A foldable container (1) for picnics comprising a foldable blank (2) connected to a sheet of material (3). When the blank (2) is folded it is used to carry a picnic, and when unfolded, the sheet (3) can be spread out to allow users to eat the picnic.
Fig. 7
FOLDABLE CONTAINER FOR PICNICS

The present invention relates to foldable containers, in particular for carrying picnics.

[0001] The invention provides a foldable container comprising a foldable blank which in a folded position thereof comprises a housing and in an unfolded position comprises a substantially flat surface, a sheet of material being connected to the foldable blank for covering the blank when in its unfolded position.

[0002] The invention further provides a foldable container comprising a foldable blank which in a folded position thereof comprises a box having a base and one or more side walls and in an unfolded position the blank is substantially flat, a sheet of material being connected to the foldable blank, at least part of the sheet being foldable independently of the blank for covering the blank when in its unfolded position.

[0003] Advantageously, the container according to the invention, by utilising a foldable blank and a connected sheet of material provides a very convenient way to enjoy picnics. The housing can be pre-packed with various picnic items including foodstuffs, and when it is desired to consume the picnic, the user simply unfolds the blank, removes its contents and spreads the sheet of material out to cover the unfolded blank. The outspread sheet can then be used in the normal manner as a picnic rug/cloth. By virtue of the sheet being connected to the blank, the blank acts as an anchor when the sheet and blank are unfolded, helping to prevent the sheet from blowing away. Since the blank is substantially flat when unfolded, the eating surface defined by the sheet is also substantially flat.

[0004] By avoiding the use of a traditional picnic basket, e.g., a wicker basket, and utilising instead a foldable blank, the present invention provides a cheap and disposable container for picnics. At the end of a picnic, the user can thus simply throw away the whole container and avoid having to carry a used basket. In this regard, it is preferred that the blank is made of a cheap material such as card and the sheet can be made of paper, cloth and/or plastics for example.

[0005] It is anticipated that the container will be especially useful for events, due to its convenience and disposability, and information regarding the event and/or sponsors can be printed on the exterior of the housing.

[0006] When the blank is in the folded position, it is preferred that the sheet is situated in the housing and is folded, whereby the sheet is kept clean and out of the way until the container is opened.

[0007] The blank can comprise a base portion, which forms the base of the box, having foldably connected thereto first and second side walls and first and second end walls, which can be folded to form a cuboidal housing. Various sizes of housing can be provided. At least one of the side walls can include a lid portion foldably connected thereto and at least one of the end walls can include closure means for holding the lid portion closed and holding the blank in the folded position. Thereby, the container can be provided with a securely closable lid to protect the contents of the housing. Preferably, the closure means has a latch for engaging with a corresponding latch on the lid portion.

[0008] Other advantageous features of the invention are set out in the sub claims.

[0009] There follows a detailed description of an embodiment of the invention, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which

[0010] FIG. 1 shows a container with a blank in an unfolded position;
[0011] FIG. 2 shows the container unfolded and in use;
[0012] FIG. 3 shows the container with its lid open;
[0013] FIG. 4 shows the open container of FIG. 3 and its contents;
[0014] FIG. 5 shows the container with the blank in a folded position;
[0015] FIG. 6 shows an alternative blank in an unfolded position; and
[0016] FIG. 7 shows a further alternative blank in an unfolded position.

[0017] Referring to FIG. 1, there is shown a container 1 in an unfolded state comprising a blank 2 and a sheet 3, both of which are unfolded. The blank 2 is made from card and comprises a rectangular base portion 7 foldably connected at its edges to first and second side walls 4 and first and second end walls 5. The foldable connections can be formed by scoring the card. At each of the four corners of the base portion 7 is a web portion 6 connected along one edge to an end wall 5 and connected along another edge to a side wall 4. Each web portion 6 is scored along its middle to allow it to fold when the side and end walls are folded together. The web portions 6 add strength to the blank and provide a degree of sealing of the housing formed when the blank is folded. In an alternative embodiment (not shown), the web portions are dispensed with, which advantageously results in a lighter construction of blank. Additionally, space that would otherwise be occupied by the web portions is thereby left free, so more room can be provided inside the housing.

[0018] Each side wall 4 has a lid portion 8 foldably connected along an edge thereof. A handle 9 is connected to each lid portion 8. Connected to each end wall 5 along a peripheral edge thereof are closure means comprising a flap 10 with latching means 11, 12 provided thereon. The latching means 11, 12 engage with corresponding latching means (shown in FIGS. 3 and 5) on the lid portions 8.

[0019] The base portion 7 is provided with a layer of adhesive between it and the sheet 3, which adhesive layer can be of the same area as the base portion 7. When the unfolded container 1 is oriented as shown in FIG. 2, the blank 2 lies under the sheet and acts as an anchor for the sheet 3. It will also be appreciated from FIG. 2 that the sheet can be octagonal, although other shapes such as oval, round or hexagonal for example can be used. Further, there are shown a number of plates, cups, a cup holder and packages of prepared food laid out on the sheet 3.

