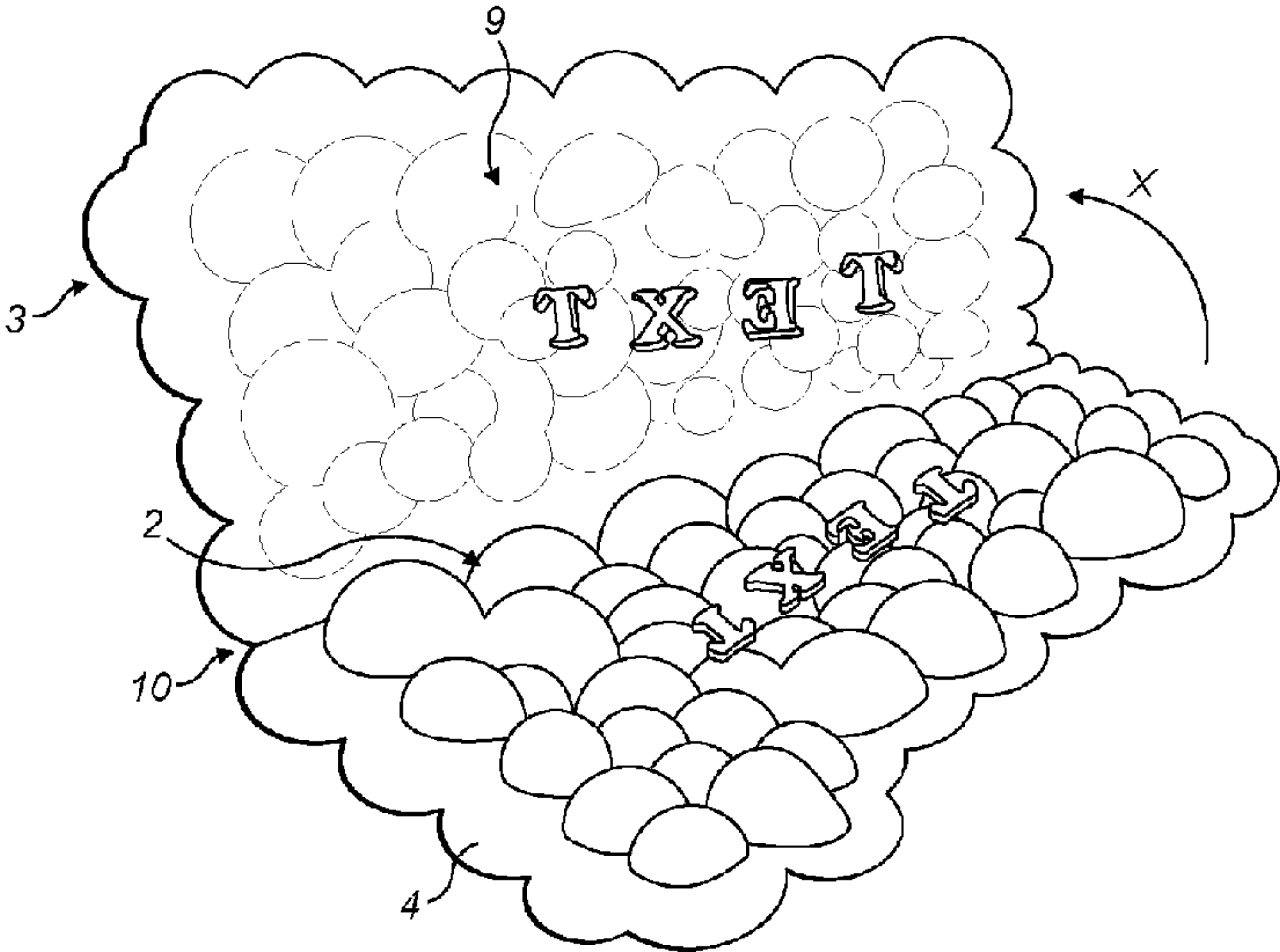




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(54) Titre : PRODUIT ALIMENTAIRE EMBALLE ET PROCEDE
(54) Title: PACKAGED FOOD ITEM AND METHOD



(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**
A packaged food item has a package holding the food item, with a preformed part having a receptacle with a peripheral edge, and second part sealed to the edge, forming an enclosure holding the food item. The receptacle is a sheet having an inner face conforming to a shaped portion of a surface of the food item, and may have an outer face following the shape of the inner face. The food item is retained within the enclosure with the shaped portion of the surface of the food item and the inner face of the receptacle mutually in proximity. The food item is securely retained with the outer face of the receptacle providing, to a viewer of the package, a clear display of the shape of the food item, permitting any display, graphics or text, on the surface of the item to be visible on the outer face of the package, without the need to apply pressure or heat to conform the package to the shaped portion of the packaged food item.

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1314107.2 7 August 2013 (07.08.2013) GB(71) Applicant: **KRAFT FOODS R&D, INC.** [—/US]; Three
Parkway North, Deerfield, Illinois 66015 (US).(72) Inventors: **LLOYD, Adam**; c/o Mondelez Europe GmbH,
Lindbergh-Allee 1, CH-8152 Glattpark Zurich (CH). **GUERRA, Filipa**; c/o Mondelez Europe GmbH, Lind-
bergh-Allee 1, CH-8152 Glattpark Zurich (CH). **CLARK,**
Jo-Ann; c/o Mondelez Europe GmbH, Lindbergh-Allee 1,
CH-8152 Zurich (CH). **ANDREWS, Richard**; c/o
Mondelez UK R&D Limited, PO Box 12, Bournville Lane,
Bournville, Birmingham West Midlands B30 2LU (GB). **EXNER, Ron**; c/o Kraft Foods R&D, Inc., Three Parkway
North, Deerfield, Illinois 60015 (US). **DISAVINO, Vin-**
cent; c/o Mondelez Europe Services GmbH, Lind-
bergh-Allee 1, CH-8152 Glattpark Zurich (CH).(81) Designated States (*unless otherwise indicated, for every
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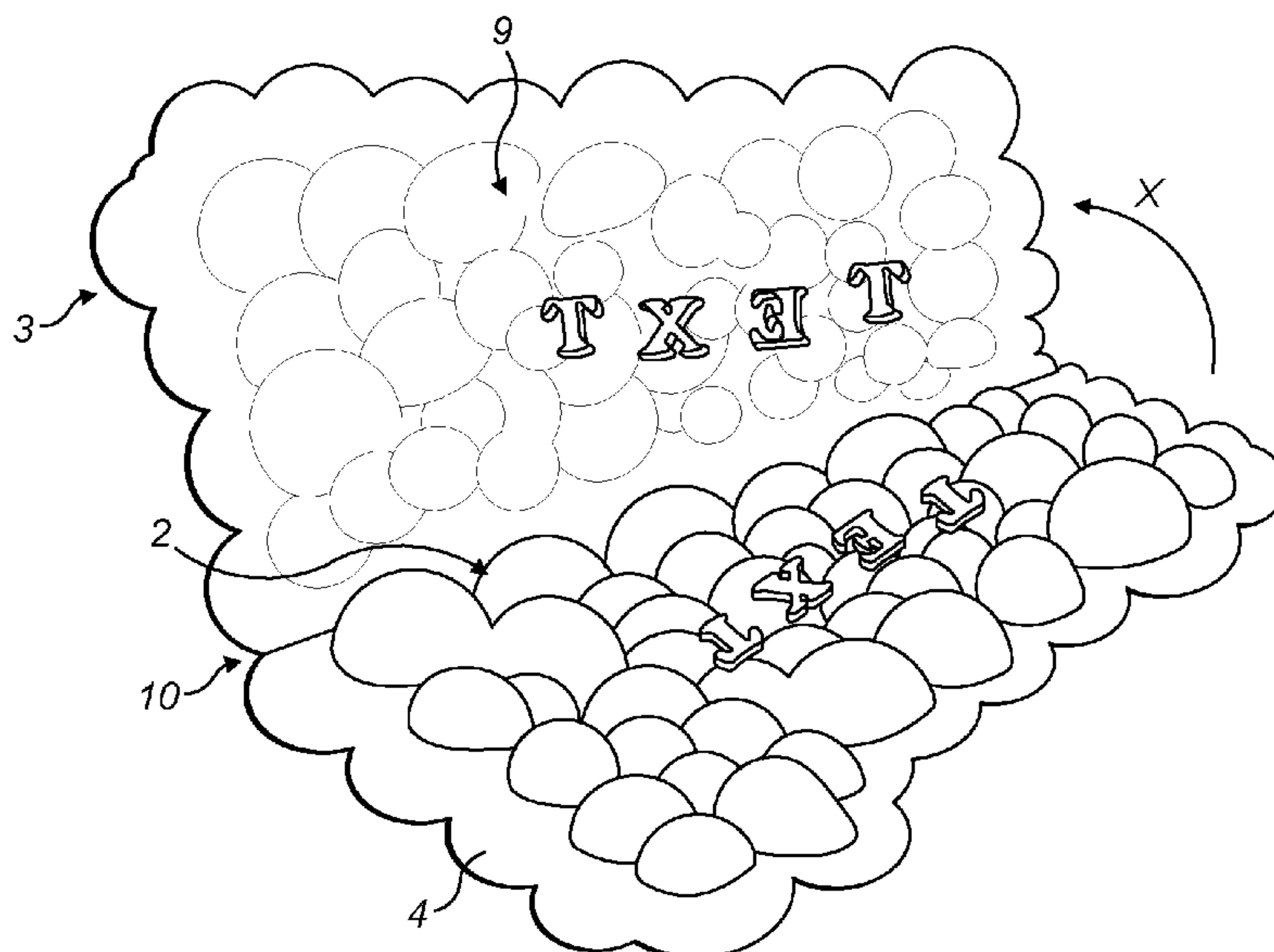


FIG. 4C

(57) Abstract: A packaged food item has a
package holding the food item, with a pre-
formed part having a receptacle with a peri-
pheral edge, and second part sealed to the
edge, forming an enclosure holding the food
item. The receptacle is a sheet having an in-
ner face conforming to a shaped portion of a
surface of the food item, and may have an
outer face following the shape of the inner
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to be visible on the outer face of the pack-
age, without the need to apply pressure or
heat to conform the package to the shaped
portion of the packaged food item.

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Packaged Food Item and Method

The present invention relates to a packaged food item and a method for producing a packaged food item.

5

Typically, a food item such as a chocolate bar, biscuit, cake or similar item, may be formed in a mould. The item is then removed from the mould as a solid product for subsequent wrapping of the item. Such products have a solid outer surface at ambient temperature. Although the interior of the product may not necessarily be solid, such products are self supporting as a result of their solid exterior. Wrapping applied to the food item may be made to at least partially conform to a shape of the item, for example for functional or aesthetic packaging reasons. In order to conform the wrapper closely to the shape of the food item, heat and/or pressure may be applied to the wrapping material in such methods.

15

A disadvantage of such processes for conforming a wrapping to a solid food item is that the application of heat and/or pressure to the wrapper, when present on the product, may have a negative effect on the underlying food item to which the wrapper is to be conformed. For instance, the heat and/or pressure may change a shape, or consistency, or quality, or the like of the food item. For instance, heat and/or pressure may change the shape of the item in an undesired manner.

20

Alternatively and/or additionally, the heat may cause at least partial surface melting and/or recrystallisation and/or phase change of at least a portion of the food item, which can affect the appearance, consistency, or overall aesthetic quality of the item.

25

Hence, there is a need for methods and packages to permit a food item to be wrapped in a package which closely conforms to at least a portion of the food item without the formation of the resulting packaged food item causing problems to the characteristics of the underlying packaged food product.

30

It is one aim exemplary embodiments of the present invention, amongst others, to provide a packaged food item which at least partially obviates or mitigates at least some of the disadvantages of the prior art, whether identified herein or elsewhere, wherein the packaging conforms to the shape of at least a portion of the surface of the food item so that the appearance of at least that portion the packaged food item is evident, upon viewing the packaged food item, from the shape of the conformed packaging. It is a further aim of exemplary embodiments of the invention to provide a method for producing such a packaged food item.

35

According to the present invention there is provided an apparatus and method as set forth in the appended claims. Other features of the invention will be apparent from the dependent claims, and the description which follows.

- 5 Throughout this specification, the term “comprising” or “comprises” means including the component(s) specified but not to the exclusion of the presence of others. The term “consisting essentially of” or “consists essentially of” means including the components specified but excluding other components except for materials present as impurities, unavoidable materials present as a result of processes used to provide the components, and components added for
- 10 a purpose other than achieving the technical effect of the invention. Typically, when referring to compositions, a composition consisting essentially of a set of components will comprise less than 5% by weight, typically less than 3% by weight, more typically less than 1% by weight of non-specified components.
- 15 The term “consisting of” or “consists of” means including the components specified but excluding other components.

Whenever appropriate, depending upon the context, the use of the term “comprises” or “comprising” may also be taken to include the meaning “consists essentially of” or “consisting essentially of”, and also may also be taken to include the meaning “consists of” or “consisting of”.

20

The optional features set out herein may be used either individually or in combination with each other where appropriate and particularly in the combinations as set out in the accompanying claims. The optional features for each exemplary embodiment of the invention, as set out herein are also applicable to any other aspects or exemplary embodiments of the invention, where appropriate.

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An exemplary embodiment of the present invention provides a packaged food item comprising a package having an enclosure adapted to hold the food item, wherein the package comprises:

30

- a first package part comprising a receptacle having an opening with an edge extending at least partially around the opening, and
- a second package part attached to the edge,
- 35 wherein the enclosure is at least partially formed via an association between the first and second package parts,
- wherein the receptacle includes an inner face adapted to conform to a shaped portion of a surface of the food item, and

wherein the enclosure is configured to retain the food item with the shaped portion of the surface of the food item being proximate to the inner face of the receptacle. The inner face of the receptacle may be arranged to conform entirely to a portion of shaped surface of the food item. The enclosure may be entirely formed via an association between the first and second
5 package parts.

The first package part may be a preformed package part.

The receptacle may include an outer face following the shape of the inner face.
10

The first preformed package part may be a moulded sheet of film, optionally of thickness less than 100 μm .

The first preformed package part may be a moulded sheet of, or comprising, a polymer film.
15

The first preformed package part may be self-supporting, or alternatively, the first preformed package part may be non-self-supporting.

The second package part may be a sheet of film.
20

The second package part may be sealed to the first package part.

The edge may comprise a flange extending at least partially around the opening, and the second package part may be attached to the flange. The second package part may be
25 peelably sealed to the first package part, for instance at the flange. The second package part may be re-attachably sealed to the first preformed package part, for instance at the flange.

