US 20070210596A1

(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication** (10) **Pub. No.: US 2007/0210596 A1**

Stewart et al. (43) **Pub. Date: Sep. 13, 2007**

(54) **FINGER TONGS**

(75) Inventors: **Anna M. Stewart**, Atlanta, GA (US); **Stephen Kraigh Stewart**, Atlanta, GA (US)

Correspondence Address:
GEORGE R. REARDON
3356 STATION COURT
LAWRENCVILLE, GA 30044

(73) Assignee: **FUSIONBRANDS INCORPORATED**, Atlanta, GA (US)

(21) Appl. No.: **11/530,783**

(22) Filed: **Sep. 11, 2006**

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 29/255,624, filed on Mar. 11, 2006, now abandoned.

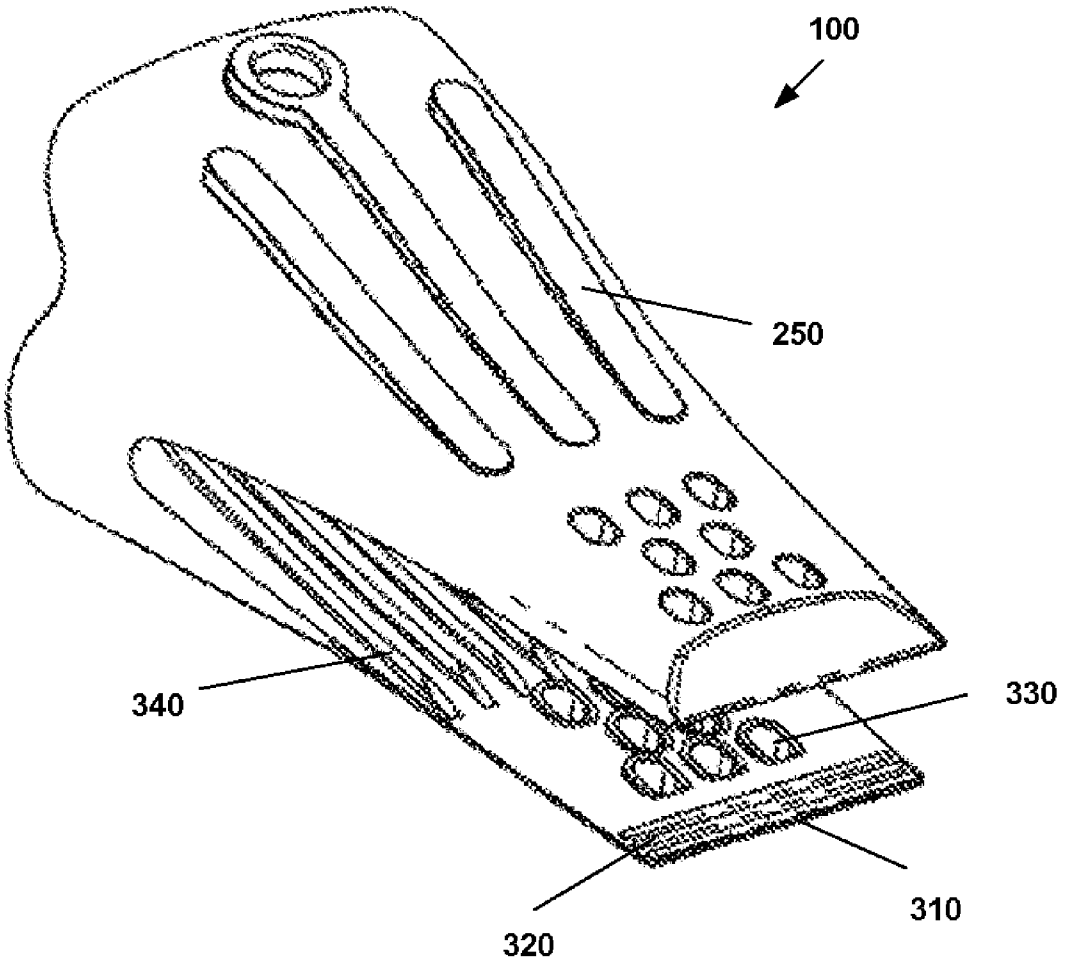
Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl.**
A47G 21/10 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **294/99.2**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A kitchen accessory that combines features of tongs and a heat protective oven mitt is disclosed. The kitchen accessory consists of a front tong element flexibly hinged to a rear tong element to form a seamless one piece structure. Additional elements include scooping tips, different sized and shaped gripping and grasping elements, and heat shrink hand protectors. each other and connected to a hinge point surrounded by a hand protection area.