[0020] FIG. 3 shows the container 1 with the lid portions 8 and the closure means in the open position. The latching means on the lid portions 8 can be seen to comprise a slit 31 spaced away from the edges of the lid 8. When the lid portions 8 are folded into their closed positions, the closure means can be brought to bear against the edges of the lid portions and the latching means 11, 12 can be folded over the lid portions 8 until a flap 12 of the latching means engages through the slit 31, thereby holding the blank in its folded position with the lid closed. The lid portions 8 and the flaps 10 of the closure means are configured so as to define, in their closed positions, sloping roof sections on top of the housing.

[0021] In FIG. 4 it is shown that when the blank 2 is folded with the sheet 3 therein, the sheet 3 is also folded to match the interior profile of the housing 2. This saves space within the housing, maximising the amount of room available for food and utensils. In the example shown, three food containers 42...
made from PET can fit into the housing 2 along with two plates 41, two cups 43 and a cup holder 44, which can also be made from PET. Alternative materials such as paper, cardboard, polystyrene and/or metal foil may be used for the contents of the container. Other utensils such as knives, forks and spoons (not shown) that can be made from wood or plastics materials for example are also included in the housing.

FIG. 5 shows the container in a fully folded position with the lid portions 8 and closure means closed. Information about events and sponsors etc. can be printed on any of the side walls 4, end walls 5, lid portions 8 or closure means and the handle 9. The handle 9 has an essentially simple structure comprising an aperture 51 suitably sized to receive a user’s hand. The folded blank defines a cuboidal housing with the lid portions 8 and the flaps 10 of the closure means slanting relative to the side and end walls 4, 5.

The blank 2 is generally to be made of card, but any suitable material including plastics or wood could also be used. Moisture impermeable card (also known as chill-proof card) is particularly preferred. The sheet 3 is generally to be made of cloth but can also be made from plastics or paper for an advantageous cost reduction. The use of environmentally friendly materials such as biodegradable ones is preferred with all aspects of the invention.

Referring to FIG. 6, an alternative form of blank 60 is shown in its unfolded position. Similarly to the blank shown in FIG. 1, the alternative blank 60 comprises a rectangular base portion 61, first and second side walls 62 being connected along their lower edges to the base portion 61. First and second end walls 63 are also connected along their lower edges to the base portion 61. Dashed lines in FIG. 6 represent folding axes of the blank 60. First and second side root sections 64 are connected along the upper edges of the side walls 62. Additionally, first and second end roof sections 65 are connected along the upper edges of the end walls 63. The angle defined between a side edge of the end wall 63 and an adjacent side edge of the side wall 62 is acute, whereby when the blank 60 is folded, the side 62 and end 63 walls slant outwardly relative to one another.

A web portion 69 is provided at each of the four corners of the base portion 61, between the side edges of the end walls 63 and side walls 62, each web portion 69 comprising a generally wedge-shaped section 70 connected to a trapezoidal band 72. A folding axis 71 is situated where the wedge-shaped section 70 and the band 72 meet. A latching tab 73, of mushroom shape is provided at a corner of the wedge-shaped portion 70, distal from the base portion 61, the tab being insertable into an inclined slot 74 in the end wall 63, thereby to hold the blank 60 in its folded position. Preferably, when the blank 60 is being folded up, the web portions 69 are folded outwardly to lie flat against the end walls 63 on the exterior of the housing and the tabs 73 are inserted inwardly through the slots 74. In this way, the user can open and unfold the picnic hamper with ease, because the web portions 69 can be grasped from outside the hamper and the tabs 73 pulled out of the slots 74, whereas if the web portions 69 are inside the hamper the user may need to remove some of the contents thereof in order to gain access to the web portions 69.

However, given the construction of the blank 60, it is entirely possible for the web portions 69 to be folded to the interior of the housing, if desired.

The side roof sections 64 of the blank 60 are to be folded over the top of the housing whereby a pair of apex sections 66 come into contact with one another. Each apex section 66 includes a gripping aperture 75 for receiving the user’s hand. Further each apex section 66 has first and second latching means 67 located towards either end thereof, and the end roof sections 65 each include a centrally located slit 68, which in the folded position of the blank 60 engages over the latching means 67 at one end of the apex sections 66, thereby holding the side and end roof sections securely in place. The latching means 67 comprise notches cut out of the apex sections 66.

FIG. 7 shows another alternative form of blank 80, which in most respects is the same as the blank 60 shown in FIG. 6, but has a different form of web portion 81. The web portion 81 in distinction to the web portion 69 is detached from the side edge of the end wall 63. The web portion 81 comprises a triangular section 82 which extends along the side edge of the side wall 62 and a quadrilateral latching tab 83 is disposed towards a distal corner of the triangular section 82, on a side of the triangular section opposite the side wall 62.

