member 21 and secure member 21 in a horizontal position.

Receptacle 30 may have a bottom part with a drain-hole so that reservoir 22 can collect liquid drained from 5 this bottom part into reservoir 22 via the drain-hole. Cup support device 20 and receptacle 30 resting thereon may be inserted and removed en bloc from seat 5.

Furthermore, receptacle 30 has an opening 33 in the 10 rear upright wall that is used to prevent clogging by an accumulation of used capsules, as described in greater details WO 2009/074559, which is hereby incorporated by way of reference.

Also shown in Fig. 2, collector 6a supporting 15 support device 6 may be removably assembled via a mechanical connector 4 to platform 1.

Service unit 20,30 comprises an arrangement for collecting: waste beverage precursor-liquid, such as water, in reservoir 22; waste beverage precursor-solid, such as a used beverage flavouring ingredient in 20 particular ground coffee, optionally contained in a pre-portioned capsule, in used ingredient receptacle 30; and waste beverage, such as drips from a beverage dispensing outlet in reservoir 22 via a liquid evacuation groove arrangement in cup support 21.

25 The beverage preparation machines shown in Figs 1 and 2 have a mechanical locking arrangement 50 including a locking device 53 held in seat 5 and associated with cooperating portions 51,52,534,535 of ingredient holder 13, of service unit 20,30 and of seat 5.

30 Figs 3a to 4c illustrate in greater detail this aspect of the invention. In particular, Figs 4a to 4c show a front view of a mechanical locking device 53 in each position of the locking device illustrated in Figs 3a to 3c, respectively, in combination with a service 35 unit 20,30 and an ingredient holder in the form of a brewing unit 13 having an extraction chamber 14.

40 The beverage preparation machine has a brewing unit 13 with a fixed front part 132 and a movable rear part 131 delimiting an ingredient chamber 14 for accommodating ingredient capsules. Chamber 14 is in fluid connection with a liquid injection line 15 and a beverage outlet 95.

Brewing unit 13 has a transfer configuration in which ingredient chamber 14 is open, as illustrated in Figs 3b and a processing configuration in which chamber 14 is closed, as shown in Fig. 3a. Chamber 14 is opened and 5 closed by moving apart and together front part 132 and rear part 131 of brewing unit 13. Specifically, rear part 131 forms a movable first part and front part 132 forms a fixed second part of brewing unit 13. A handle 11, as illustrated in Figs 1 and 2, can be provided to open and 10 close manually brewing unit 13.

Such a brewing unit opening and closing mechanism together with the insertion, extraction and removal of ingredient capsules is described in greater details for example in EP 1 646 305, EP 1 757 212, EP 1 859 713, EP 1 15 859 714, EP 2 103 236, EP 2 119 385, WO 2009/043630 and WO 2009/130099, the contents of which are incorporated by way of reference.

Furthermore, the illustrated beverage preparation machine comprises a mechanical locking arrangement 50 with locking device 53 for mechanically preventing preparation of any beverage when service unit 20,30 is not in the collection position. In particular, mechanical locking device 53 may be configured to prevent: closure of ingredient chamber 14 when service unit 20,30 is not 20 in the collection position, as illustrated in Fig. 3c; and/or prevent removal of service unit 20,30 when 25 ingredient chamber 14 is not in its open configuration, as illustrated in Fig. 3a.

When brewing unit 13 is opened and closed manually 30 with a handle, locking device 53 in locking arrangement 50 will block or release the brewing unit and the handle depending on the position of service unit 20,30.

Mechanical locking arrangement 50 comprises a first cam 51, e.g. a groove, associated with movable rear part 35 131 of brewing unit 13, a second cam 52, e.g. a groove, associated with service unit 20,30 and a locking device 53 having cam-followers 531a,532a associated with cams 51,52. Cam-follower 531a forms a first linkage member linked to movable first part 131 of brewing unit 13 via a 40 cooperating (integral) linkage member including cam 51 in movable first part 131. Cam-follower 532a forms a second linkage member linked or linkable to service unit 20,30

via a cooperating (integral) linkage member including cam 52 in service unit 20,30.

