Abstract: A meal kit is provided to facilitate providing utensils, mats, and other items. In one embodiment, the items are particularly suited for use by children. Meal kit items may include one or more of a mat, a straw, utensils and a wipe. In one embodiment, the mat is has an adhesive backing for sticking to an eating surface. In another embodiment, the straw is flexible and/or has a point for piercing a fluid container, such as a juice container. In other embodiments the meal kit includes crayons, activity books, stickers, and/or toys. Indicia may be provided to individualize the meal kit.
MEAL KITS AND METHODS FOR ASSEMBLING AND PROVIDING MEAL KITS

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present invention relates to meal kits, and more specifically to kits and methods of assembling and distributing meal kits for children.

BACKGROUND ART

[0002] Parents of young children often carry, or wish that they were carrying, many of the eating-related paraphernalia that they feel are necessary to facilitate their child's mealtime. Thus, for example, small children can require small and easily graspable utensils, bibs, wipes, straws, and placemats. It would be much easier on parents if these items were packaged in an easily transportable, inexpensive package.

DISCLOSURE OF INVENTION

[0003] Embodiments described herein overcome the limitations and problems of the prior art by assembling or providing a meal kit containing items which are of use for children.

[0004] In one embodiment, a meal kit is provided including a straw, a sheet having an adhesive on one side of the sheet, and a bag containing the straw and mat. The bag may also contain one or more of the following items: eating utensils, a napkin, a wipe, or a bib. In one embodiment, the straw is a flexible straw. In another embodiment the straw is of the type used with a container having a foil or other membrane, where the straw has a pointed end that is used to puncture the foil to permit the straw to be used for drinking the contents of the previously sealed fluid container. In yet another embodiment, the mat includes an adhesive layer on one side. In another embodiment, the meal kit is in a sealed bag. The bag may be either sealed about its edges or may be sealed using one or more adhesive labels.

[0005] In another embodiment, a meal kit is manufactured by placing, in a bag, a straw and a sheet having an adhesive on one side of said sheet and then sealing said bag. In one embodiment, the bag is sealed about the bag's edges. In an alternative embodiment, the bag is sealed with one or more adhesive labels. In yet another embodiment, the meal kit is manufactured by further placing eating utensils in said bag. In another embodiment, the meal kit is manufactured by further placing a napkin or a wipe in said bag.

[0006] In yet another embodiment, a method is provided for providing a meal kit including a bag, a straw and a sheet having an adhesive on one side.
In one embodiment, a meal kit is provided that includes a flexible straw and an adhesive mat contained in a sealed package.

In another embodiment, a meal kit is provided having personalized indicia.

These features together with the various ancillary provisions and features which will become apparent to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description, are attained by the meal kits of the present invention, preferred embodiments thereof being shown with reference to the accompanying drawings, by way of example only, wherein:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of one side of a meal kit embodiment;

FIG. 2 is another perspective view of the meal kit embodiment of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of an open meal kit of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 4, 5, and 6 show several items that may be within a meal kit embodiment;

FIG. 7 shows one embodiment of a mat that may be within a meal kit embodiment;

FIG. 8 shows several of the items in one embodiment meal kit arranged for use; and

FIG. 9 shows several optional meal kit items.

Reference symbols are used in the Figures to indicate certain components, aspects or features shown therein, with reference symbols common to more than one Figure indicating like components, aspects or features shown therein.

MODE(S) FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

Embodiments of the present invention are referred to herein as a "meal kit," which generally refers to, without limitation, a collection of one or more items, some of which are useful in eating or in keeping one clean either during or after eating. The items of the meal kit that are useful for eating or keeping clean may include, but are not limited to, eating utensils, a straw, a mat for placing food, a napkin, or a wipe. Additional meal kit items may include, but are not limited to, toys, crayons, activity pages or books, or printed matter containing personalized information, such as a name or personalized message, or informational or sales material. While several embodiments described herein describe meal kits for use by infants, toddlers, or children by including, for example, a bib or child-friendly items, the present invention is not limited to
any particular combination of items. The meal kits may either be sold individually, or may be
sold in bulk and used, for example and without limitation, in restaurants, on airliners, or
amusement parks.

[0019] In general, meal kit embodiments enclose, partially enclose, or constrain several meal
kit items, and may be opened or otherwise manipulated to remove the meal kit items. Thus, for
example and without limitation, the meal kit items may wholly or partially contained or sealed in
a bag, or may be collectively be bound by a rubber band, string, or adhesive tape. Examples of
meal kit bags include, but are not limited to, a wrapping or pouch that is fully or partially formed
from a flexible material or combination of materials, including but not limited to paper or plastic.
Further, the package may be either open, closed or sealed closed, or may either fully or partially
surround the items.