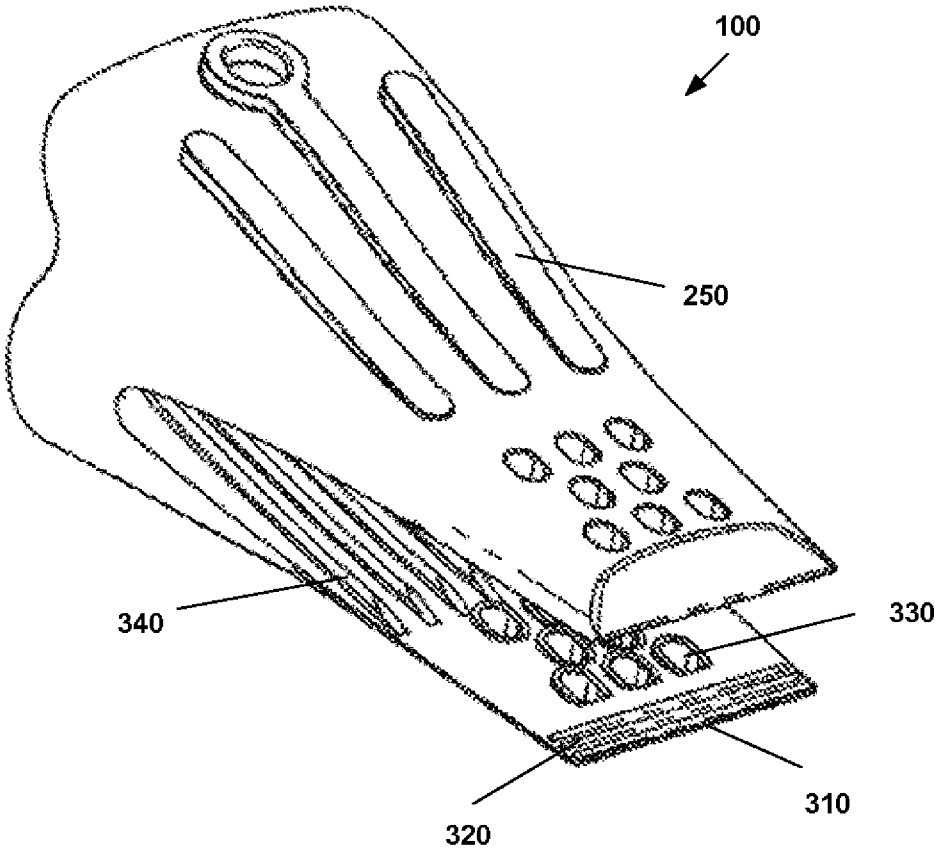


FIG. 1

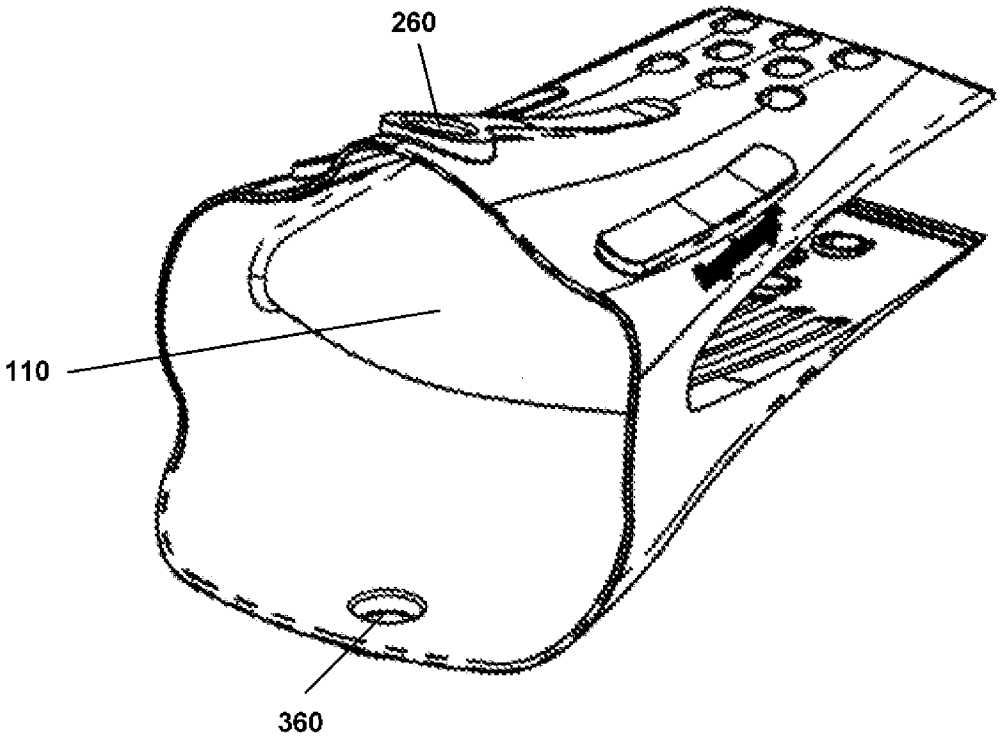


FIG. 2

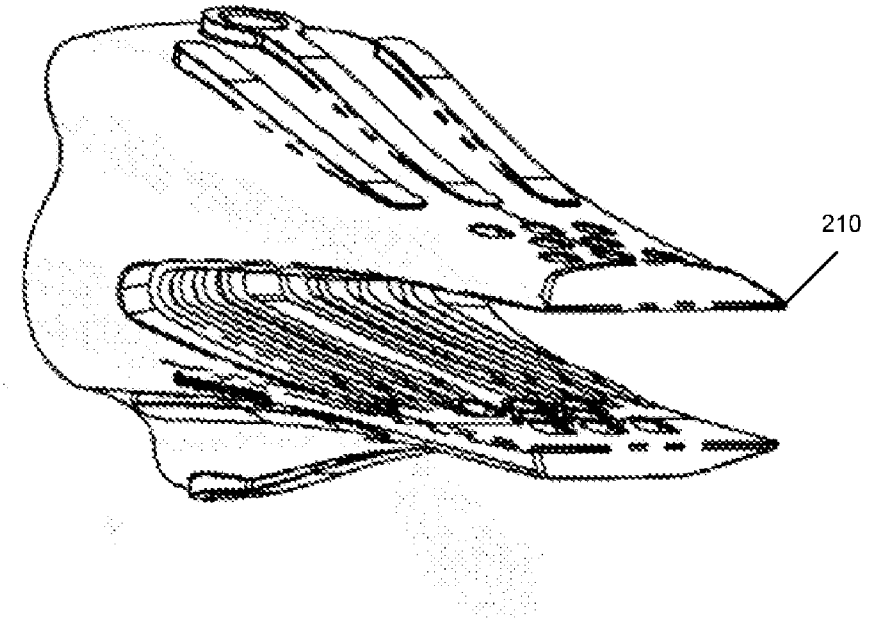


FIG. 3

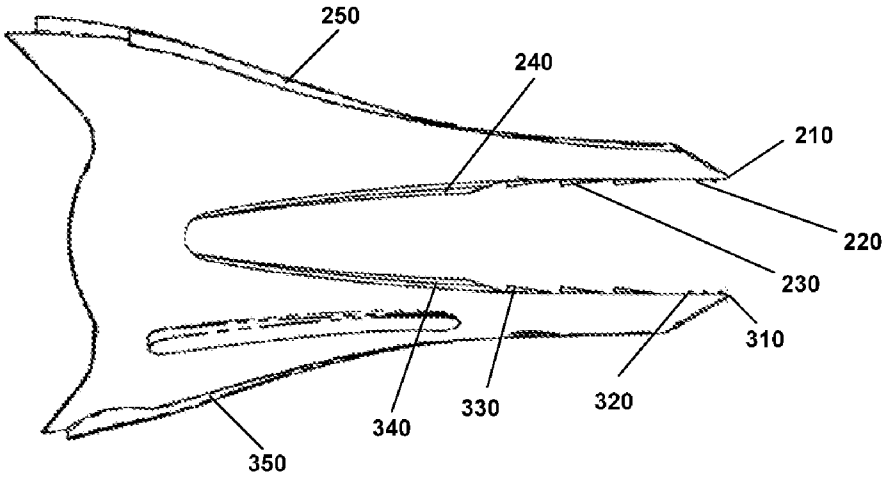


FIG. 4

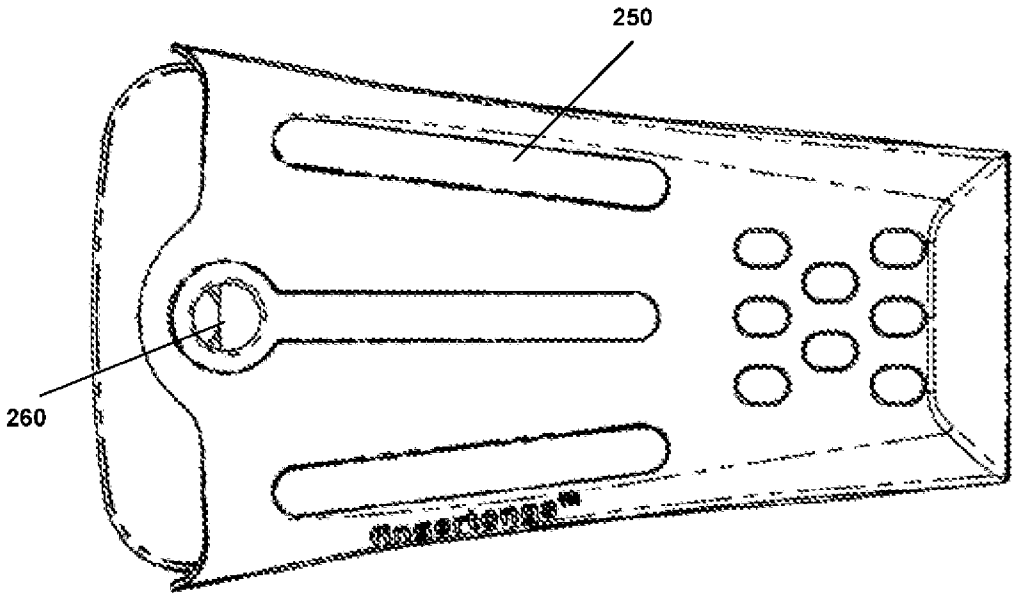


FIG. 5

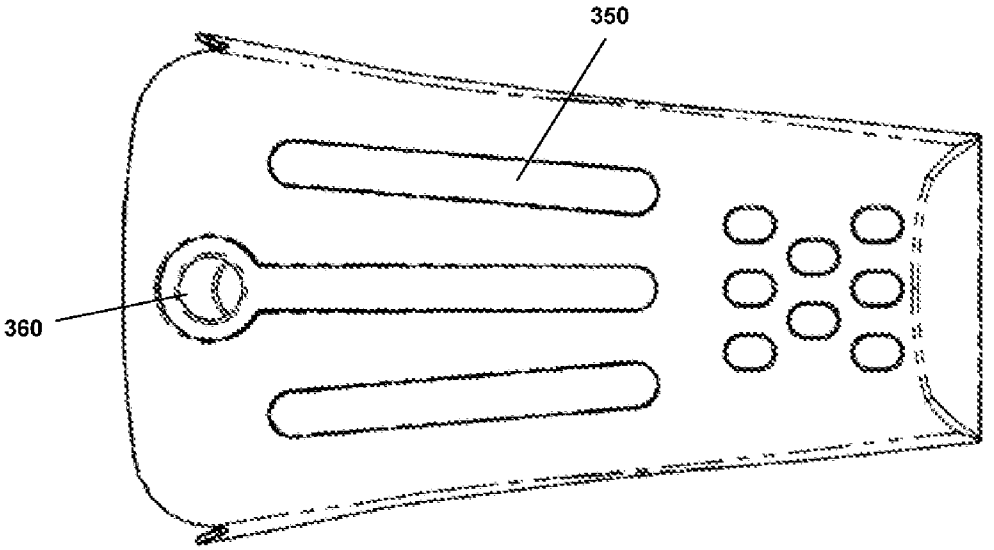


FIG. 6

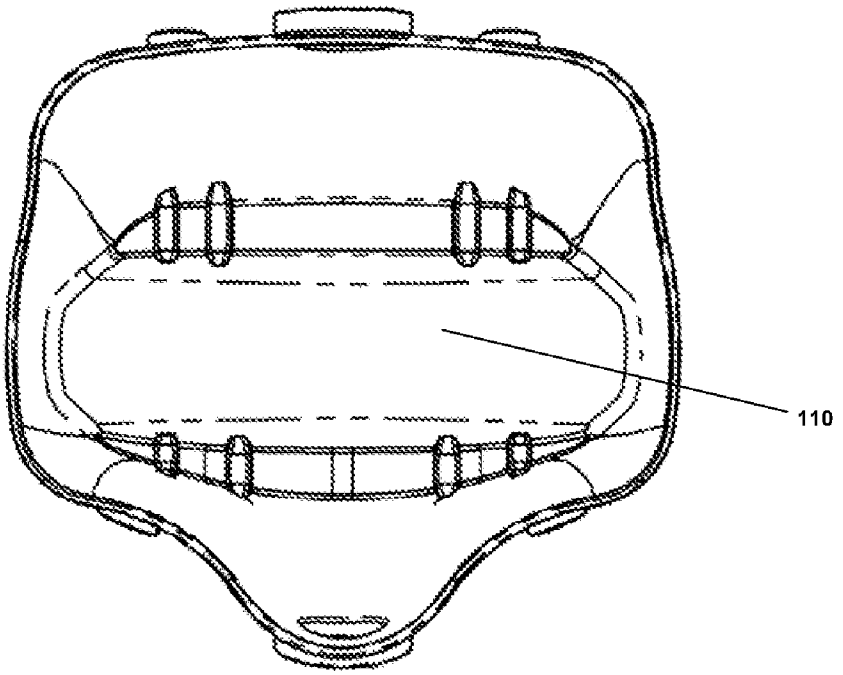


FIG. 7

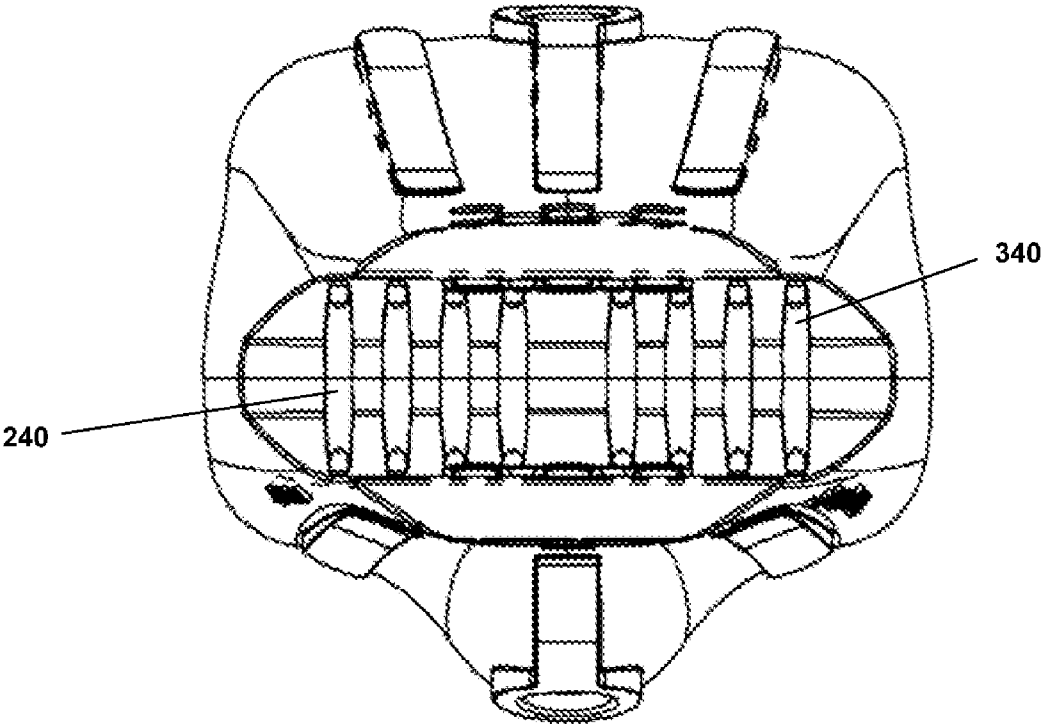


FIG. 8

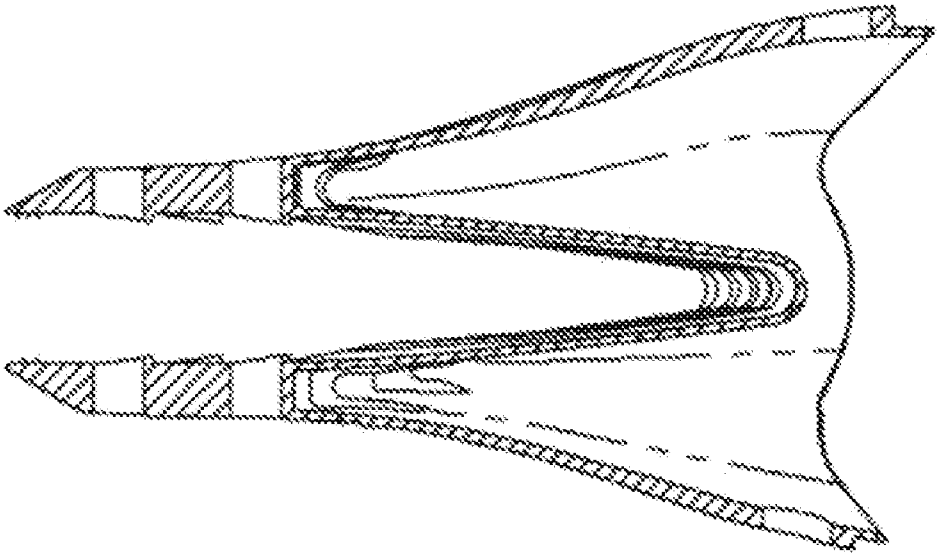


FIG. 9

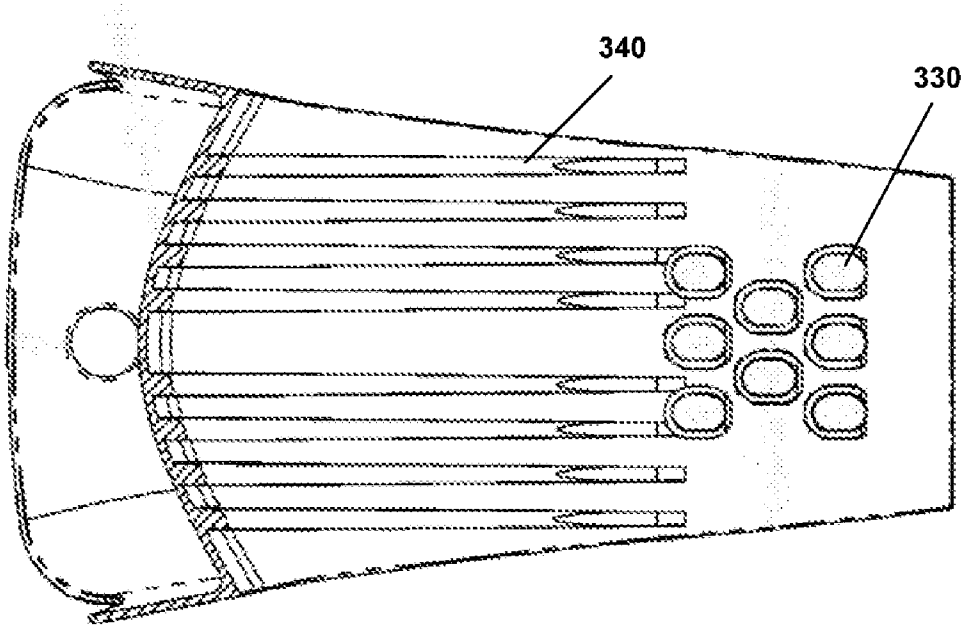


FIG. 10

FINGER TONGS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of the filing date of and is a continuation-in-part of United States Design Patent Application having a title of FINGER TONGS, filed on Mar. 11, 2006 and assigned Ser. No. 29/255,624.