Hence, locking device 53 has a pair or connected arms 531,532 pivotable about an axis 53' in seat 5. Arms 531,532 bear linkage members 531a,532a, e.g. generally in the form of pins, engaging as cam-followers with cams 51,52, e.g. in the form of grooves cooperating with such pins. Pivoting axis 53' is inserted into a generally oblong holding opening (not shown) in seat 5 of the beverage preparation machine, to permit the pivoting of element 53 about axis 53' and small translations of axis 53' in seat 5, in particular generally horizontal translations.

First linkage member 531a is so mechanically linked to ingredient holder 13 that bringing ingredient holder 13 from its processing configuration (Figs 3a and 4a) to its transfer configuration (Figs 3b and 4b) and vice versa causes motion of first and second linkage members 531a,532a. Second linkage member 532a is so mechanically linked or linkable to service unit (20,30) that moving service unit (20,30) to and from its operative position (Fig. 3a) in seat 5 causes motion of the second and first linkage members.

Figs 3a and 4a illustrate locking arrangement 50 when extraction chamber 14 is in the closed state, i.e. front and rear parts 131,132 of brewing unit 13 are urged together and in the processing configuration. In this configuration, the beverage preparation machine is ready to prepare a beverage, providing a capsule is present in extraction chamber 14. In such a configuration, service unit 20,30 should not be removed from seat 5. To prevent such a removal, locking device 53 has its arm 532 with member 532a fully engaged with cam 52 associated with service unit 20,30. If a user pulls on service unit 20,30, locking device 53 that has its other arm 531 with member 531a engaged in cam 51 and its pivoting axis 53' engaged in the corresponding opening in seat 5, will prevent removal or service unit 20,30 since locking device 53 will be prevented from pivoting.

Hence, in accordance with the invention, locking device 53 mechanically detects a configuration of the brewing unit 13 and mechanically prevents removal of

service unit 20,30 from seat 5 when brewing unit 13 is in its processing configuration, in particular when brewing unit 13 is off its transfer configuration.

5 Figs 3b and 4b illustrate extraction chamber 14 in its transfer configuration, i.e. front and rear parts 131,132 of brewing unit 13 are spaced apart. In this configuration, the beverage preparation machine is not in a state of readiness for preparing a beverage. In such a configuration, it is possible to insert a capsule into 10 brewing chamber 14 or remove a capsule therefrom. Moreover, in this inoperative configuration, service unit 20,30 can be removed from seat 5. Figs 3b and 4b thus illustrate a transitional configuration.

15 Locking device 53 has its arm 531 with member 531a driven upwards cam 51 associated with brewing unit 13. Moreover, arm 532 with member 532a are disengaged from cam 52 associated with service unit 20,30. If a user 20 pulls on service unit 20,30, locking device 53 does not block anymore removal of unit 20,30 from seat 5. In this case, locking arrangement 50 is moved to the configuration shown in Figs 3c and 4c.

25 Conversely, if instead of pulling service unit 20,30 out of seat 5, rear part 131 of brewing unit 13 is moved to front part 132, locking device 53 is pivoted about axis 53' with its arm 532 and member 532a re-engaging with cam 52 of service unit 20,30 towards the configuration illustrated in Figs 3a and 4a.

30 Figs 3c and 4c illustrate the removal of service unit 20,30 while extraction chamber 14 is blocked in its opened configuration, i.e. front and rear parts 131,132 of brewing unit 13 are spaced apart in the transfer configuration and prevented from being brought together. In this configuration, the beverage preparation machine 35 is not in a state of readiness for preparing a beverage but in a state of servicing, e.g. emptying collected water and solid ingredient material such as ground coffee from service unit 20,30.