[0020] Figures 1, 2, and 3 show one embodiment of meal kit 100, where FIG. 1 is a
perspective view of one side of the meal kit, FIG. 2 is another perspective view of the meal kit of
FIG. 1, and FIG. 3 is a perspective view of an open meal kit of FIG. 1. Meal kit 100 includes
meal kit items 110, and a bag 101 having an end 102 which is sealed with an adhesive label 105
(FIG. 2), and that may be opened (FIG. 3). In one embodiment, bag 101 is a plastic bag, such as a
bag formed from polypropylene films manufactured by Innovative Packaging, Spring Valley,
NY. In alternative embodiments, bag 101 may be opaque, partially transparent, or may have
printing.

[0021] In one embodiment, meal kit 100 is assembled by placing items 110 in the bag, and
then sealing the bag. Meal kit 100 is used by opening the bag, as in FIG. 3, and removing items
110 for use. Meal kit 100 may be produced in bulk, or may be individualized with indicia or
inserts, as described subsequently, for distribution to a restaurant, hotel, amusement park, or
other establishment. Meal kit 100 may also be individualized for smaller groups, such as for a
birthday party or other gatherings.

[0022] As shown in Figure 1, bag 101 is transparent, permitting viewing of items 110, and
contains an optional insert 103. In one embodiment, one or more of bag 101, adhesive label 102,
and insert 103 contain indicia including, but not limited to, a corporate or restaurant logo or
information, a listing of meal kit items, or a greeting or message which may be personalized
(such as "Happy Birthday, Laurel!") label 105 includes a brand name, and insert 103 contains a
brand name an a listing of meal kit items. Figures 1 and 2 show indicia 1-1 on insert 103 and
indicia 1-2 on label 105.
While not meant to be limiting to the present invention, Figures 4, 5, and 6 illustrate possible items 110, which may, in various combinations, be present in an embodiment of a meal kit, and Figure 8 shows some of the items arranged for use. Specifically, FIG. 4 shows a mat/utensil bundle 410, a wipe 420, and a straw 430, FIG. 5 shows a bib 500. In one embodiment, bundle 410 includes a mat 601, a fork 603, and a spoon 605, as shown in FIG. 6, where the mat is wrapped around the fork and spoon and sealed with an adhesive strip or held together with an elastic band or string. Alternatively, meal kit 100 includes one or more of the items of FIG. 6 - mat 601, fork 603, and/or spoon 605 placed separately or bundled together in the meal kit.

In one embodiment, wipe 420 is a sealed package containing a pre-moistened cloth. Examples of such wipes are towelettes, manufactured by Kari-Out (White Plains, NY).

In one embodiment, straw 430 is a sealed straw of the type that is flexible and that has a pointed end for puncturing the seal of a fluid container, such as a "juice box" or "juice bag." In one embodiment, the straws are neon plastic flexible straws, manufactured by Pentry (West Parks, Maine). In alternative embodiments, the straw may be straight straw, may be a straw that does not have a pointed end, or may not be sealed.

Mat 601 is a placement or an item that may be used as a placemat, such as a napkin. FIG. 7 shows one embodiment of mat 601 as including a sheet of plastic having a front side 701, a back side 703, and edges 702 and 704. Back side 703 has an adhesive 705 with a protective release layer 707 along edge 702 and 704 which may be removed to expose the adhesive. Examples of mat 601 include, but are not limited to an "Activity Mat," manufactured by MadMat, Toronto, Ontario, and the TABLETOPPER® mat distributed by Neat Solutions, Inc. (Huntersville, NC) (See, for example: http://www.tabletopper.com/NStable.htm). Embodiments of mat 601 are not limited to a self-adhesive plastic mat, and alternative embodiments include, but are not limited to, paper mats and mats having no adhesive.

FIG. 7 shows edge 704 adhered to a surface S and release layer 707 partially removed from adhesive 705 of edge 702. Figure 8 shows mat 601 with edges 702 and 704 adhered to surface S. Figure 8 also shows wipe 420, utensils 603 and 605, and straw 430 arranged on front side 701 of mat 601.

Embodiments of items 110 include, but are not limited to, any and all combinations of the items of Figures 4, 5, and 6, as well as other items. As an example of embodiments of items 110 which are not meant to limit the present invention, the following are the contents of various
embodiments: 1) mat 601 and straw 430; 2) mat/utensil bundle 410, and straw 430; 3) mat 601, spoon 60S, and straw 430; 4) mat 601, spoon 60S, straw 430, and bib 500; 5) mat/utensil bundle 410, and bib 500.