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to the field of kitchen utensils, and more particularly to glove like devices for handling hot items.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] There are many kinds of food serving tongs and food handling gloves in present day use. Among the most familiar tongs is the simple sheet metal tongs composed of two identical opposing arms joined at one end by a pin and biased in the open position by a spring metal member inside the handles. Other well known tongs include the scissors type or those that are molded as one continuous piece of resilient plastic. Serving tongs such as these are often used at salad bars in restaurants and in serving other types of food in self-service food establishments, as well as for serving food in the home. There are many varieties of metal, wood, plastic or silicone tongs on the market.

[0004] Several inventions use the glove concept of hand protection for removing hot pot and pans or foods from the oven of stove top but none are designed to actually go into a pot or pan, on the stove top or in the oven and actually flip the food similar to using a spatula. The ORCA oven mitt uses the glove concept to allow user to reach deeply into boiling water and pull out a lobster or other submerged hot foods. This is designed for clumsy grabbing of large bulky foods and not small delicate food that require continual turning in a pot or pan. This type of mitt is not designed to easily slide under a chicken breast and flip it without splattering, creating a potential mess or grease fire hazard.

[0005] Known art related to tongs or food handling gloves includes the following.

[0006] U.S. Pat. No. 580,148, issued to Staples on Apr. 6, 1897, discloses a folding holder.

[0007] U.S. Pat. No. 2,937,377, issued to Mackay et al. on May 24, 1960, discloses a hand covering mitt.

[0008] U.S. Pat. No. D368,330, issued to Robinson on Mar. 26, 1996, illustrates a thermal insulating finger pad.

[0009] U.S. Pat. No. D425,261, issued to Basile on May 16, 2000, illustrates a folding oven mitt.

[0010] U.S. Pat. No. 6,131,977, issued to Sacks et al. on Oct. 17, 2000, discloses a tongs assembly comprising a tongs and a hand shield. In a preferred embodiment, the tongs include a pair of arms hingedly connected at one end and the shield is attached to the arms and extends radially outward from an optimal fulcrum point on the arms. The shield is preferably round and formed by two thin, rigid shield sections that are individually attached to the arms. Each shield section is positioned on an arm in such a way as to create a fulcrum point on the longitudinal axis of the tongs, so that in the open position, the grasping ends of the tongs pivot downwardly and the hinged or closed end of the tongs pivot upwardly and away from the surface on which the grasping ends of the tongs are resting. The handles of the tongs are thereby kept from directly contacting the food or the utensil.