40 In this configuration, locking device 53 has been brought in a blocking position to prevent closure of brewing chamber 14. Arm 531 with member 531a are driven upwards cam 51 to a locking end 51a thereof. Locking end 51a extends generally upwardly in cam 51 and exhibits a

change of direction. Moreover, Arm 532 has a securing member 532b opposite member 532a. Securing member 532b is secured on and against a retainer 534 of seat 5. To drive securing member 532b onto retainer 534, service unit 5 20,30 has a guide member 535, e.g. protrusion, which guides locking device 53 via arm 532 at the passage of drive member 535 when service unit 20,30 is pulled out from seat 5. By driving arm 532 onto support surface 534, pivoting axis 53' is slightly displaced towards the front 10 with drive member 535. In this configuration, locking device is locked between support surface 534, locking end 51a and the oblong opening in seat 5 for receiving axis 53'. In particular, locking device 53 is prevented from 15 pivoting counter-clockwise which blocks open rear part 131 of brewing unit 13, thus preventing beverage preparation upon removal of service unit 20,30 from its normal operative position in seat 5.

Hence, in accordance with the invention, locking device 53 is arranged to mechanically detect a position 20 of service unit 20,30 and mechanically prevent ingredient holder 13 from taking its processing configuration when service unit 20,30 is off its operative position, in particular when the service unit is removed from seat 5.

Generally speaking, the machine may be configured to 25 deactivate one or more components necessary for the processing of the ingredient when ingredient holder 13 is not in its processing configuration. In such a situation, the machine may deactivate a pump for pumping liquid such as water through the ingredient.

When service unit 20,30 is inserted back into its operative position, guide member 535 of service unit 20,30, comes into contact with member 532a of locking device 53 and pushes member 532b off retainer 534 into the configuration shown in Figs 3b and 4b. In order to 35 permit such a disengagement, the upper end of guide member 535 is slightly higher than the bottom end of member 532a when member 532b is resting on support surface 534. Hence, guide member 535 is used to secure and un-secure locking device 53 in both directions when 40 passing under locking device 53.

In its secured position, as shown in Figs 3c and 4c, locking device 53 may be placed loose between locking end

51a, retainer 534 and the oblong opening in seat 5 for holding axis 53', or locking device 53 may be urged therebetween so as to properly secure member 53 in this position in case the beverage preparation machine is 5 moved while service unit 20,30 is removed. When the locking device 53 is configured to be urged in this position, at least one or both arms 531,532 may be made slightly resilient.

First and second linkage members 531a,532a are 10 generally rigidly interconnected via arms 531,532. Locking device 53 including securing member 532b and axis 53' can be formed of a single component with which first and second linkage members 531a,532a are integral. For example, locking device is formed unitarily by moulding 15 or machining.

In a variation, it is of course possible to provide this type of configuration with a brewing unit in which the front part is moved to and away from the rear part in order to open and close the brewing chamber, for instance 20 as taught in WO 2009/043630. In this case, the locking device follows a cam associated with the movable front part of the brewing unit.

Claims

1. A beverage preparation machine comprising:

- a seat (5);

5 - an ingredient holder (13) that has a processing configuration for processing an ingredient contained in the holder and a transfer configuration for inserting said ingredient into the holder and/or for evacuating said ingredient from the holder; and

10 - a service unit (20,30) having an operative position in the seat for collecting consumed ingredient from the ingredient holder and/or for supplying consumable ingredient to the ingredient holder, the service unit being removable from the seat for emptying the consumed ingredient and/or refilling with consumable ingredient,

characterised in that a mechanical locking device (53) is provided to:

- mechanically detect a position of the service unit and mechanically prevent the ingredient holder from taking its processing configuration when the service unit is off its operative position, in particular when the service unit is removed from the seat; and/or

- mechanically detect a configuration of the ingredient holder and mechanically prevent removal of the service unit from the seat when the ingredient holder is in its processing configuration, in particular when the ingredient holder is off its transfer configuration.