Thus, exemplary embodiments of the invention provide the technical benefit that the food item is securely retainable in proximity with, optionally in contact with and optionally mated with the
30 inner face of the receptacle within the package, with the outer face of the receptacle potentially providing, to a viewer of the package, a clear display of the shape of the food item retained therein by means of the visible shape of the outer face of the receptacle. This may be used to permit any display, graphics or text, which may be present in relief form on the surface of the product, to be visible on the outer face of the receptacle of the package, also in relief form,
35 irrespective of any additional information or display printed on the outer face of the receptacle of the package. The outer face of the receptacle may be a printed outer face, printed prior to formation. The printed outer face may be a graphic or decorative face. The decoration or graphic may be applied to the first package part as a flat film, with the printing taking into account the expected subsequent distortion of the film when the first film is deformed to form

the receptacle. In other words, the desired image may be printed as a distorted image on the film, becoming the desired image after the first film has been conformed to a receptacle conformed to the shape of the portion of the product. When the item is a chocolate bar, or the like, having a segmented structure with the bar dividable into portions by fracture along thinned regions of the bar, such segments may be evident for the bar retained within the package, and the bar may be easily broken into segments prior to opening the package with reduced risk of inadvertent damage to the package when compared to prior art packages such as metal foil packages or unshaped sachets. This is achieved without the need to apply pressure or heat to conform the package to the shaped portion of the packaged food item.

10

The term food item may refer to a snack food item, for instance to a confectionery item. The present invention is appropriate to chocolate food items. Food items include: chocolate products, including chocolate in bar form, and chocolates. Food items include sugar-food or sugar-replacement or candy products, for example caramel products, toffee products, fudge products, marshmallow products, nougat products, sweets and gums. Food items include flour-based food products, for example cakes, biscuits, cookies and sweet or savoury pastries. The food item may be prepared by baking of a dough or batter. The food item may be a frozen food item such as an ice, ice-cream, frozen sorbet, frozen yoghurt or the like. The food item may be a chocolate product or a caramel, toffee or fudge product. The food item may be a chocolate or chocolate-based item such as a chocolate bar, for instance a solid chocolate bar or a filled chocolate bar or item. Typically, a food item such as a chocolate bar or similar, is formed in a mould. The item is then removed from the mould as a solid product for subsequent wrapping of the item. The food item may have a solid outer surface at ambient temperature. Although an interior of the product may not necessarily be solid, such food items may be self supporting as a result of their solid exterior.

25

The package comprises a first preformed package part comprising a receptacle having an opening with an edge, optionally including a flange, extending at least partially around the opening, and a second package part. Where the first and second package parts are each formed separately and then brought together to cooperate to form the package, then it may be appropriate for the edge or optional flange to extend around the entire opening of the receptacle. The opening of the receptacle may be sized to permit the food item to be easily placed within the receptacle during preparation of the packaged food item.

30

The receptacle may be self-supporting, meaning that it may be capable of retaining its shape under its own weight under gravity irrespective of the orientation of the package. Alternatively, the receptacle may be non-self-supporting. The first preformed package part may be a moulded sheet of film, such as a moulded sheet of polymer or laminated film comprising a plurality of layers. For instance the film may include at least one polymer layer. For instance

35

the film may include at least one metal foil layer, such as an aluminium layer, as part of a laminated film. The moulded sheet of film may be a laminate sheet comprising one or more polymer layers and optionally comprising a metal layer, optionally an aluminium layer.

- 5 The first preformed package part may be formed from a film such as a polymer or laminate film using a suitable moulding or shaping process, for instance thermoplastic moulding or thermosetting moulding, vacuum moulding or the like. The first preformed package part may otherwise be made by injection or blow moulding of a polymer, or by any suitable process. By
- 10 laminate film as used herein is meant a film comprising at least two separate layers, one of which may be a polymer film. The first preformed package part may, for instance, be formed from a starting film or template typically having a substantially uniform thickness less than 0.2 mm by thermal and/or vacuum moulding, so that the thickness of the self-supporting receptacle will typically be 0.2 mm or less in thickness, with the flange remaining as the un-
- 15 moulded peripheral portion of the first preformed package part. Such a film thickness allows the receptacle to be self-supporting whilst being sufficiently thin to ensure that the outer face follows the shape of the inner face of the receptacle and so is topologically similar to that inner face and follows the contours of the portion of shaped surface of the food item that is within the package.
- 20 The package may form part of a multipack arrangement, with a plurality of first preformed package parts joined together as parts of a multipack arrangement. Lines of weakness, such as perforations or thinned portions may be provided between adjacent first preformed package parts, for instance in the flange regions, where flanges link the adjacent first preformed package parts in the multipack arrangement. Corresponding lines of weakness may be
- 25 provided in the second package parts in order to permit separation of individual packaged food items from the multipack assembly, within their respective package, without requiring opening of the package.

The first preformed package part may be resilient.

30

At least 20% of the surface area of the inner face of the receptacle may be arcuate (by which term "arcuate" is meant curved or non-planar).

- 35 The outer face of the package may substantially, or exactly, conform to the shape of the food item. For instance the outer face of the package may be of identical shape to the shape of the food item save for it being a little larger in total dimensions as a result of the thickness of the receptacle. Any flanges on the package are not to be taken into account when considering the shape of the outer face of the package.

The volume of the enclosure may be less than 110% of the volume of the packaged food item.

The enclosure may be arranged to closely fit to the packaged food item, whereby movement of the food item relative to the enclosure is restricted.

5

For instance, any width of the enclosure measured along an axis passing through a centroid thereof may be no more than 5% greater than a width of the food item retained within the enclosure as measured along the same axis.

10 At least 60% of the surface area of the food item may be in contact with the inner face of the enclosure.

The food item and the inner face of the receptacle may be mutually mated whereby the food item is retainable within the second package part upon inversion thereof with the first package part removed. In other words, the food item may be closely matched to the shape of the inner face of the receptacle whereby it adheres or cleaves thereto.

15

The receptacle may include portions having both negative and positive curvatures relative to the inside of the receptacle – in other words, the receptacle may include portions having different curvatures in different directions, such as concave and convex portions.

20

The receptacle may comprises planar portions suitable for display of graphics.

Suitably, the packaged food item may be configured to permit a consumer to eat the food item without having to touch the outer surface of the food item directly.

25

In an exemplary embodiment of the invention the first preformed package part and the second package part may be formed from the same sheet of film as a unitary item and folded together to form the package. The first preformed package part and the second package part may mutually hinged, with the package formed by folding about the hinge as a fold axis. The hinge may be provided, for instance, by perforation or scoring along a line forming a boundary between the first and second package parts of the unitary item. In such an arrangement, the flange may extend around the periphery of the opening of the receptacle of the first package part other than in the portion of the periphery where the hinge is formed at the boundary between the first and second package parts.

30

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The second package part may be attached to the first package part at the optional flange, and may be a sheet of film, for instance a sheet of film of substantially uniform thickness such as a

polymer or laminate film. The second package part may have a shape with dimensions substantially corresponding to the dimensions of the outer edge of the first package part, for instance the outer edge of any optional flange flange, so that the second package part may be attached to the first package part with the edges of the second package part and the first
5 package part, including any optional flange of the first package part, substantially aligned. The second package part may be a flat, or substantially flat, piece of film.

The first and second package parts may be attached together by any suitable means such as thermal welding, heat sealing or adhesive. The second package part may be peelably attached
10 to the first package part at the flange. The second package part may be re-attachably attached to the first preformed package part at the flange. In one embodiment of the invention, the first and second package parts may be attached together by means of a pressure sensitive adhesive. The first and second package parts may be sealed together, for instance to provide a hermetic seal which is impermeable to gas, water vapour or liquid water.

15 The first preformed package part may comprise a first tab, adapted for gripping whereby the first preformed package part may be held and pulled for separation of first and second package parts to open the package. The second package part may comprise a second tab adapted for gripping whereby the first preformed package part may be held and pulled for
20 separation of first and second package parts to open the package. Where each of the first and second package parts is provided with a respective tab, these may be situated in adjacent and/or partially overlapping locations at a periphery of the package.

25 The flange may be arranged or shaped to provide an opening in the flange, a hook arrangement or some other hanging arrangement whereby the packaged food item may be suspendable from a display hook or the like.

In some embodiments, an enclosure is formed via an association between the first and second package parts, with the enclosure arranged to retain the food item. The receptacle has an
30 inner face adapted to conform to a shaped portion of a surface of the food item. The food item is retained within the enclosure with the shaped portion of the surface of the food item and the inner face of the receptacle mutually in contact, for instance mated together. In other words, the inner face of the receptacle has a shape which closely or exactly corresponds to the shape of the shaped portion of the surface of the food item, and the corresponding shapes are
35 located together when the packaged item is retained within the enclosure of the pack. The shaped portion of the surface of the food item may represent at least 30% of the total surface area of the item, for instance at least 40%, such as at least 50% or at least 60%.

The food item may be a chocolate-based moulded item or a baked, moulded item such as a moulded biscuit or a moulded cake.

5 The term "chocolate-based" as used herein means that the product comprises chocolate. For a chocolate-based moulded food item, the outer surface of the food item may comprise a solid layer of chocolate enrobing or partially covering an interior item which may be a non-chocolate item or filling, or, for instance, which may be a biscuit or a cake.

10 The term chocolate in the context of the present invention is not restricted by the various definitions of chocolate provided by government and regulatory bodies. Nor are the terms biscuit or cake so restricted.

The chocolate may comprise a cocoa-derived product, a fat and at least one sweetener. Suitable cocoa-derived products include low-fat cocoa solids (also called non-fat cocoa solids
15 of NFCS), cocoa liquor and cocoa butter.

By low-fat or non-fat cocoa solids we mean to refer to the component remaining after removal, or partial removal, of fats from cocoa liquor. Cocoa butter is both a cocoa-derived product and a fat. In some embodiments the cocoa butter may be the only fat. In these embodiments the
20 chocolate may comprise cocoa butter and at least one sweetener. In some embodiments the chocolate comprising cocoa butter may comprise an additional fat.

In some embodiments the chocolate comprises low-fat cocoa solids, a fat and at least one sweetener. The fat may be a single fat or a combination of more than one fat. Suitable fats
25 include cocoa butter and cocoa butter alternatives. Suitable cocoa butter alternatives include, butterfat, a cocoa butter equivalent (CBE), a cocoa butter replacer (CBR), a cocoa butter substitute (CBS), (sometimes used interchangeably with CBR), a vegetable fat that is liquid at standard ambient temperature and pressure (SATP, 25°C and 100kPa) or any combination of the above.

30 CBEs are defined in European Directive 2000/36/EC as complying with the following criteria:

- a) they are non-lauric vegetable fats, which are rich in symmetrical monounsaturated triglycerides of the type POP, POST and StOST;
- b) they are miscible in any proportion with cocoa butter, and are compatible with its
35 physical properties (melting point and crystallisation temperature, melting rate, need for tempering phase);
- c) they are obtained only by the processes of refining and/or fractionation, which excludes enzymatic modification of the triglyceride structure.

Suitable CBEs include illipe, Borneo tallow, tengkawang, palm oil, sal, shea, kokum gurgi and mango kernel or synthetic CBEs such as COBERINE (RTM) produced by Lodders Croklaan, The Netherlands. CBEs may be used in combination with cocoa butter.

- 5 Suitable CBSs (or CBRs) include CBS laurics and CBS non-laurics. CBS laurics are short-chain fatty acid glycerides. Their physical properties vary but they all have triglyceride configurations that make them compatible with cocoa butter. Suitable CBSs include those based on palm kernel oil and coconut oil. CBS non-laurics consist of fractions obtained from hydrogenated oils. The oils are selectively hydrogenated with the formation of trans acids,
10 which increases the solid phase of the fat. Suitable sources for CBS non-laurics include soya, cottonseed, peanut, rapeseed and corn (maize) oil.

- 15 Suitable vegetable fats are liquid at standard ambient temperature and pressure (SATP, 25°C and 100kPa). A liquid vegetable fat may be employed when a liquid chocolate composition is desired. Suitable vegetable fats include corn oil, cotton seed oil, rapeseed oil, palm oil, safflower oil, and sunflower oil.

Some or all of the fat may be a partly or wholly non-metabolisable fat, for example Caprenin or Olestra.

- 20 "Chocolate" in the context of the present invention may include dark, milk, white, compound chocolate and any other food mass which is solid at ambient temperature and contains fat (e.g. cocoa butter or cocoa butter alternative) and one or more components derived from cocoa beans (e.g. cocoa powder). A sweetener (e.g. sucrose) is typically also contained in the chocolate. Other optional components include milk components (e.g. milk fat and milk
25 powder).

As used herein, the term wt% is used as an abbreviation for "parts by weight expressed as a percentage of the total weight".

- 30 The chocolate may comprise at least 1 wt% low-fat cocoa solids, such as at least 5 wt%, for example at least 8 wt% low-fat cocoa solids. The chocolate may comprise up to 30 wt% low-fat cocoa solids, such as up to 20 wt%, for example up to 15 wt% low-fat cocoa solids. The chocolate may comprise at least 10 wt% of a fat, such as at least 20 wt%, for example at least 30 wt% of a fat. The chocolate may comprise up to 70 wt% of a fat, such as up to 60 wt%, for
35 example up to 50 wt% of a fat.

The low-fat cocoa solids and fat together may provide at least 20 wt% of the chocolate, such as at least 30 wt%, for example at least 40 wt%. The low-fat cocoa solids and fat together may

provide up to 90 wt% of the chocolate, such as up to 80 wt%, for example up to 70 wt%.
Suitably the fat present in the chocolate is cocoa butter.

5 The chocolate may comprise cocoa liquor. Cocoa liquor comprises low-fat cocoa solids and cocoa butter. The chocolate may comprise cocoa liquor and an additional fat. Suitable additional fats are as described above in relation to the fat. The chocolate may comprise cocoa liquor and additional cocoa butter.

10 The chocolate may comprise at least one sweetener. The at least one sweetener may be a bulk sweetener or an intense sweetener. Suitable bulk sweeteners include sucrose, invert sugar syrup, caramel, glucose, fructose, polydextrose, high fructose corn syrup, maltodextrin, honey, maple syrup, agave syrup, jam, marmalade, stevia and sugar alcohols, for example glycerol, maltitol, isomalt, sorbitol, xylitol, lactitol, erythritol, galactitol, polyglycitol and mannitol.