[0011] U.S. Pat. No. 6,145,128, issued to Suzuki on Nov. 14, 2000, discloses a finger protector apparatus which includes a thumb-receiver cup portion, a flexible hinge portion connected to the thumb-receiver cup portion, and a two-finger-receiver cup portion is connected to the flexible hinge portion. A longitudinal axis extends through the thumb-receiver cup portion, the flexible hinge portion, and the two-finger-receiver cup portion. In addition, the thumb-receiver cup portion, the flexible hinge portion, and the two-finger-receiver cup portion are disposed in a plane symmetrically around the longitudinal axis. The two-finger-receiver cup portion includes interior space for receiving two fingers, one finger in a receiving space on one side of the longitudinal axis and the second finger in a receiving space on the other side of the longitudinal axis. The thumb-receiver cup portion includes an interior space for receiving a thumb along the longitudinal axis. The thumb-receiver cup portion, the flexible hinge portion, and the two-finger-receiver cup portion are made from oil-resistant material. The thumb-receiver cup portion and the two-finger-receiver cup portion can be lined with a non-slip polyurethane foam materials. The finger protector apparatus of the invention can be worn by a person who wishes to pick up oily finger foods such as potato chips. After the oily finger foods have been eaten, the person can remove the finger protector apparatus to prevent oily material from contacting devices touched by the person's fingers, such as keyboards, writing implements, and remote controls.

[0012] U.S. Pat. No. 6,305,023 B1, issued to Barkes on Oct. 23, 2001, discloses an oven mitt incorporating high temperature materials, composed of polyester fleece, having a flap that protects the wrist, stitched channels to hold the hand in place which may also be used as a hot pad.

[0013] U.S. Pat. No. 6,532,597 B2, issued to Bignon et al. on Mar. 18, 2003, discloses a glove for housework, the glove being made integrally of silicone material and possessing an ambidextrous shape comprising a main pocket designed to receive four fingers of a user, and a secondary pocket designed to receive the thumb, said secondary pocket opening out into the main pocket.

[0014] U.S. Pat. No. D477,690 S, issued to Howell et al. on Jul. 22, 2003, illustrates a silicone glove

[0015] U.S. Pat. No. D488,887 S, issued to Bignon et al. on Apr. 20, 2004, illustrates a long oven mitten without any raised band.

[0016] U.S. Pat. No. D491,317 S, issued to Bignon et al. on Jun. 8, 2004, illustrates a long oven mitten with raised bands.

[0017] U.S. Pat. No. D491,318 S, issued to Bignon et al. on Jun. 8, 2004, illustrates a long oven mitten with anti-grip raised bands and mouth raised bands.

[0018] U.S. Pat. No. D500,177 S, issued to Wu on Dec. 21, 2004, discloses a glove.

[0019] U.S. Pat. No. D504,544 S, issued to Lee on Apr. 26, 2005, illustrates an insulating glove.

[0020] U.S. Pat. No. D526,096 S, issued to Kaposi on Aug. 1, 2006, discloses a silicone glove.

[0021] While these devices fulfill their respective, particular objectives and requirements, the aforementioned patents do not utilize or disclose a finger tongs device that combines

the features of food tongs with a food handling glove, e.g. the ability to pick up small food items while being protecting the hand from the heat.

[0022] Therefore, a need exists for a finger tongs device with these attributes and functionalities. The finger tongs device according to embodiments of the invention substantially departs from the conventional concepts and designs of the prior art. It can be appreciated that there exists a continuing need for a new and improved finger tongs device which can be used commercially. In this regard, the present invention substantially fulfills these objectives.

[0023] The foregoing patent and other information reflect the state of the art of which the inventors are aware and are tendered with a view toward discharging the inventors' acknowledged duty of candor in disclosing information that may be pertinent to the patentability of the present invention. It is respectfully stipulated, however, that the foregoing patent and other information do not teach or render obvious, singly or when considered in combination, the inventors' claimed invention.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0024] The general purpose of the present invention, which will be described subsequently in greater detail, is to provide a device that combines the features of food tongs with a food handling glove, e.g. the ability to pick up small food items while being protecting the hand from the heat.

[0025] In an exemplary embodiment the present invention pertains to a flexible silicone set of tongs that the user wears on his/her hand for grasping and flipping foods while cooking. The high temperature resistance of the silicone material allows the user to work in the oven or on the stove top and handle foods while cooking. The advantage this gives is maximum control of handling food.

[0026] Unlike using a single spatula where the flipping motion usually causes splatters and often result in injuries the present invention lets the user gently turn the food thus minimizing mess or dangerous splatters. The present invention gives more control than conventional tongs or double spatulas due to the closeness of the user's hand to the food being cooked.

[0027] The user wears the present invention instead of holding it. It allows the user to maximize control over turning or moving food while cooking. This present invention protects a hand as if the user is wearing a protective glove.

[0028] In one embodiment the elements of the present invention consist of the following;

- **[0029]** two substantially parallel tong elements with edges thin enough to slide underneath small food items
- **[0030]** a flexible hinge element joining the two substantially parallel tong elements
- **[0031]** beveled edge elements formed on the top and bottom tong areas for additional protection from heat
- **[0032]** Gripping teeth elements for holding small food items, formed on the food contacting portion of the parallel tong elements.
- **[0033]** Gripping bands for increasing the gripping ability for larger or slippery items, formed behind the gripping teeth elements

[0034] One aspect of the present invention is that it may be used to protect the hand of the wearer while facilitating the grasping of hot food items.