2. The machine of claim 1, wherein the ingredient holder (13) has a first part (131) and a second part (132) delimiting an ingredient chamber (14) for receiving said ingredient, the first part being movable to the second part into the processing configuration and away from the second part into the transfer configuration.

3. The machine of claim 2, wherein the mechanical locking device (53) comprises a first linkage member (531a) linked to the movable first part (131), the first linkage member being optionally linked to the movable first part by a cam and cam-follower arrangement (51,531a), the first linkage member being arranged to:

- block the movable first part from reaching the processing configuration when the service unit (20,30) is detected off its operative position by the locking device; and/or

5 - detect when the movable first part is in its processing configuration so as to block the service unit in its operative position by the locking device.

4. The machine of any preceding claim, wherein the mechanical locking device (53) comprises a second linkage member (532a) linked or linkable to the service unit (20,30), the second linkage member being optionally linked to the removable service unit (20,30) by a cam and cam-follower arrangement (52,532a), the second linkage member being arranged to:

15 - block the service unit in its operative position when the movable first part (131) is in its processing configuration; and/or

20 - detect when the service unit is off its operative position so as to block the movable first part from reaching the processing configuration by the locking device.

5. The machine of any preceding claim, wherein the mechanical locking device (53) comprises mechanically interconnected first and second linkage members (531a,532a), the first linkage member being mechanically linked to the ingredient holder (13), in particular by a cam and cam-follower first arrangement (51,531a), the second linkage member being mechanically linkable to the service unit (20,30), in particular by a cam and cam-follower second arrangement (52,532a).

35 6. The machine of claim 5, wherein the first linkage member (531a) is so mechanically linked to the ingredient holder (13) that changing the ingredient holder from its processing configuration to its transfer configuration and vice versa causes motion of the first and second linkage members (531a,532a).

7. The machine of claim 5 or 6, wherein the second linkage member (532a) is so mechanically linked or linkable to the service unit (20,30) that moving the 40 service unit to and from its operative position in the

seat (5) causes motion of the second and first linkage members (532a, 531a).

8. The machine of any one of claims 5 to 7, wherein the first and second linkage members (531a, 532a) are generally rigidly interconnected, the mechanical locking device (53) being optionally formed of a single component with which the first and second linkage members are integral.

9. The machine of any preceding claim, wherein the mechanical locking device (53) is pivotally and/or translationally mounted in the seat (5), in particular by a cam cam-follower arrangement (53') between the locking device and a wall of the seat, such as a sidewall thereof.

10. 10. The machine of any preceding claim, wherein the service unit (20, 30) is arranged to lock the locking device (53) in a position for locking the ingredient holder (13) in its transfer configuration when the service unit is removed from the seat (5) and until reinsertion into the seat.

11. The machine of claim 10, which comprises a retainer (534), in particular fixed to the seat (5), for holding the locking device (53) in the position locking the ingredient holder (12) in its transfer configuration, 25 optionally the service unit (20, 30) having a guide member (535) for driving the locking device to the retainer when the service unit is withdrawn from the seat and/or for driving the locking device away from the retainer by reinsertion of the service unit into the seat.

12. The machine of any preceding claim, wherein the service unit (20, 30) is manually movable into the operative position and removable from the seat (5) and/or wherein the ingredient holder (13) is arranged to be manually brought from its processing configuration to its transfer configuration and vice versa, in particular via a user handle (11).

13. The machine of any preceding claim, wherein the service unit (20, 30) is arranged to: collect waste liquid and/or solid ingredient; and/or supply consumable liquid and/or solid ingredient.

14. The machine of claim 13, wherein the service unit (20,30) is arranged to:

- supply to the ingredient holder consumable liquid and/or solid ingredient such as water, milk, tea leafs, ground or instant coffee, concentrate or dry soup, syrup and powder chocolate; and/or
- collect from the ingredient holder waste liquid and/or ingredient such as water, beverage excesses and/or consumed ingredient.