15 The chocolate may comprise at least 1 wt% of a bulk sweetener, such as at least 10 wt%, for example 20 wt% of a bulk sweetener. The chocolate may comprise up to 70 wt% of a bulk sweetener, such as up to 60 wt%, for example up to 55 wt% of a bulk sweetener.

20 The chocolate may comprise at least one intense sweetener, for example to alter the flavour or reduce the calorie value of the edible material. Suitable intense sweeteners are selected from, for example, aspartame, saccharin, sucralose, acesulfame-K, stevia and neohesperidine. An intense sweetener may be present in an amount of from 0.01 to 2 wt%.

25 The chocolate may comprise additional ingredients. Suitable additional ingredients include milk products, emulsifiers and flavourings.

Suitable milk products include milk solids and milk fat. Suitable milk solids include skimmed milk powder.

30 Suitable flavourings for the chocolate include nuts pastes, for example hazelnut paste, fruit flavourings, for example orange essence, mint essence, lemon grass, coriander, cinnamon, chilli, ginger, coffee, and vanillin.

35 The chocolate product may consist essentially of chocolate or it may comprise further ingredients. In some embodiments the further ingredients may be dispersed within the chocolate. In some embodiments chocolate pieces may be dispersed within the other ingredients. In some embodiments the chocolate may provide a coating around other ingredients. In some embodiments the chocolate may provide a topping or filling. In some embodiments the chocolate may be intimately mixed with other ingredients.

The skilled person will understand the range of such chocolate items that are available. These include, for example, tablets and other shaped items consisting essentially of chocolate; tablets and other shaped items having pieces of fruit, nut, biscuit, toffee, cereals and the like dispersed therein; food or baked items having chocolate pieces dispersed therein; food or baked items partially or fully covered by a chocolate layer or including an internal chocolate layer or filling; and a chocolate tablet or other shaped item mixed with a flavouring agent.

In some embodiments of the invention the chocolate may be or comprise a dark chocolate. The dark chocolate may comprise at least 30 wt% cocoa-derived products, such as at least 35 wt%, for example at least 40 wt% cocoa-derived products. The dark chocolate may comprise up to 99 wt% cocoa solids, such as up to 90 wt%, for example up to 80 wt% cocoa solids.

Typically dark chocolate comprises cocoa-derived products and a sweetener as major components, in varying amounts which can readily be determined by the skilled person in accord with the type of chocolate being produced, but substantially no dairy-derived components, for example milk solids.

The dark chocolate may comprise cocoa liquor and cocoa butter. Additional low-fat cocoa solids may be present.

In some embodiments of the invention, the chocolate may be or comprise a milk chocolate. The milk chocolate may comprise cocoa-derived products, for example cocoa liquor and cocoa butter, a sweetener, and a dairy component, for example milk solids, as major components, these being in varying amounts which can readily be determined by the skilled person in accord with the type of chocolate being produced.

The dairy component is a major component in distinguishing milk chocolate from dark chocolate and another is, typically, the lesser amount of cocoa-derived products, compared with many dark chocolates.

The milk chocolate may comprise at least 10 wt% cocoa-derived products, such as at least 15 wt%, for example at least 20 wt% cocoa-derived products. The milk chocolate may comprise up to 40 wt% cocoa-derived products, such as up to 35 wt%, for example up to 30 wt% cocoa-derived products. The milk chocolate may comprise at least 10 wt% milk solids, such as at least 15 wt%, for example at least 20 wt% milk solids. The milk chocolate may comprise up to 40 wt% milk solids, such as up to 35 wt%, for example up to 30 wt% milk solids.

In some embodiments the chocolate may be a white chocolate. The white chocolate may comprise cocoa butter, a sweetener, and a dairy component, for example milk solids, and substantially no cocoa solids.

- 5 The white chocolate may comprise at least 10 wt% cocoa butter, such as at least 15 wt%, for example at least 20 wt% cocoa butter. The white chocolate may comprise up to 40 wt% cocoa butter, such as up to 35 wt%, for example up to 30 wt% cocoa butter. The white chocolate may comprise at least 10 wt% milk solids, such as at least 15 wt%, for example at least 20 wt% milk solids. The white chocolate may comprise up to 40 wt% milk solids, such as up to 35 wt%, for
10 example up to 30 wt% milk solids.

- The chocolate may comprise at least one sweetener. The at least one sweetener may be a bulk sweetener or an intense sweetener. A mixture thereof may be provided. Suitable bulk sweeteners include sucrose, invert sugar syrup, caramel, glucose, fructose, polydextrose, high
15 fructose corn syrup, honey, maple syrup, agave syrup, jam, marmalade and sugar alcohols, for example glycerol, maltitol, isomalt, sorbitol, xylitol, lactitol, erythritol, galactitol, polyglycitol and mannitol.

- The chocolate may comprise at least 1 wt% of a bulk sweetener, such as at least 10 wt%, for
20 example at least 20 wt% of a bulk sweetener. The chocolate may comprise up to 60 wt% of a bulk sweetener, such as up to 50 wt%, for example up to 40 wt% of a bulk sweetener. When more than one bulk sweetener is provided these definitions of proportion refer to the total amount of the bulk sweeteners (this principle applies to other components defined in this specification).

- 25 The chocolate may comprise at least one intense sweetener, for example to alter the flavour or reduce the calorie value of the edible material. Suitable intense sweeteners are selected from, for example, aspartame, saccharin, sucralose, acesulfame-K, stevia and neohesperidine. An intense sweetener may be present in an amount of from 0.01 to 2 wt%.

- 30 The chocolate may comprise a whey protein product. The whey protein product may be derived from cheese whey, casein whey or soy whey. The whey protein may be derived from cheese whey. Cheese whey is the by-product of the acid or rennet coagulation of protein (casein) from milk. Suitable forms of whey protein products include dried whey, delactosed
35 whey, calcium treated delactosed whey, delactosed whey and demineralized whey. Demineralization of whey may be carried out using any known method. Suitable methods of demineralizing whey include electrodialysis, ion exchange, ultrafiltration and reverse osmosis.

In some embodiments the chocolate may comprises demineralized whey. The chocolate may comprise a milk product and a whey protein product. The chocolate may comprise a whey protein product and no milk products. The whey protein product may partially or fully replace a milk product in a chocolate. The chocolate may comprise at least 1 wt% of a whey protein product, such as at least 2 wt%, for example at least 4 wt% of a whey protein product. The chocolate may comprise up to 10 wt% of a whey protein product, such as up to 6 wt% of a whey protein product.

The moulded food item may have a shaped portion formed solidified in contact with an inner face of a mould and a freely set portion formed solidified at an opening of said mould. Typically, the freely set portion of the moulded item may be a substantially flat surface formed at a mouth or opening of the mould used for forming or moulding the moulded item.

The inner face of the receptacle of the first preformed package part may be partially or entirely conformed to the same shape as the inner face of the mould used for forming the moulded item. The second package part may cover the freely-set portion of the moulded item.

The solidification may arise from cooling of a melt (for instance in the case of a chocolate-based moulded item) or may arise from solidification caused by baking (for instance for a moulded biscuit or cake formed by baking of a dough or batter).

The moulded item may be a chocolate bar. The moulded item may be a biscuit or a cake.

The first and/or second package parts may formed of a plastically deformable material whereby the package may be manually compacted for disposal following removal from the food item. In other words, when the package is scrunched up or crumpled together by a user after removal of the food item, the package may remain in a crumpled or compacted form rather than returning back to its original shape. This permits a reduction in volume occupied by the package for disposal, making it easy to fit in a pocket or handbag of a consumer and causing less volume of a waste container to be occupied by the package once it has been disposed of.

The packaged food may be configured to permit a consumer to eat the food item without having to touch the outer surface of the food item directly.

The food item may have a thickness greater than or equal to a width and a length greater than or equal to the width, wherein the ratio thickness/length is less than 0.3. The ratio width/length may be less than 0.3.

An exemplary embodiment of the invention provides a method of forming a packaged food item, the method comprising:

- providing a food item,
- providing a first package part comprising a receptacle having an opening with an edge
- 5 extending at least partially around the opening, wherein the receptacle includes an inner face adapted to conform to a shaped portion of a surface of the food item,
- providing a second package part adapted for sealing to the edge,
- bringing together the food item and the receptacle with the shaped portion of the surface of the food item being proximate to the inner face of the receptacle, and
- 10 attaching the second package part to the first package part at the edge to form the packaged food item with the food item retained in an enclosure formed at least partially via an association between the first and second package parts.

- The features as set out above in relation to the aforementioned exemplary embodiments are
- 15 also applicable to this present exemplary embodiment unless evidently inappropriate.

The first package part may be a preformed package part.

- The receptacle may include an outer face following the shape of the inner face.

20

The second package part may be a sheet of film.

- The edge comprises a flange extending at least partially around the opening and the second package part may be attached or sealed to the flange. The second package part may be
- 25 peelably and/or re-attachably attached or sealed to the first preformed package part at the flange.

- The first preformed package part and the second package part may be formed from the same sheet of film as a unitary item and folded together around the food item to form the enclosure.
- 30 The first preformed package part and the second package part may be mutually hinged: the folding may be about the hinge as fold axis.

- The food item may be a chocolate-based moulded item or baked moulded item, such as a chocolate bar, a biscuit or a cake.

35

The moulded item may have a shaped portion formed solidified in contact with an inner face of a mould and a freely set portion formed solidified at an opening of said mould, wherein the inner face of the receptacle is conformed to the same shape as a portion of or the entire said inner face of said mould.

The second package part may cover the freely-set portion of the moulded item.

5 The outer face of the receptacle may be printed prior to formation from a flat sheet, with the printing onto the flat sheet taking into account a subsequent distortion of the flat sheet when deformed to form the receptacle.

An exemplary embodiment of the invention provides a method of forming a packaged food item, the method comprising:

10 providing a food item,
 providing a first package part comprising a receptacle having an opening with an edge extending at least partially around the opening,
 providing a second package part adapted for sealing to the edge,
 bringing together the food item and the receptacle with the shaped portion of the surface
 15 of the food item being proximate to the inner face of the receptacle, and
 attaching the second package part to the first package part at the edge to form the packaged food item with the food item retained in an enclosure formed at least partially via an association between the first and second package parts,
 wherein the first preformed package part and the second package part are formed from
 20 the same sheet of film as a unitary item and folded together around the food item to at least partially form the enclosure.

The first preformed package part and the second package part may be mutually hinged: the folding may be about the hinge as fold axis.

25

The features as set out above in relation to the aforementioned exemplary embodiments are also applicable to this present exemplary embodiment unless evidently inappropriate.

A further exemplary embodiment of the invention provides a packaged food item comprising a
 30 package having an enclosure adapted to hold the food item, wherein the package comprises:

a first preformed package part comprising a self-supporting receptacle having an opening with a flange extending at least partially around the opening, and
 a second package part attached to the flange,
 wherein the enclosure is formed via an association between the first and second
 35 package parts,
 wherein the receptacle is in the form of a sheet having an inner face adapted to conform to a shaped portion of a surface of the food item, and an outer face following the shape of the inner face,

wherein the first preformed package part is a moulded sheet of film and in which the second package part is a sheet of film, and

wherein the food item is retained within the enclosure with the shaped portion of the surface of the food item and the inner face of the receptacle mutually in contact, for instance
5 mated together.

For this exemplary embodiment, the first preformed package part and the second package part may formed from the same sheet of film as a unitary item and folded together to form the package, with the first preformed package part and the second package part mutually hinged.
10

In a further exemplary embodiment of the invention there is provide a packaged a moulded food item wherein the moulded item has a shaped portion formed solidified in contact with an inner face of a mould and a freely set portion formed solidified at an opening of said mould, the packaged food item comprising:

15 a package having an enclosure adapted to hold the food item, wherein the package comprises:

a first preformed package part comprising a self-supporting receptacle having an opening with a flange extending at least partially around the opening, and

a second package part attached to the flange,

20 wherein the enclosure is formed via an association between the first and second package parts,

wherein the inner face of the receptacle is conformed to the same shape as said inner face of said mould whereby the inner face is adapted to conform to a portion of or to the entire shaped portion of the food item,

25 wherein the food item is retained within the enclosure with the shaped portion of the food item and the inner face of the receptacle mutually in contact, for instance mated together, and

wherein the second package part covers the freely-set portion of the moulded item.

30 For this exemplary embodiment, the moulded item may be a cake or a biscuit, for instance formed by baking a dough or a batter in a mould. The first preformed package part and the second package part may formed from the same sheet of film as a unitary item and folded together to form the package, with the first preformed package part and the second package part mutually hinged.

35

Yet a further exemplary embodiment of the invention provides packaged chocolate-based moulded food item wherein the moulded item has a shaped portion formed of chocolate solidified in contact with an inner face of a mould and a freely set portion formed of chocolate solidified at an opening of said mould, the packaged food item comprising:

a package having an enclosure adapted to hold the food item, wherein the package comprises:

- 5 a first preformed package part comprising a self-supporting receptacle having an opening with a flange extending at least partially around the opening, and

a second package part attached to the flange,

wherein the enclosure is formed via an association between the first and second package parts,

wherein the inner face of the receptacle is conformed to the same shape as said inner face of said mould whereby the inner face is adapted to conform to a portion of or

10 the entire shaped portion of the food item,

wherein the food item is retained within the enclosure with the shaped portion of the food item and the inner face of the receptacle mutually in contact, for instance mated together, and

wherein the second package part covers the freely-set portion of the moulded item.

15

For this exemplary embodiment, the moulded item may be a chocolate bar. The first preformed package part and the second package part may be formed from the same sheet of film as a unitary item and folded together to form the package, with the first preformed package part and the second package part mutually hinged.

20

Another exemplary embodiment of the invention provides a method of forming a packaged food item, the method comprising:

- providing a food item,

providing a first preformed package part comprising a self-supporting receptacle having

25 an opening with a flange extending at least partially around the opening, wherein the receptacle is in the form of a sheet having an inner face adapted to conform to a shaped portion of a surface of the food item, and an outer face following the shape of the inner face,

providing a second package part adapted for sealing to the flange

bringing together the food item and the receptacle with the shaped portion of the surface

30 of the food item mated with the inner face of the receptacle, and

sealing the second package part to the first package part at the flange to form the packaged food item with the food item retained in an enclosure formed via an association between the first and second package parts,

wherein the first preformed package part is a moulded sheet of film and in which the

35 second package part is a sheet of film, and

wherein the first preformed package part and the second package part are formed from the same sheet of film as a unitary item and are folded together around the food item to form the enclosure, with the preformed package part and the second package part mutually hinged.