When the blank is being folded, the triangular section 82 is folded to lie against the exterior side of the end wall 63, the latching tab 83 being inserted through an inclined slot 84 on the end wall 63 to the interior of the housing. A second, smaller slot 85 is situated at the edge of the side wall 62 and is arranged to receive a tip 86 of the latching tab 83, thereby helping to secure the blank in its folded position. Similarly to the previous embodiment, it would alternatively be possible to arrange the triangular section 82 on the interior of the housing with the latching tab 83 folding along the exterior side of the end wall 63 and folding around a corner of the housing so that the tip 86 can be inserted through the smaller slot 85. This may require a slightly longer latching tab 86.

With reference to FIGS. 6 and 7, instead of having the slots 74, 84 in the end walls 63 of the blank 60, 80, it would also be possible to arrange the slots in the side walls 62, with a corresponding re-arrangement of the web portions 69, 81, whereby the latching tabs 73, 83 face in the opposite direction to that shown in FIGS. 6 and 7, and other corresponding features of the blank being suitably modified.

The features particular to each embodiment of blank are combinable with one another, e.g., the web portions 69, 81 according to FIGS. 6 and 7 could be utilised with the lid closure means shown in FIG. 7, and so on.

The container is generally to be distributed in flat-pack form, i.e. with the blank unfolded, to save space, and the sheet folded and secured to the base. When it is desired to erect the container, the side and end walls are folded upwardly until they meet one another, and the latching tabs 73, 83 are pushed through the slots 74, 84. The wedge-shaped section 70 and the triangular section 82 can be inside or outside the box. Objects, such as picnic items can be placed in the box on top of the sheet. The side roof sections 64 are folded inwardly and the apex sections 66 brought together to form the handle. The end roof sections 65 are then folded over, whereby the latching means 67 latch with the slits 68 in the end roof sections, thereby locking the structure of the container and forming a secure, self-contained picnic box with a carry handle. To use the container for a picnic, this procedure is reversed and the sheet is unfolded and spread out over the unfolded blank, thereby forming the picnic surface on which items can be laid out. After the picnic, the box can be refolded and the rubbish can be put therein, for convenient disposal.
[0033] In the embodiments shown in the drawings, the assembled box has the folded sheet located at the bottom, and the picnic items are stored on top of the sheet. This leads to the need to remove the picnic items before unfolding the sheet. In an alternative embodiment, the sheet can be so arranged that it is unfoldable without first moving the picnic items. This can be achieved, e.g. by wrapping the sheet around the picnic items.

[0034] Instead of the foldable blank having a sheet of material connected thereto for forming a picnic surface, it is possible to dispense with the sheet, so that the blank can be folded and simply used as a box. This embodiment can be used e.g. for lunchboxes and so on, which are to be eaten indoors or at a table, when a sheet of material may not be needed.

1. A foldable container comprising a foldable blank which in a folded position thereof comprises a box having a base and one or more side walls and in an unfolded position the blank is substantially flat, a sheet of material being connected to the foldable blank, at least part of the sheet being foldable independently of the blank for covering the blank when in its unfolded position.

2. The container according to claim 1, wherein in the folded position of the blank, the sheet of material is situated in the box and is folded.

3. The container according to claim 2, wherein the sheet of material is sized to completely cover the blank in the unfolded position of the blank and the unfolded position of the sheet of material.

4. The container according to claim 1, wherein the sheet of material is connected to the blank by adhesive.

5. The container according to claim 1, wherein the sheet of material comprises cloth.

6. The container according to claim 1, wherein first and second side walls and first and second end walls are foldably connected to the base.

7. The container according to claim 6, wherein a web is provided between each of the first and second side and end walls.

8. The container according to claim 7, wherein the web comprises a generally wedge-shaped section which extends along an edge of the side wall, and which is connected to an edge of the end wall by means of a band, a latching tab being provided towards a distal corner of the wedge-shaped section for insertion through a slot in the end wall.

9. The container according to claim 8, wherein the wedge-shaped section is arranged on the exterior of the housing when the blank is folded.

10. The container according to claim 9, wherein an acute angle is defined between adjacent edges of the side and end walls when the blank is in the unfolded position.

11. The container according to claim 10, wherein at least one of the first and second side walls includes a lid portion foldably connected thereto.

12. The container according to claim 11, wherein at least one of the first and second end walls includes closure means for holding the lid portion closed and holding the blank in the folded position.

13. The container according to claim 12, wherein the closure means comprises a flap foldably connected to an end wall, including latching means for engaging with corresponding latching means on the lid portion.

14. The container according to claim 11, wherein the lid portion comprises at least one handle for carrying the container.

15. The container according to claim 1, containing culinary equipment and/or food stuffs.

16. The container according to claim 15, wherein the culinary equipment is plastic.

17. The container according to claim 1, wherein the sheet of material is octagonal when unfolded.

18. The container according to claim 1, wherein the sheet of material and the blank are connected together at a central point of the sheet of material.

19. The container according to claim 6, wherein the whole area of the base portion is adhered to the sheet of material.

20. The container according to claim 1, wherein the blank comprises card.

21. (canceled)

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