[0035] Another aspect of the present invention is that it may be used in most cooking temperatures.

[0036] Another aspect of the present invention is that it may be reused.

[0037] Another aspect of the present invention is that is dishwasher safe.

[0038] Another aspect of the present invention is that is may be manufactured economically.

[0039] Another aspect of the present invention is that it may be made from readily available materials.

[0040] These and other features and advantages of the present invention will be presented in more detail in the following specification of the invention and the accompanying figures, which illustrate by way of example the principles of the invention.

[0041] There are additional features of the invention that will be described hereinafter and which will form the subject matter of the claims appended hereto. In this respect, before explaining at least one embodiment of the invention in detail, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of construction and to the arrangements of the components set forth in the following description or illustrated in the drawings. The invention is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced and carried out in various ways. Also, it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology employed herein are for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting.

[0042] As such, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the conception, upon which this disclosure is based, may readily be utilized as a basis for the designing of other structures, methods and systems for carrying out the several purposes of the present invention. It is important, therefore, that the claims be regarded as including such equivalent constructions insofar as they do not depart from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0043] The invention, together with further advantages thereof, may best be understood by reference to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

[0044] FIG. **1** illustrates a bottom perspective view of a finger tongs device, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0045] FIG. **2** illustrates a top perspective view of a finger tongs device, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0046] FIG. **3** illustrates a side perspective view of a finger tongs device, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0047] FIG. **4** illustrates a side plan view of a finger tongs device, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0048] FIG. **5** illustrates a front plan view of a finger tongs device, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0049] FIG. **6** illustrates a rear plan view of a finger tongs device, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0050] FIG. **7** illustrates a top plan view of a finger tongs device, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0051] FIG. **8** illustrates a bottom plan view of a finger tongs device, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0052] FIG. **9** illustrates a side sectional plan view of a finger tongs device, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0053] FIG. **10** illustrates a plan view of the internal structure of a finger tongs device, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0054] The present invention will now be described in detail with reference to a few preferred embodiments thereof as illustrated in the accompanying drawings. In the following description, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. It will be apparent, however, to one skilled in the art, that the present invention may be practiced without some or all of these specific details. In other instances, well known operations have not been described in detail so not to unnecessarily obscure the present invention.

[0055] Referring now to FIG. **1** through FIG. **10** an embodiment of a finger tongs device **100** is comprised of a front tong element **200** flexibly hinged to a rear tong element **300** to form a seamless one piece structure, e.g., by a molding process having an internal cavity **110**. In an exemplary embodiment the material of finger tongs device **100** is a flexible material that resists the high temperatures found in most cooking situations, e.g. silicone. Front tong element **200** is further comprised of a front scooping tip **210**, a plurality of front small food grasping teeth **220**, a plurality of front large food grasping teeth **230**, a plurality of front stiffening ribs **240**, a plurality of front heat shrink hand protectors **250**, and a front hole **260**. Rear tong element **300** is further comprised of a rear scooping tip **310**, a plurality of rear small food grasping teeth **320**, a plurality of rear large food grasping teeth **330**, a plurality of rear stiffening ribs **340**, a plurality of rear heat shrink hand protectors **350**, and a rear hole **260**.

[0056] From the foregoing, it will be appreciated that, although specific embodiments of the invention have been described herein for purposes of illustration, various modifications may be made without deviating from the spirit and scope of the invention. For example, many of the features and components described above in the context of a particular finger tongs device configuration can be incorporated into other configurations in accordance with other embodiments of the invention. Accordingly, the invention is not limited except by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A kitchen accessory for the grasping of hot food comprising:

a front tong element having an front interior and a front exterior,

a rear tong element having a rear interior and a rear exterior, and

a flexible hinge element joining the front tong element to the rear tong element to form a seamless one piece structure,

wherein the front interior is comprised of a front scooping tip, a plurality of front small food grasping teeth, a plurality of front large food grasping teeth, and a plurality of front stiffening ribs and the front exterior is comprised of a plurality of front heat shrink hand protectors;

wherein the rear interior is comprised of a rear scooping tip, a plurality of rear small food grasping teeth, a plurality of rear large food grasping teeth, and a plurality of rear stiffening ribs and the rear exterior is comprised of a plurality of rear heat shrink hand protectors.

2. The kitchen accessory of claim **1**, wherein the front tong element is further comprised of a front hole.

3. The kitchen accessory of claim **2**, wherein the rear tong element is further comprised of a rear hole.

* * * * *