Another exemplary embodiment of the invention provides a method of forming a packaged chocolate-based moulded food item, the method comprising:

- providing a chocolate-based moulded food item,
- providing a first preformed package part comprising a self-supporting receptacle having
- 5 an opening with a flange extending at least partially around the opening, wherein the receptacle is in the form of a sheet having an inner face adapted to conform to a shaped portion of a surface of the food item, and an outer face following the shape of the inner face,
- providing a second package part adapted for sealing to the flange
- bringing together the food item and the receptacle with the shaped portion of the surface
- 10 of the food item in contact with, for instance mated with, the inner face of the receptacle, and sealing the second package part to the first package part at the flange to form the packaged food item with the food item retained in an enclosure formed via an association between the first and second package parts,
- wherein the chocolate-based moulded food item has a shaped portion formed of
- 15 chocolate solidified in contact with an inner face of a mould and a freely set portion formed of chocolate solidified at an opening of said mould, and wherein the inner face of the receptacle is conformed to the same shape as said inner face of said mould, and wherein the second package part covers the freely-set portion of the moulded item.

- 20 For this exemplary embodiment, the chocolate-based moulded food item may be a chocolate bar. The first preformed package part and the second package part may formed from the same sheet of film as a unitary item and folded together to form the package, with the first preformed package part and the second package part mutually hinged.

- 25 Yet another exemplary embodiment of the invention provides a method of forming a packaged baked moulded food item, the method comprising:

- providing a baked moulded food item,
- providing a first preformed package part comprising a self-supporting receptacle having
- an opening with a flange extending at least partially around the opening, wherein the
- 30 receptacle is in the form of a sheet having an inner face adapted to conform to a shaped portion of a surface of the food item, and an outer face following the shape of the inner face,
- providing a second package part adapted for sealing to the flange
- bringing together the food item and the receptacle with the shaped portion of the surface of the food item in contact with, for instance mated with, the inner face of the receptacle, and
- 35 sealing the second package part to the first package part at the flange to form the packaged food item with the food item retained in an enclosure formed via an association between the first and second package parts,
- wherein the baked moulded food item has a shaped portion formed solidified in contact with an inner face of a mould and a freely set portion formed solidified at an opening of said

mould, and wherein the inner face of the receptacle is conformed to the same shape as said inner face of said mould, and wherein the second package part covers the freely-set portion of the moulded item.

- 5 For this exemplary embodiment, the baked moulded food item may be a baked biscuit or a baked cake. The first preformed package part and the second package part may be formed from the same sheet of film as a unitary item and folded together to form the package, with the first preformed package part and the second package part mutually hinged.
- 10 An exemplary embodiment of the invention provides a packaged food item comprising a package having an enclosure adapted to hold the food item, wherein the package comprises:
- a first preformed package part comprising a receptacle having an opening with an edge extending at least partially around the opening, and
 - a second package part attached to the edge,
- 15 wherein the enclosure is at least partially formed via an association between the first and second package parts,
- wherein the receptacle includes an inner face adapted to conform to a shaped portion of a surface of the food item,
 - wherein the enclosure is configured to retain the food item with the shaped portion of the
- 20 surface of the food item being proximate to the inner face of the receptacle, and
- wherein the first package part and the second package part are formed from the same sheet of film as a unitary item and folded together to form the package.

25 The first preformed package part and the second package part may be mutually hinged as set out hereinbefore.

Another exemplary embodiment of the invention provides a package for containing a food item, the package having an enclosure adapted to hold said food item, wherein the package comprises:

- 30 a first preformed package part comprising a receptacle having an opening with an edge extending at least partially around the opening, and
- a second package part attached to the edge,
 - wherein the enclosure is at least partially formed via an association between the first and second package parts, and
- 35 wherein the first package part and the second package part are formed from the same sheet of film as a unitary item and folded together to form the package.

Features of any exemplary embodiment may, where appropriate, be combined with and/or replace a feature of any other exemplary embodiment, as would be apparent to the skilled person, without departing from the scope of the invention as defined by the claims.

5 For a better understanding of the invention, and to show how example embodiments of the same may be carried into effect, reference will be made, by way of example only, to the accompanying diagrammatic Figures, in which:

10 Figure 1A schematically depicts a packaged chocolate bar in accordance with a first embodiment of an aspect of the invention;

Figure 1B schematically depicts the packaged chocolate bar of the first embodiment with the package partially opened;

15 Figure 1C schematically depicts the chocolate bar of the first embodiment with the package completely removed;

20 Figure 2A schematically depicts a packaged chocolate bar in accordance with a second embodiment of an aspect of the invention;

Figure 2B schematically depicts the packaged chocolate bar of the second embodiment with the package partially opened;

25 Figure 3A schematically depicts a packaged chocolate bar in accordance with a third embodiment of an aspect of the invention;

Figure 3B schematically depicts the packaged chocolate bar of the third embodiment with the package partially opened;

30 Figure 3C schematically depicts the chocolate bar of the third embodiment with the package completely removed;

Figure 4A schematically depicts a plan view of a packaged chocolate bar in accordance with a fourth embodiment of an aspect of the invention;

35 Figure 4B schematically depicts a perspective view of the packaged chocolate bar of the fourth embodiment;

Figure 4C schematically depicts the packaged chocolate bar of the fourth embodiment with the package opened but not removed from the chocolate bar.

5 Figure 5A schematically depicts a perspective view of a packaged biscuit in accordance with a fifth embodiment of an aspect of the invention;

Figure 5B schematically depicts a perspective view of the packaged biscuit of the fifth embodiment upside down relative to Figure 5A;

10 Figure 5C schematically depicts the packaged biscuit of the fifth embodiment with the package opened but with the biscuit not removed.

Turning to Figures 1A to 1C, these Figures schematically depict a first exemplary embodiment according to the invention which is a packaged food item 1 wherein the food item is a
15 chocolate bar 2. A first preformed package part 3 includes a receptacle 5 surrounded entirely by a flange 6. A first tab 7 is provided on the flange 6. A second package part 4 is in the form of a flat sheet, and is provided with a second tab 8. The second package part 4 is attached to the flange 6 of the first package part 3 by means of a pressure sensitive adhesive in this embodiment, but it will be appreciated that other sealing means may be employed. The tabs
20 are left unattached so that they may be separated for opening as detailed below.

The inner face 9 of the receptacle 5 is adapted to conform to the shaped upper face of the chocolate bar 2 (upper as shown in the Figures). The first preformed package part 3 has the receptacle 5 in the form of a thin film so that the outer face of receptacle 5 also follows the
25 shape of the inner face 9 such that the pattern on the shaped upper face of the chocolate bar 2 is also shown on the outer face of the receptacle 5 of the packaged food item 1.

In this first exemplary embodiment, the chocolate bar 2 has been formed by moulding as set out hereinbefore, with the shaped upper portion as shown formed of chocolate solidified in
30 contact with an inner face of a mould and the lower face of the chocolate bar 2 is a freely set portion formed of chocolate solidified at an opening of the mould. The second package part 4 covers the freely set portion of the chocolate bar 2 and the inner face 9 of the receptacle 5 is conformed to the same shape as the inner face of the mould used to form the shaped surface of the chocolate bar 2. It will be understood that the chocolate bar of this embodiment will be
35 formed in a mould with the freely set portion upwards and the shaped portion, formed in contact with the mould, downwards. In the Figures for this embodiment, and for the other embodiments shown in the Figures, the chocolate bar is shown upside-down relative to its configuration when originally moulded.

In use, the packaged food item 1 is opened by a user gripping the first tab 7 and second 8 and pulling these apart in order to peel the first package part 3 away from the second package part 4 in order to separate the first and second package parts to allow the chocolate bar 2 to be removed from the package.

5

Figures 2A and 2B schematically depict a second exemplary embodiment according to the invention which is a packaged food item 1 wherein the food item is a chocolate bar 2. A first preformed package part 3 includes a receptacle 5 surrounded entirely by a flange 6. A first tab 7 is provided on the flange 6. A second package part 4 is in the form of a flat sheet, and is provided with a second tab 8. The tabs are offset relative to each other to facilitate gripping by a user or consumer. The second package part 4 is attached to the flange 6 of the first package part 3 by means of a pressure sensitive adhesive in this embodiment, but it will be appreciated that other sealing means may be employed. The tabs (7, 8) are not attached to each other.

15 The inner face 9 of the receptacle 5 is adapted to conform to the shaped upper face of the chocolate bar 2 (upper as shown in the Figures). The first preformed package part 3 has the receptacle 5 in the form of a thin film so that the outer face of receptacle 5 also follows the shape of the inner face 9 such that the pattern on the shaped upper face of the chocolate bar 2 is also shown on the outer face of the receptacle 5 of the packaged food item 1.

20

In this second exemplary embodiment, the chocolate bar 2 has again been formed by moulding as set out hereinbefore.

25 In use, the packaged food item 1 is opened by a user gripping the first tab 7 and second tab 8 and pulling these apart in order (as shown by arrow X) to peel the first package part 3 away from the second package part 4 in order to separate the first and second package parts to allow the chocolate bar 2 to be removed from the package.

30 Figures 3A to 3C schematically depict a third exemplary embodiment according to the invention which is a packaged food item 1 wherein the food item is a chocolate bar 2. A first preformed package part 3 includes a receptacle 5 surrounded entirely by a flange 6. A first tab 7 is provided on the flange 6. A second package part 4 is in the form of a flat sheet, and is provided with a second tab 8. The second package part 4 is attached to the flange 6 of the first package part 3 by means of a pressure sensitive adhesive in this embodiment, but it will be appreciated that other sealing means may be employed.

35

The inner face 9 of the receptacle 5 is adapted to conform to the shaped upper face of the chocolate bar 2 (upper as shown in the Figures). The first preformed package part 3 has the receptacle 5 in the form of a thin film so that the outer face of receptacle 5 also follows the

shape of the inner face 9 such that the pattern on the shaped upper face of the chocolate bar 2 is also shown on the outer face of the receptacle 5 of the packaged food item 1.

5 In this third exemplary embodiment, the chocolate bar 2 has again been formed by moulding as set out hereinbefore.

10 In use, the packaged food item 1 is opened by a user gripping the first tab 7 and second tab 8 and pulling these apart in order (as shown by arrow X) to peel the first package part 3 away from the second package part 4 in order to separate the first and second package parts to allow the chocolate bar 2 to be removed from the package.

15 Figures 4A to 4C schematically depict a fourth exemplary embodiment according to the invention, which is a packaged food item 1 wherein the food item is again a chocolate bar 2. A first preformed package part 3 includes a receptacle 5 surrounded partially by a flange 6. A first tab 7 is provided on the flange 6. A second package part 4 is in the form of a flat sheet, and is formed as a unitary item with the first package part 3, with the first 3 and second 4 package parts joined at a hinge. The second package part 4 is also provided with a second tab 8. The second package part 4 is attached to the flange 6 of the first package part 3 by means of a pressure sensitive adhesive in this embodiment, but it will be appreciated that other
20 sealing means may be employed. The tabs 7, 8 are offset relative to each other in the package 1 in order to facilitate gripping when it is desired to open the pack.

25 The inner face 9 of the receptacle 5 is adapted to conform to the shaped upper face of the chocolate bar 2 (upper as shown in the Figures). The first preformed package part 3 has the receptacle 5 in the form of a thin film so that the outer face of receptacle 5 also follows the shape of the inner face 9 such that the pattern on the shaped upper face of the chocolate bar 2 is also shown on the outer face of the receptacle 5 of the packaged food item 1. In this embodiment, the shaped surface of the chocolate bar 2 includes text in relief which is reproduced in relief on the outer face of receptacle 5 and so is visible to a viewer of the
30 packaged food item 1.

In this fourth exemplary embodiment, the chocolate bar 2 has again been formed by moulding as set out hereinbefore.

35 In use, the packaged food item 1 of this fourth embodiment is opened by a user gripping the first tab 7 and second tab 8 and pulling these apart in order (as shown by arrow X) to peel the first package part 3 away from the second package part 4 in order to separate the first and second package parts to allow the chocolate bar 2 to be removed from the package.

- Figures 5A to 5C schematically depict a fifth exemplary embodiment according to the invention, which is a packaged food item 1 wherein the food item is a moulded biscuit. A first preformed package part 3 includes a receptacle 5 surrounded partially by a flange 6. A second package part 4 is in the form of a flat sheet. The second package part 4 is also provided with a second tab 8 which also includes a hole 11 adapted to accept a finger to assist with gripping and pulling the second tab 8. The second package part 4 is attached to the flange 6 of the first package part 3 by means of a pressure sensitive adhesive in this embodiment, but it will be appreciated that other sealing means may be employed.
- 10 The inner face (not shown) of the receptacle 5 is adapted to conform to the shaped face of the biscuit 2 (lower face as shown in the Figures 5A, 5C). The first preformed package part 3 has the receptacle 5 in the form of a thin film so that the outer face of receptacle 5 also follows the shape of the inner face 9 such that the pattern on the shaped face of the moulded biscuit 2 is also shown on the outer face of the receptacle 5 of the packaged food item 1. This is shown in
- 15 Figure 5B. In this embodiment, the shaped surface of the biscuit is in the form of an animal.

In this fifth exemplary embodiment, the biscuit been formed by baking in a mould as set out hereinbefore. It will be understood that the biscuit 2 may be replaced in this fifth embodiment by an alternative food item such as a baked, moulded cake.

20

- In use, the packaged food item 1 of this fifth embodiment is opened by a user gripping the second tab 8, for instance by putting a finger through hole 11, and pulling the second package part away from the first package part as shown in Figure 5C (as shown by arrow X) to peel the second package part 4 away from the first package part 3 in order to separate the first and
- 25 second package parts to allow the biscuit 2 to be removed from the package.

- Although a few exemplary embodiments have been shown and described, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications might be made without departing from the scope of the invention, as defined in the appended claims. For
- 30 instance, although reference has been made to a moulded chocolate bar in the Examples set out above, it will be understood that the chocolate bar in the Examples may be substituted by a baked moulded cake or biscuit yet still be according to the invention.

- In summary, there is disclosed a packaged food item which has a package holding the food
- 35 item, with a preformed part having a receptacle with a peripheral edge, and second part sealed to the edge, forming an enclosure holding the food item. The receptacle is a sheet having an inner face conforming to a shaped portion of a surface of the food item, and may have an outer face following the shape of the inner face. The food item is retained within the enclosure with

the shaped portion of the surface of the food item and the inner face of the receptacle mutually in proximity.