[0029] FIG. 9 shows several optional meal kit items 110 that might be added to a child's meal kit. Optional items 110 include, but are not limited to, crayons 910, sheets or book 920 (where the sheets or book may include, but are not limited to, comics or stories, puzzles, mazes, or figures or space for coloring), a toy 930, or other items that might be of interest, though not directly related to consuming a meal. Another optional item 110 is a sticker 940, which may be on a backing 941, or may be on another item including, but not limited to, mat 601.

Embodiments also include kits 100 having one or more of the optional items 110 shown or described with reference to FIG. 9.

[0030] Although certain embodiments and examples are disclosed herein, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that the invention extends beyond the specifically disclosed embodiments to other alternative embodiments and/or uses and obvious modifications and equivalents thereof. Thus it is intended that the scope of the invention herein disclosed should not be limited by the particular disclosed embodiments described herein. For purposes of contrasting various embodiments with the prior art, certain aspects and advantages of these embodiments are described where appropriate herein. Of course, it is to be understood that not necessarily all such aspects or advantages may be achieved in accordance with any particular embodiment. Thus, for example, it should be recognized that the various embodiments may be carried out in a manner that achieves or optimizes one advantage or group of advantages as taught herein without necessarily achieving other aspects or advantages as may be taught or suggested herein. In any method or process disclosed herein, the acts or operations making up the method/process may be performed in any suitable sequence, and are not necessarily limited to any particular disclosed sequence.

[0031] Throughout this specification, the term "comprising" is inclusive or open-ended and does not exclude additional, unrecited elements or method steps. Reference throughout this specification to "one embodiment" or "an embodiment" means that a particular feature, structure or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment is included in at least one embodiment of the present invention. Thus, appearances of the phrases "in one embodiment" or "in an embodiment" in various places throughout this specification are not necessarily all referring to the same embodiment. Furthermore, the particular features, structures or
characteristics may be combined in any suitable manner, as would be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art from this disclosure, in one or more embodiments.

Similarly, it should be appreciated that in the above description of exemplary embodiments, various features are sometimes grouped together in a single embodiment, figure, or description thereof for the purpose of streamlining the disclosure and aiding in the understanding of one or more of the various inventive aspects. This method of disclosure, however, is not to be interpreted as reflecting an intention that the claimed invention requires more features than are expressly recited in each claim. Rather, as the following claims reflect, inventive aspects lie in less than all features of a single foregoing disclosed embodiment. Thus, the claims following the Detailed Description are hereby expressly incorporated into this Detailed Description, with each claim standing on its own as a separate embodiment.

Thus, while there has been described what is believed to be the preferred embodiments, those skilled in the art will recognize that other and further modifications may be made thereto without departing from the spirit of the invention, and it is intended to claim all such changes and modifications as fall within the scope of the invention. For example, any formulas given above are merely representative of procedures that may be used. Functionality may be added or deleted from the block diagrams and operations may be interchanged among functional blocks. Steps may be added or deleted to methods described within the scope of the present invention.
WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A meal kit comprising:
   meal kit items including
   a straw, and
   a sheet having an adhesive on one side of said sheet; and
   a device for removably securing the meal kit items together.

2. The meal kit of Claim 1, where said meal kit items further include eating utensils.

3. The meal kit of Claim 1, where said meal kit items further include a napkin or a wipe.

4. The meal kit of Claim 1, where said straw is a flexible straw.

5. The meal kit of Claim 1, where said device is a bag.

6. The meal kit of Claim 5, where said bag is hermetically sealed.

7. The meal kit of Claim 5, where said bag is sealed with an adhesive label.

8. The meal kit of Claim 1, where said sheet is a plastic sheet.

9. The meal kit of Claim 1, where said meal kit include a toy.

10. The meal kit of Claim 1, where said meal kit includes an activity book.

11. The meal kit of Claim 1, where said meal kit includes crayons.

12. The meal kit of Claim 1, where said meal kit includes one or more stickers.

13. The meal kit of Claim 1, where said meal kit includes indicia.

14. A meal kit substantially as shown and described.

15. A method of producing a meal kit of any of claims 1-14 comprising:
   placing, in a bag, meal kit items including a straw and a sheet having an adhesive
   on one side of said sheet; and
   sealing said meal kit items in said bag.

16. The method of Claim 15, where said sealing includes hermetically sealing said bag.

17. The method of Claim 15 where said sealing includes placing a sticker over the opening of
    said bag.

18. A method comprising providing any of the meal kits of claims 1-14.