10 15. The machine of any preceding claim, wherein the ingredient holder (13) is arranged to receive, house and evacuate a capsule in which said ingredient is contained.

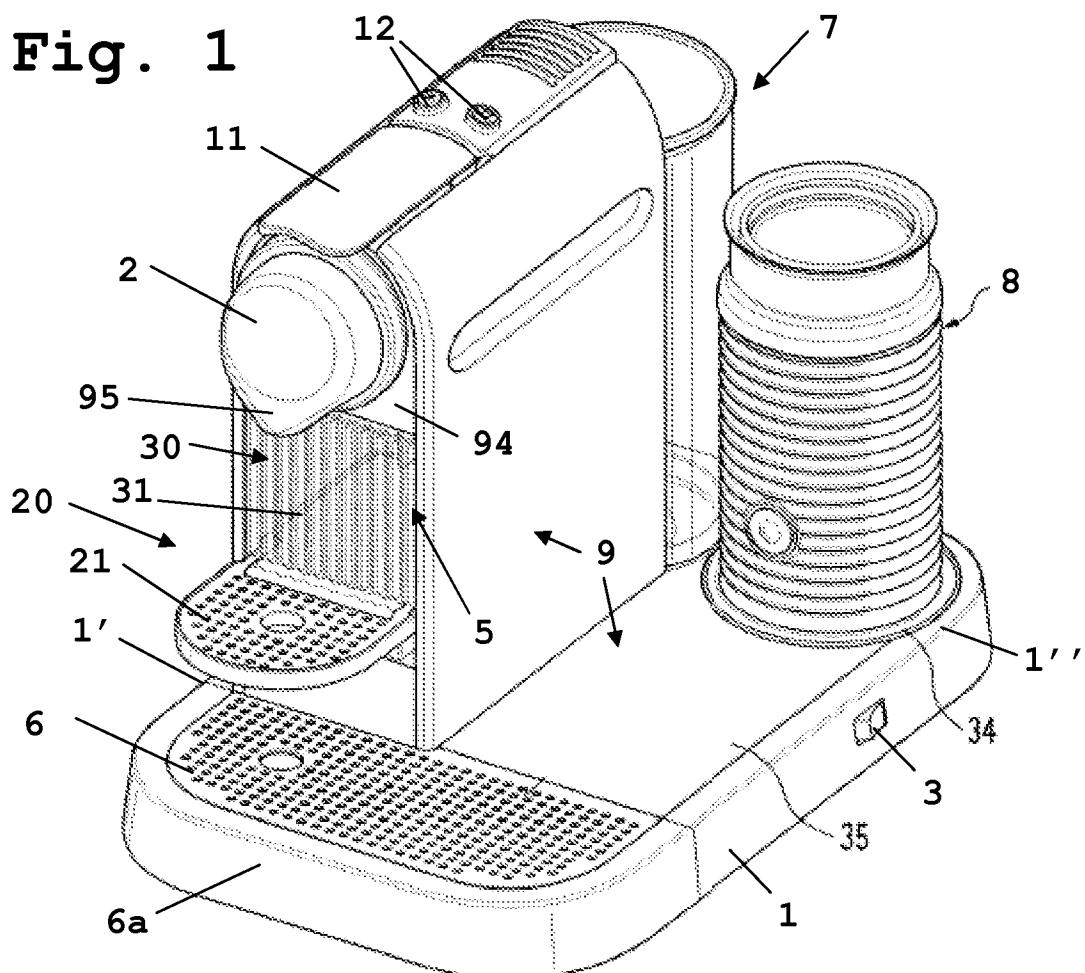
Fig. 1

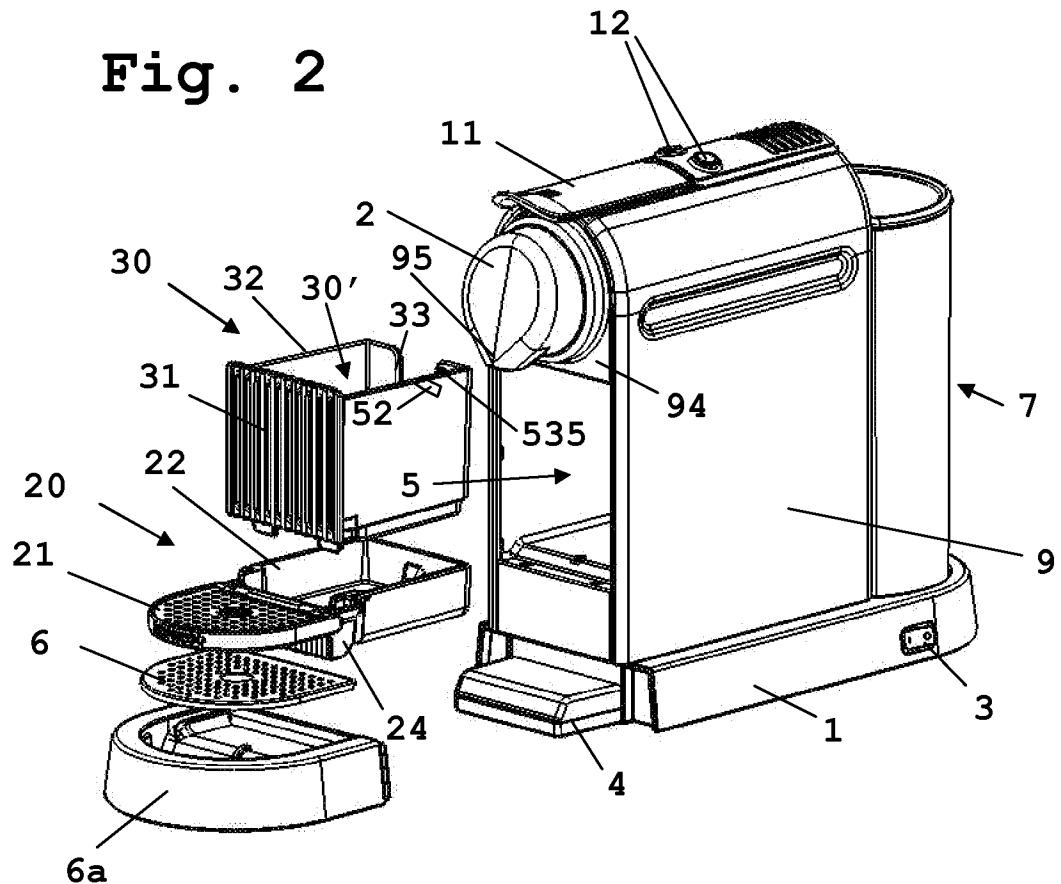
Fig. 2

Fig. 3a

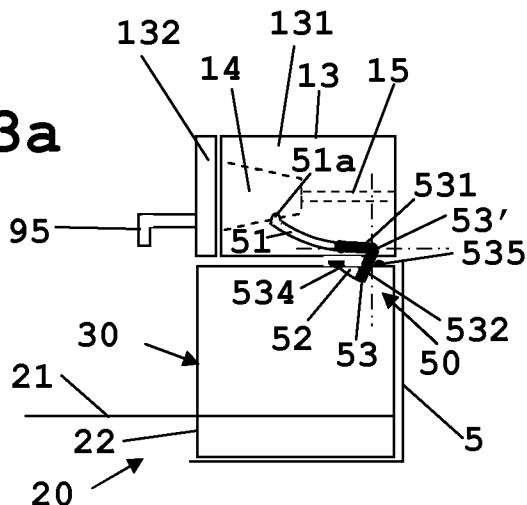


Fig. 4a

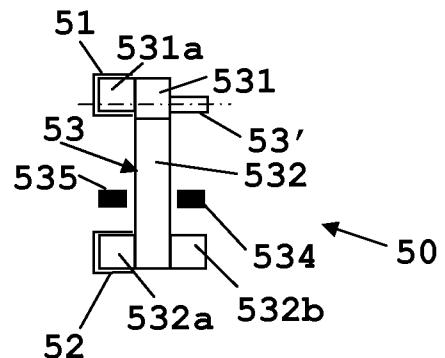


Fig. 3b

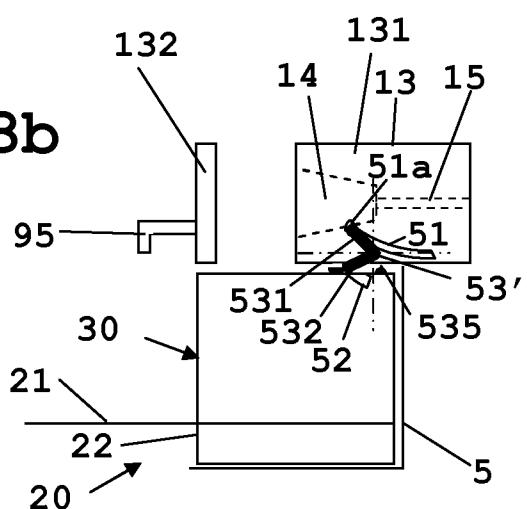


Fig. 4b