5 The food item is securely retained with the outer face of the receptacle providing, to a viewer of the package, a clear display of the shape of the food item, permitting any display, graphics or text, on the surface of the item to be visible on the outer face of the package, without the need to apply pressure or heat to conform the package to the shaped portion of the packaged food item.

10 Attention is directed to all papers and documents which are filed concurrently with or previous to this specification in connection with this application and which are open to public inspection with this specification.

15 All of the features disclosed in this specification (including any accompanying claims and drawings), and/or all of the steps of any method or process so disclosed, may be combined in any combination, except combinations where at least some of such features and/or steps are mutually exclusive.

20 Each feature disclosed in this specification (including any accompanying claims and drawings) may be replaced by alternative features serving the same, equivalent or similar purpose, unless expressly stated otherwise. Thus, unless expressly stated otherwise, each feature disclosed is one example only of a generic series of equivalent or similar features.

25 The invention is not restricted to the details of the foregoing embodiment(s). The invention extends to any novel one, or any novel combination, of the features disclosed in this specification (including any accompanying claims and drawings), or to any novel one, or any novel combination, of the steps of any method or process so disclosed.

Claims

1. A packaged food item comprising a package having an enclosure adapted to hold the food item, wherein the package comprises:
 - a first package part comprising a receptacle having an opening with an edge extending at least partially around the opening, and
 - a second package part attached to the edge,
 - wherein the enclosure is at least partially formed via an association between the first and second package parts,
 - wherein the receptacle includes an inner face adapted to conform to a shaped portion of a surface of the food item,
 - wherein the enclosure is configured to retain the food item with the shaped portion of the surface of the food item being proximate to the inner face of the receptacle,
 - wherein the edge comprises a flange extending at least partially around the opening, and the second package part is attached to the flange,
 - wherein the second package part is peelably, re-attachably sealed to the first package part at the flange,
 - wherein the first package part and the second package part are formed from the same sheet of film as a unitary item and folded together to form the package, and
 - wherein the second package part is a substantially flat piece of film.
2. The packaged food item of claim 1 wherein the first package part is a preformed package part.
3. The packaged food item of claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the receptacle includes an outer face following the shape of the inner face.
4. The packaged food item of claim 2 or claim 3 in which the preformed package part is a moulded sheet of film.
5. The packaged food item of claim 4 in which the preformed package part is a moulded sheet of, or comprising, a polymer film.
6. The packaged food item of claim 4 wherein the moulded sheet of film is a laminate sheet comprising one or more layers of polymer and/or metal.
7. The packaged food item of any one of claims 2 to 6 in which the preformed package part is self-supporting.

8. The packaged food item of any one of claims 2 to 6 in which the first package part is non-self-supporting.
9. The packaged food item of any one of claims 1 to 8 wherein the first package part and the second package part are mutually hinged.
10. The packaged food item of any one of claims 1 to 9 wherein the first package part comprises a first tab adapted for gripping whereby the first preformed package part may be held and pulled for separation of first and second package parts to open the package.
11. The packaged food item of any one of claims 1 to 10 wherein the second package part comprises a second tab adapted for gripping whereby the first preformed package part may be held and pulled for separation of first and second package parts to open the package.
12. The packaged food item of any one of claims 1 to 11 wherein the first and/or second package parts are formed of a plastically deformable material whereby the package may be manually compacted for disposal following removal from the food item.
13. The packaged food item of any one of claims 1 to 12 wherein the receptacle has a surface area and at least 20% of the surface area of the inner face of the receptacle is arcuate.
14. The packaged food item of any one of claims 1 to 13 wherein the outer face of the package conforms to the shape of the packaged food item.
15. The packaged food item of any one of claims 1 to 14 wherein the enclosure has a volume and the packaged food item has a volume, and the volume of the enclosure is less than 110% of the volume of the packaged food item.
16. The packaged food item of any one of claims 1 to 15 wherein the enclosure is arranged to closely fit to the packaged food item whereby movement of the food item relative to the enclosure is restricted.
17. The packaged food item of any one of claims 1 to 16 wherein the food item has a surface area and at least 60% of the surface area of the food item is in contact with the inner face of the enclosure.

18. The packaged food item of any one of claims 1 to 17 wherein the food item and the inner face of the receptacle are mutually mated whereby the food item is retainable within the second package part upon inversion thereof with the first package part fully or partly removed.
19. The packaged food item of any one of claims 1 to 18 wherein the inner face of the receptacle includes portions having both negative and positive curvatures relative to an inside of the receptacle.
20. The packaged food item of any one of claims 1 to 19 wherein the receptacle comprises planar portions suitable for display of graphics.
21. The packaged food item of any one of claims 1 to 20 wherein the food item is a moulded item which is a chocolate-based moulded item or a baked moulded item.
22. The packaged food item of claim 21 wherein the moulded item has a shaped portion formed solidified in contact with an inner face of a mould and a freely set portion formed solidified at an opening of said mould.
23. The packaged food item of claim 22 wherein the inner face of the receptacle is conformed to the same shape as said inner face of said mould.
24. The packaged food item of any one of claims 22 or 23 wherein the second package part covers the freely-set portion of the moulded item.
25. The packaged food item of any one of claims 21 to 24 wherein the moulded item is a chocolate bar.
26. The packaged food item of any one of claims 21 to 24 wherein the moulded item is a biscuit or a cake.
27. The packaged food item of any one of claims 1 to 26 which is configured to permit a consumer to eat the food item without having to touch an outer surface of the food item directly.
28. The packaged food item of any one of claims 1 to 27 wherein the food item has a thickness greater than or equal to a width and a length greater than or equal to the width, wherein the ratio thickness/length is less than 0.3.
29. A method of forming a packaged food item, the method comprising:

providing a food item,
 providing a first package part comprising a receptacle having an opening with an edge extending at least partially around the opening, wherein the receptacle includes an inner face adapted to conform to a shaped portion of a surface of the food item,
 providing a second package part adapted for sealing to the edge,
 bringing together the food item and the receptacle with the shaped portion of the surface of the food item being proximate to the inner face of the receptacle, and
 attaching the second package part to the first package part at the edge to form the packaged food item with the food item at least partially retained in an enclosure formed via an association between the first and second package parts,
 wherein the second package part is a substantially flat sheet of film,
 wherein the edge comprises a flange extending at least partially around the opening and the second package part is attached to the flange,
 wherein the first package part and the second package part are formed from the same sheet of film as a unitary item and are folded together around the food item to form the enclosure, and
 wherein the second package part is peelably, re-attachably sealed to the first package part at the flange.

30. The method of claim 29 wherein the first package part and the second package part are mutually hinged.

31. The method of any one of claims 29 or 30 wherein the food item is a moulded item which is a chocolate-based moulded item or a baked moulded item.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein the food item is a chocolate bar.

33. The method of claim 31 wherein the food item is a biscuit or a cake.

34. The method of any one of claims 31 to 33 wherein the moulded item has a shaped portion formed solidified in contact with an inner face of a mould and a freely set portion formed solidified at an opening of said mould, and wherein the inner face of the receptacle is conformed to the same shape as a portion of the or the entire said inner face of said mould.

35. The method of claim 34 wherein the second package part covers the freely-set portion of the moulded item.

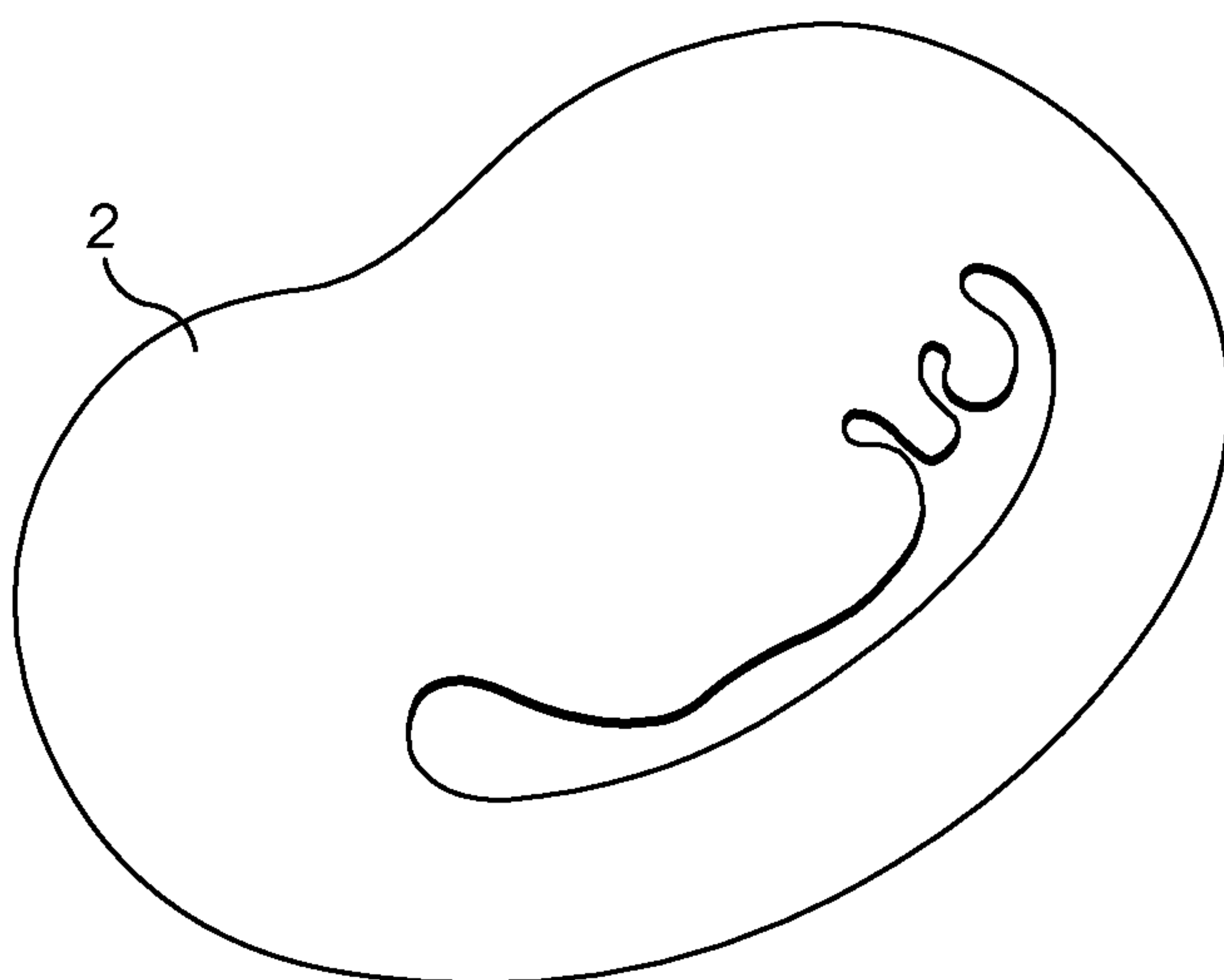
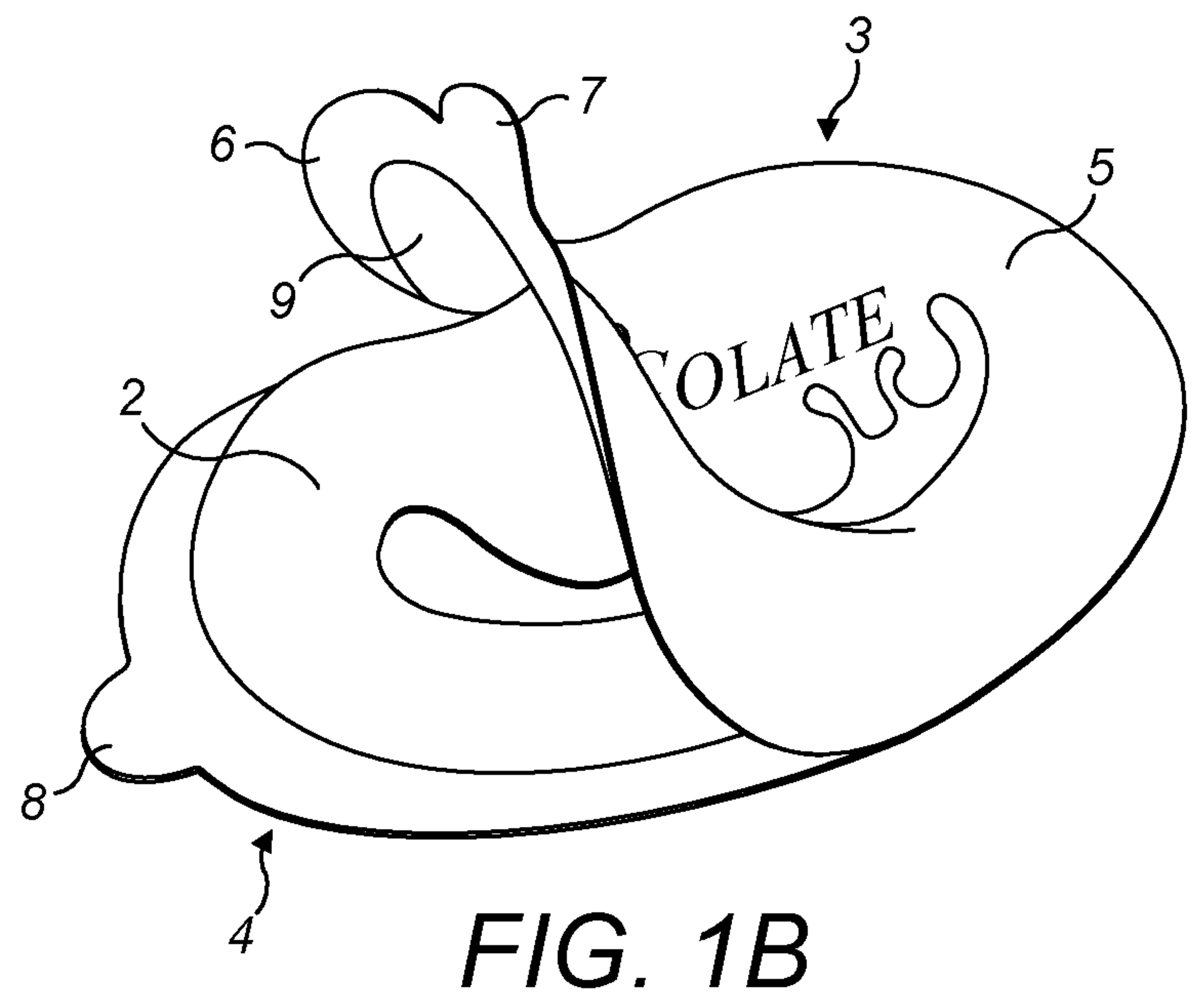
36. The method of any one of claims 29 to 35 wherein the outer face of the receptacle is printed prior to formation from a flat sheet, with the printing onto the flat sheet taking into account a subsequent distortion of the flat sheet when deformed to form the receptacle.
37. A package for containing a food item, the package having an enclosure adapted to hold said food item, wherein the package comprises:
- a first package part comprising a receptacle having an opening with an edge extending at least partially around the opening, and
 - a second package part attached to the edge,
- wherein the enclosure is at least partially formed via an association between the first and second package parts,
- wherein the first package part and the second package part are formed from the same sheet of film as a unitary item and folded together to form the package
- wherein the receptacle includes an inner face adapted to conform to a shaped portion of a surface of said food item,
- wherein the enclosure is configured to retain said food item with the shaped portion of the surface of the food item being proximate to the inner face of the receptacle,
- wherein the edge comprises a flange extending at least partially around the opening, and the second package part is attached to the flange,
- wherein the second package part is peelably, re-attachably sealed to the first package part at the flange, and
- wherein the second package part is a substantially flat piece of film.

38. The packaged food item of claim 4, in which the preformed package part is a moulded sheet of film of thickness less than 100 μm .

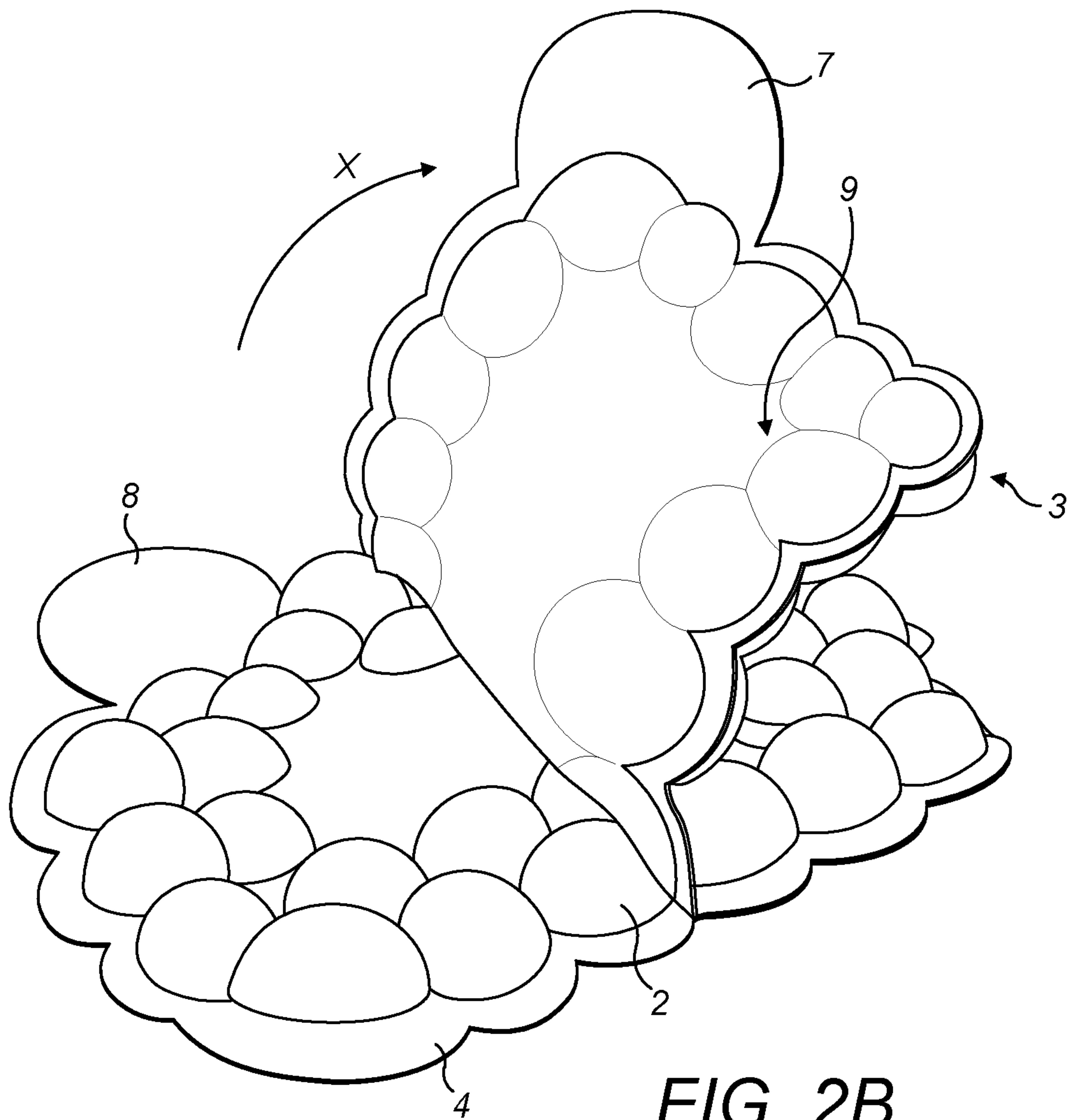
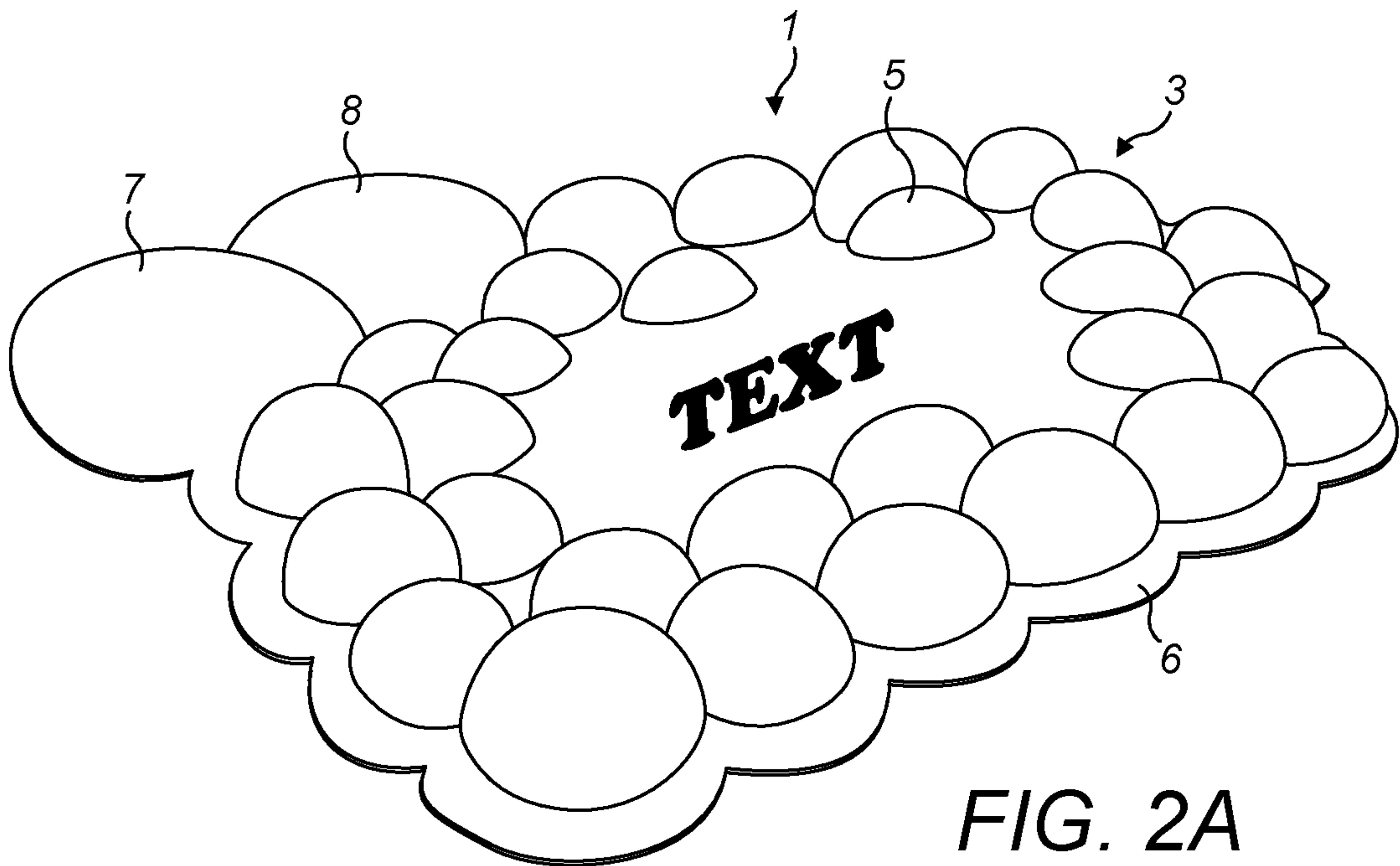
39. The packaged food item of claim 28 wherein the ratio width/length is less than 0.3.