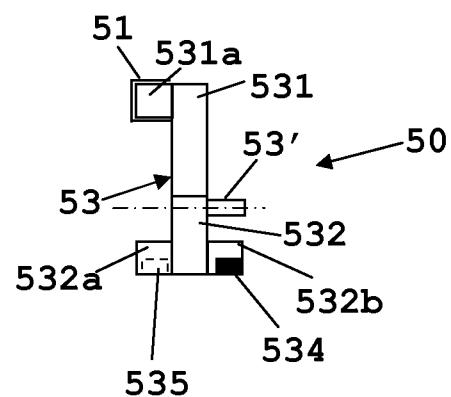


Fig. 3c

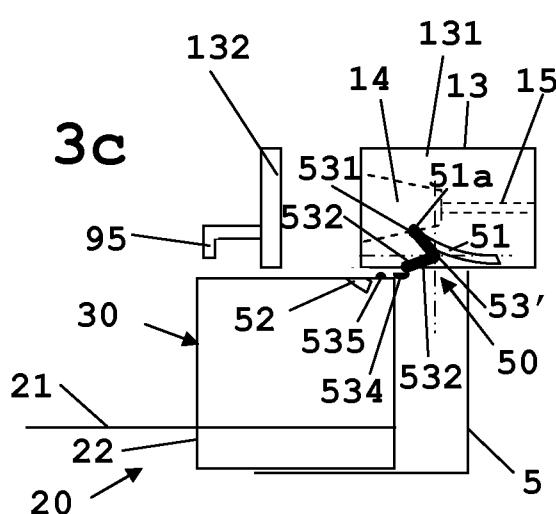
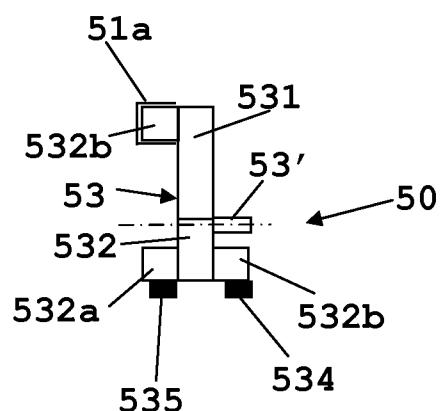


Fig. 4c



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No	PCT/EP2011/050319
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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
INV. A47J31/44
ADD.

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

A47J

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	WO 2009/074559 A1 (NESTEC SA) 18 June 2009 (2009-06-18) cited in the application figure 2 -----	1



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

10 March 2011

Date of mailing of the international search report

18/03/2011

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No
PCT/EP2011/050319

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)		Publication date
WO 2009074559	A1 18-06-2009	AU 2008334691	A1 18-06-2009	18-06-2009