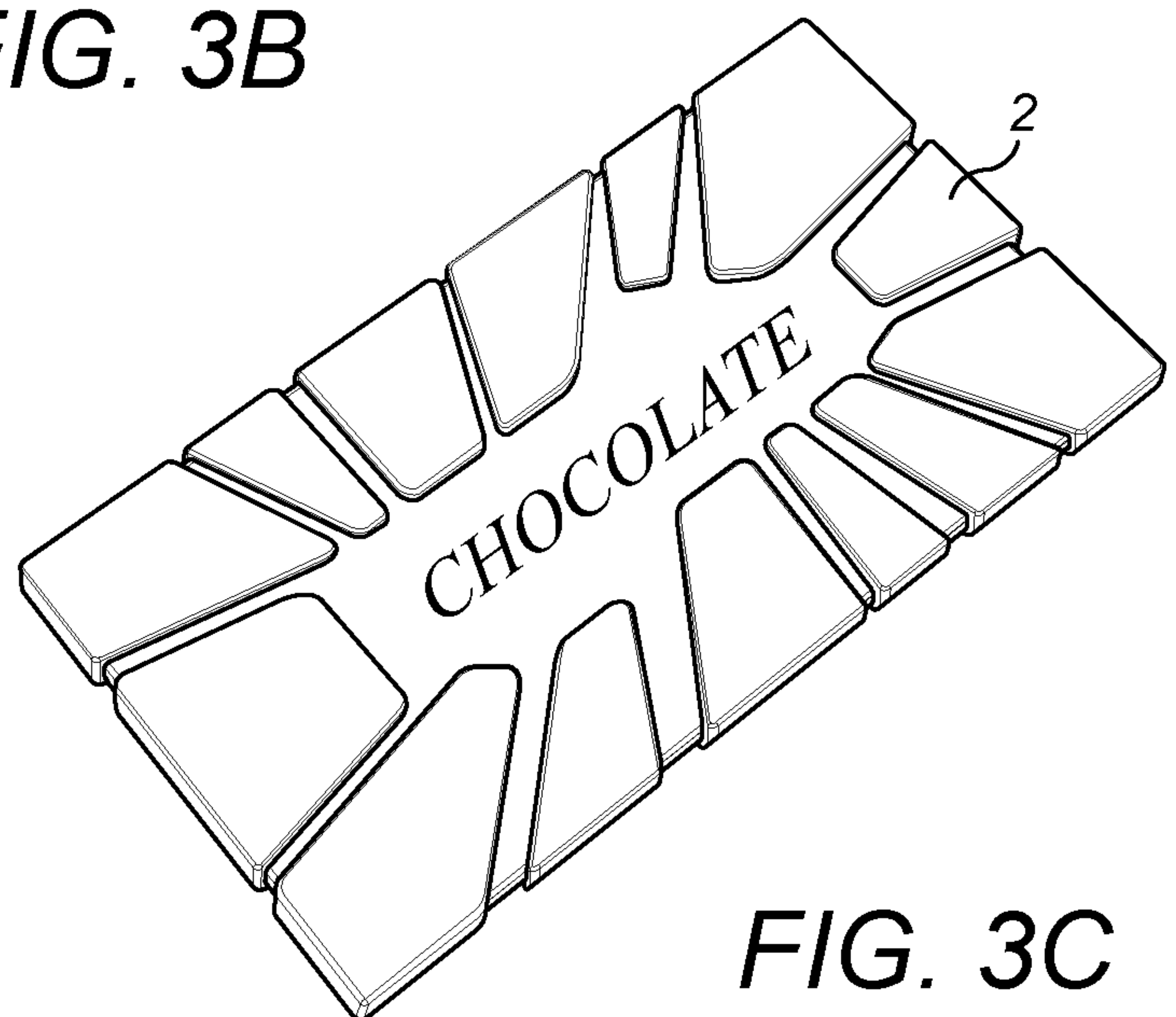
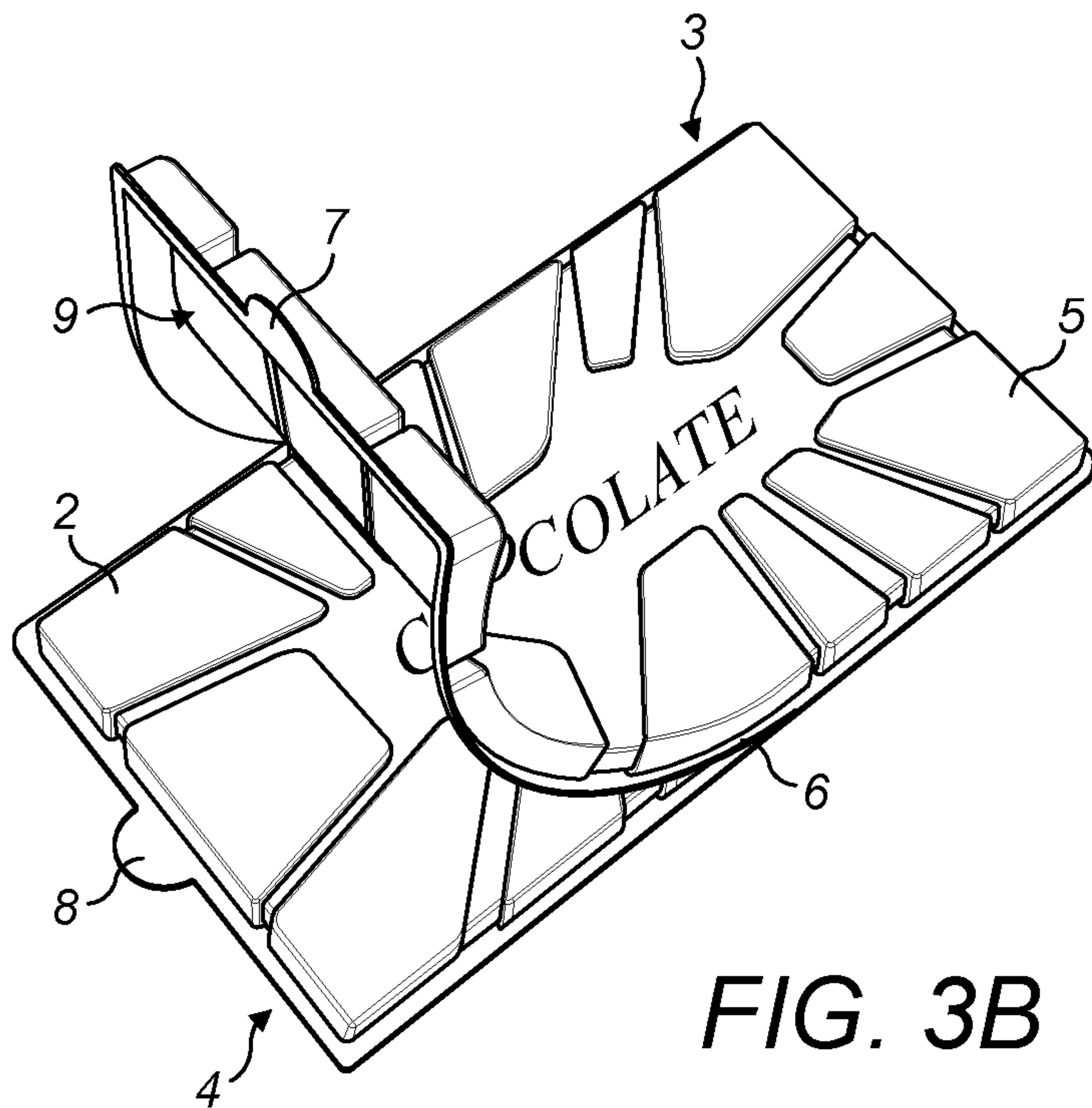
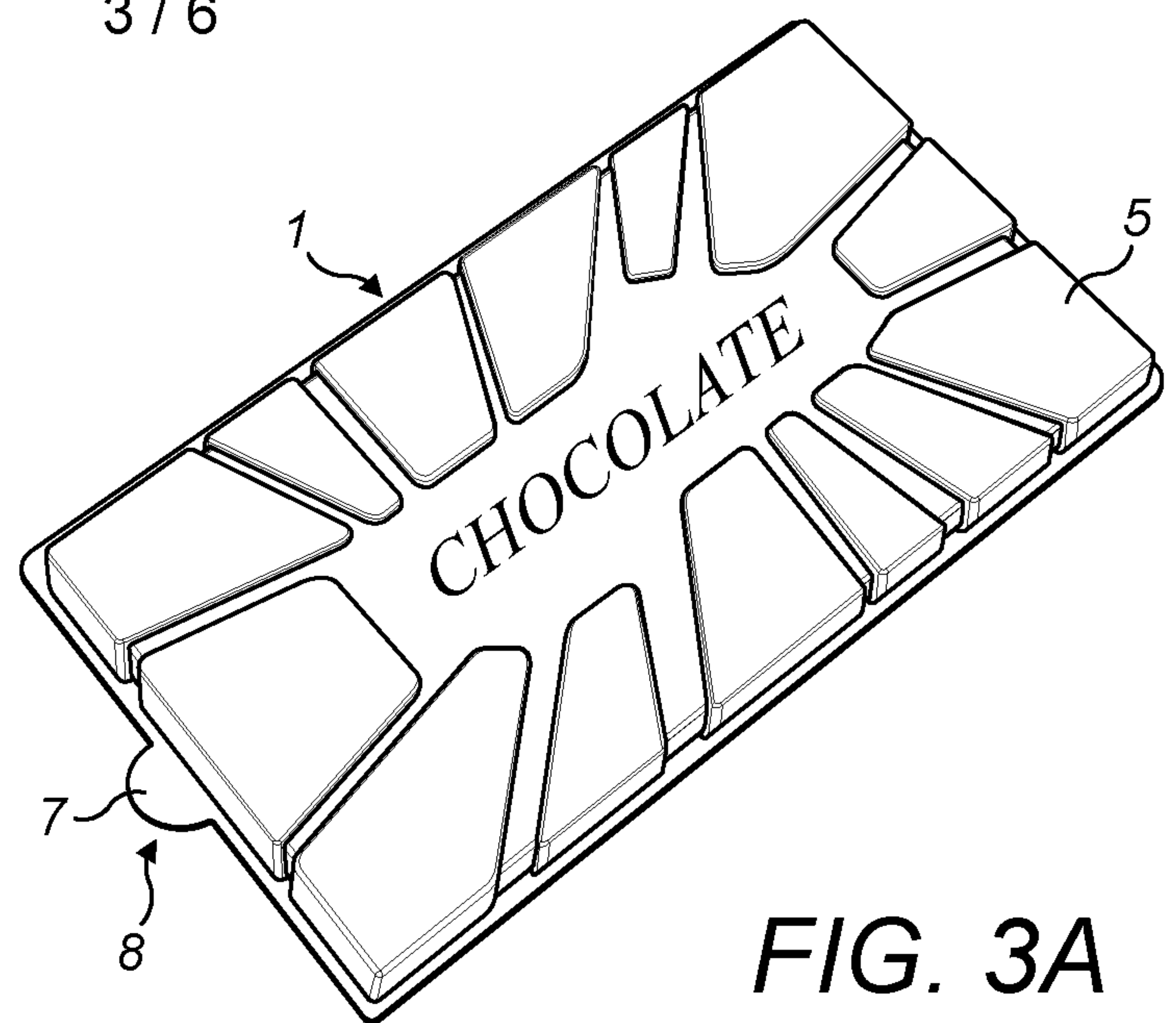
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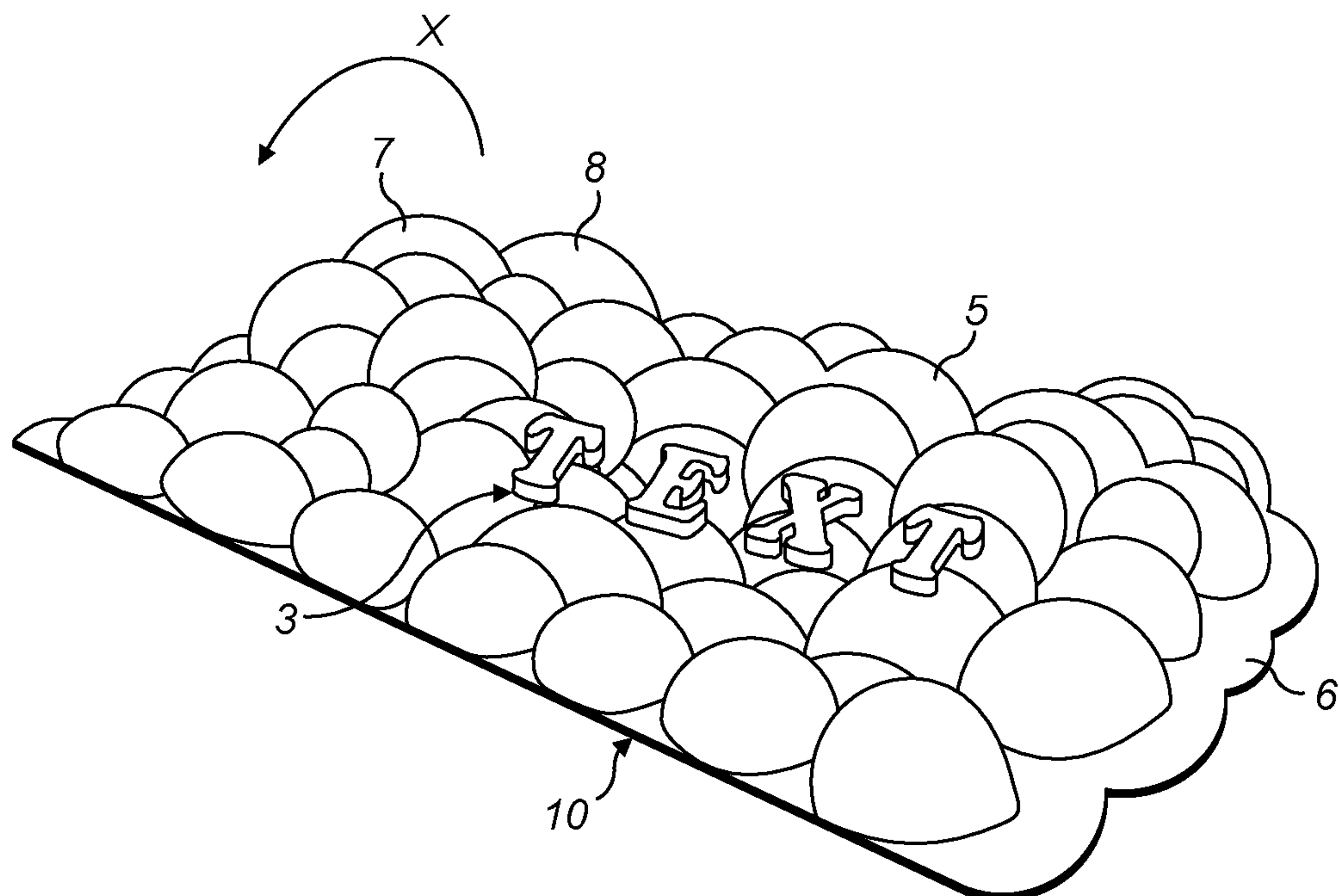
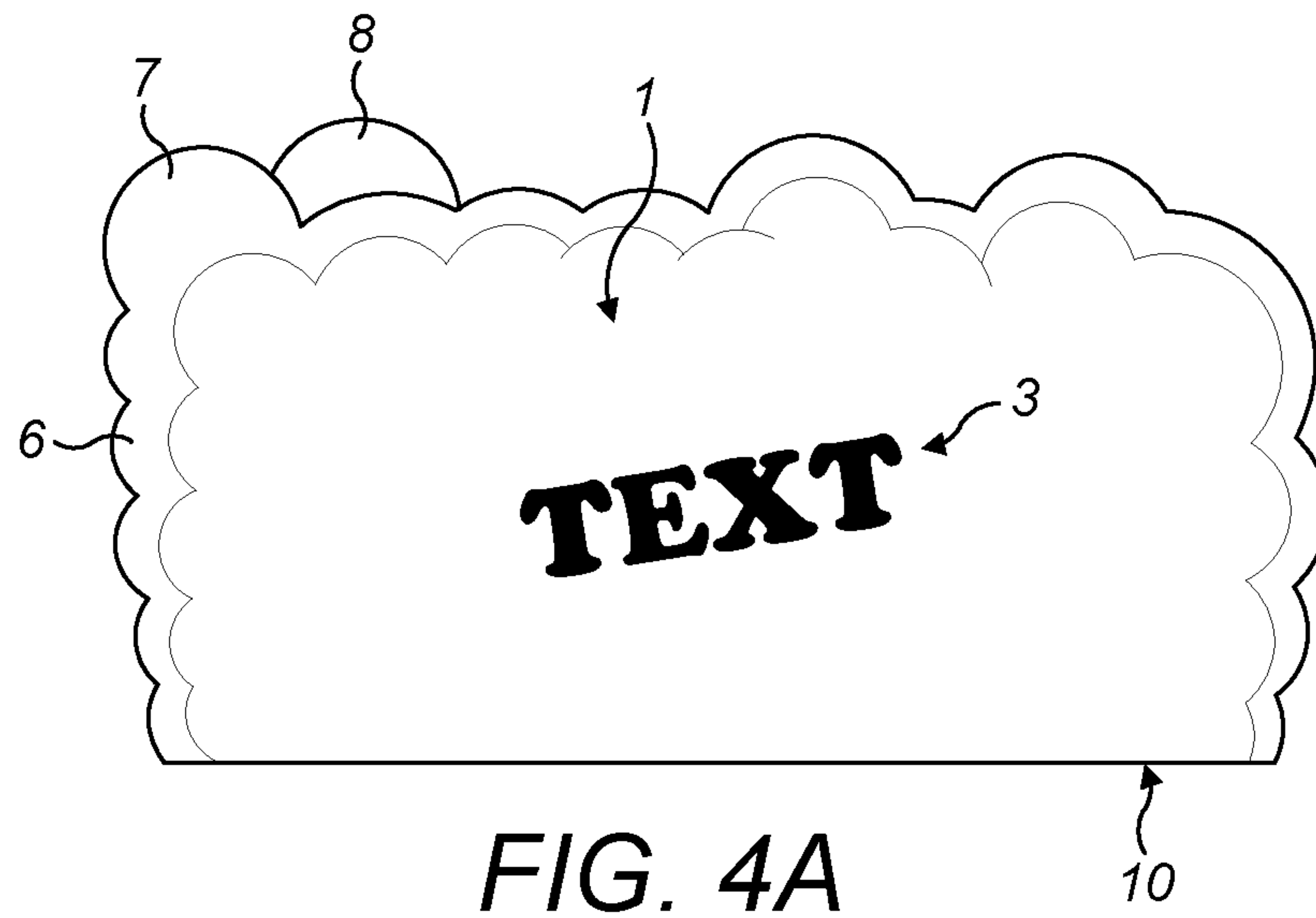


FIG. 4B

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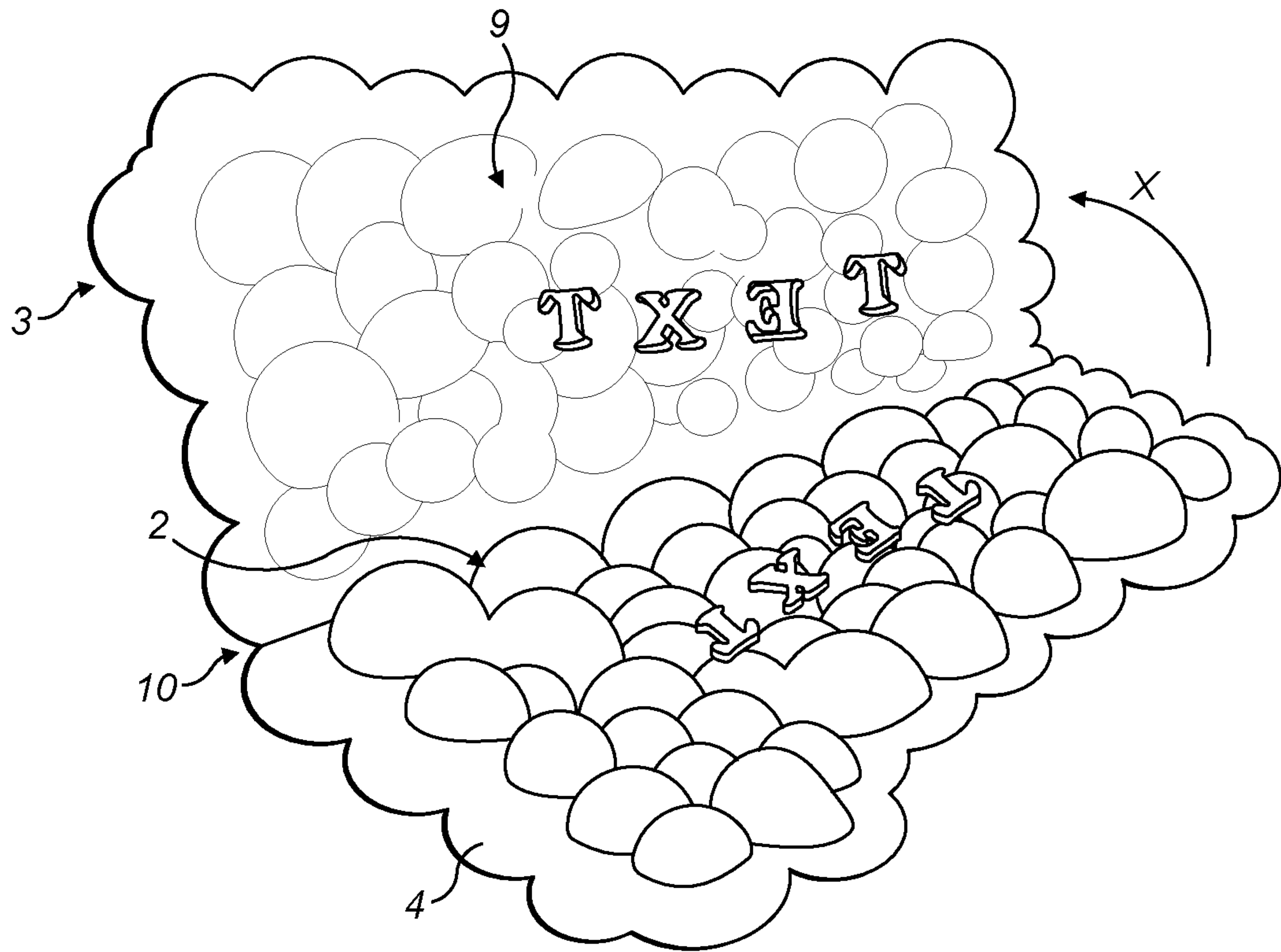


FIG. 4C

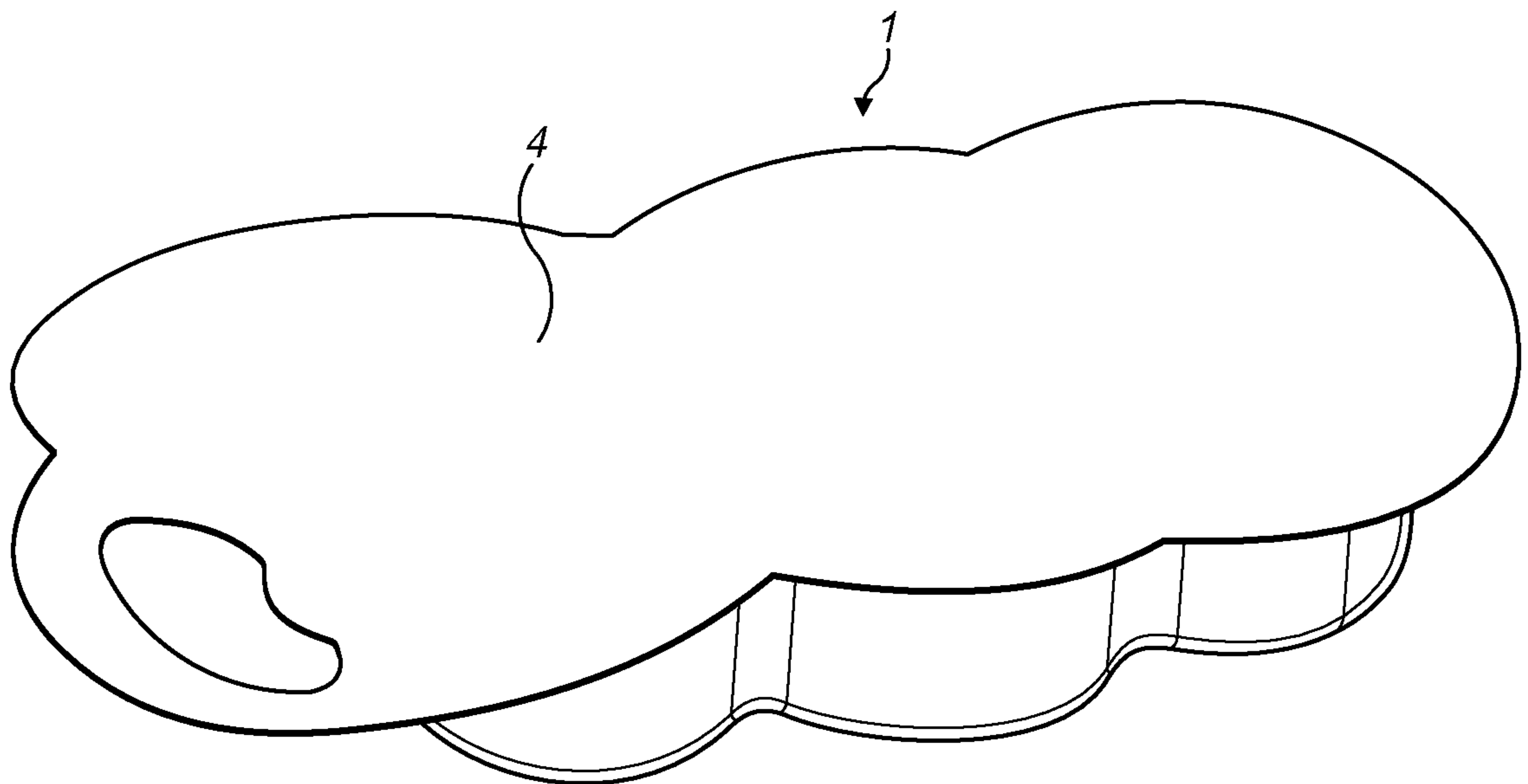
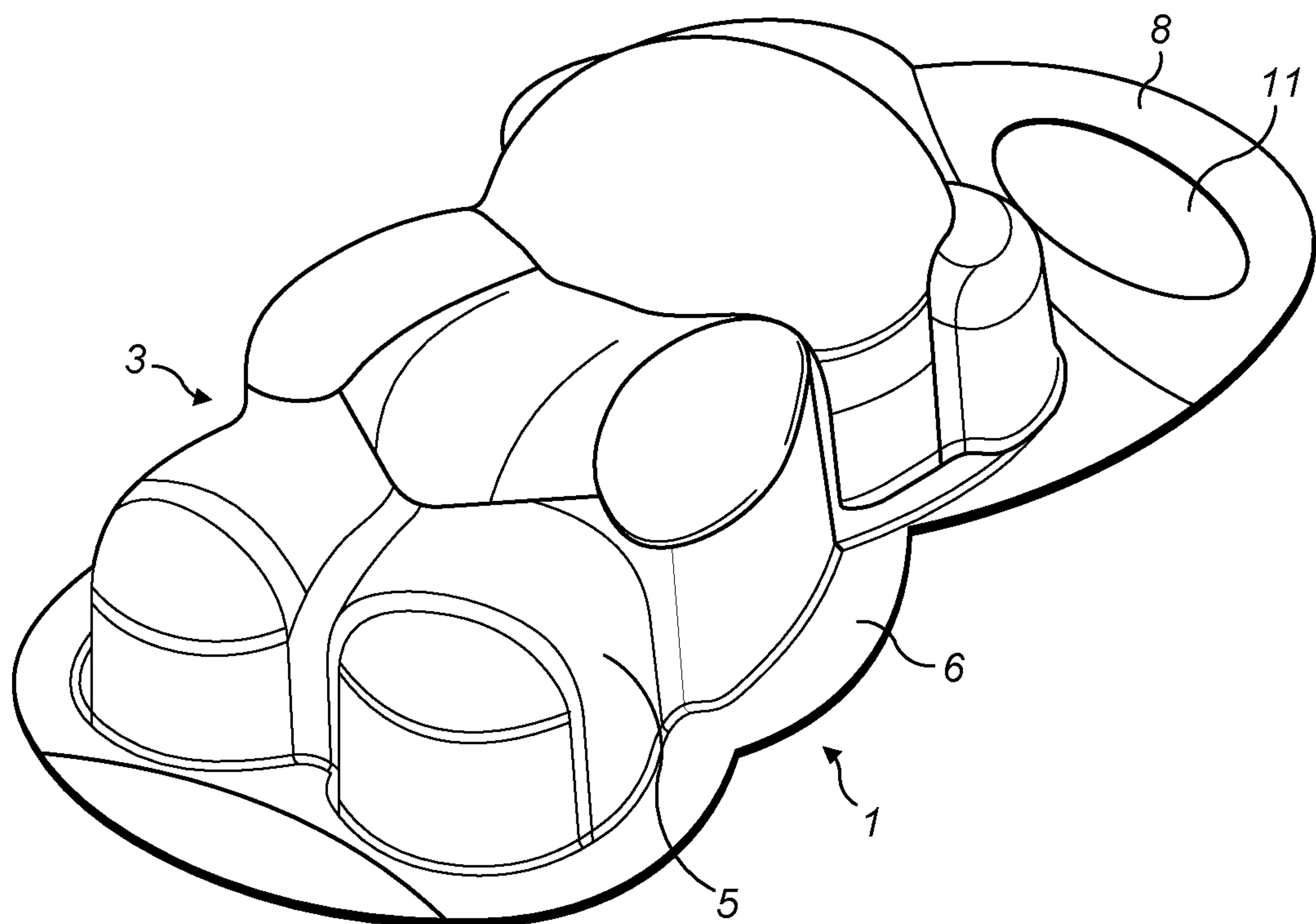
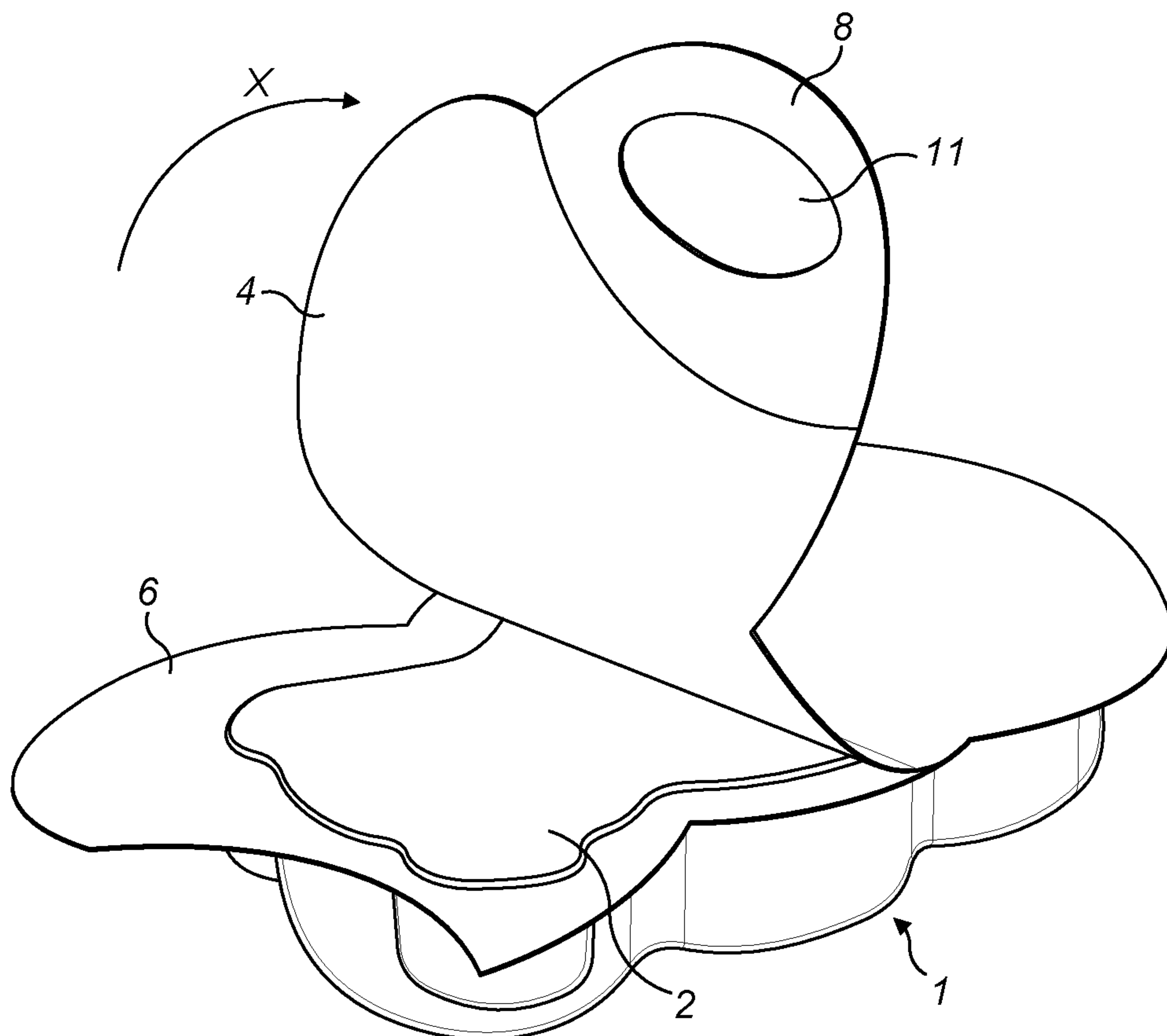


FIG. 5A

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**FIG. 5B****FIG. 5C**

