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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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A cooling container is provided for keeping food held in any size food container cool during serving. The cooling container is made from flexible fabric with elastic about its edge. The fabric has a plurality of cooling chambers filled with a cooling medium about its surface. The cooling container is placed into a freezer until the cooling medium is frozen. Then, the cooling container may be placed around a food container by stretching its elastic portion around the food container. If the cooling container thaws, it can be easily removed and replaced with a second frozen cooling container. The first cooling container may be re-used or disposed of.

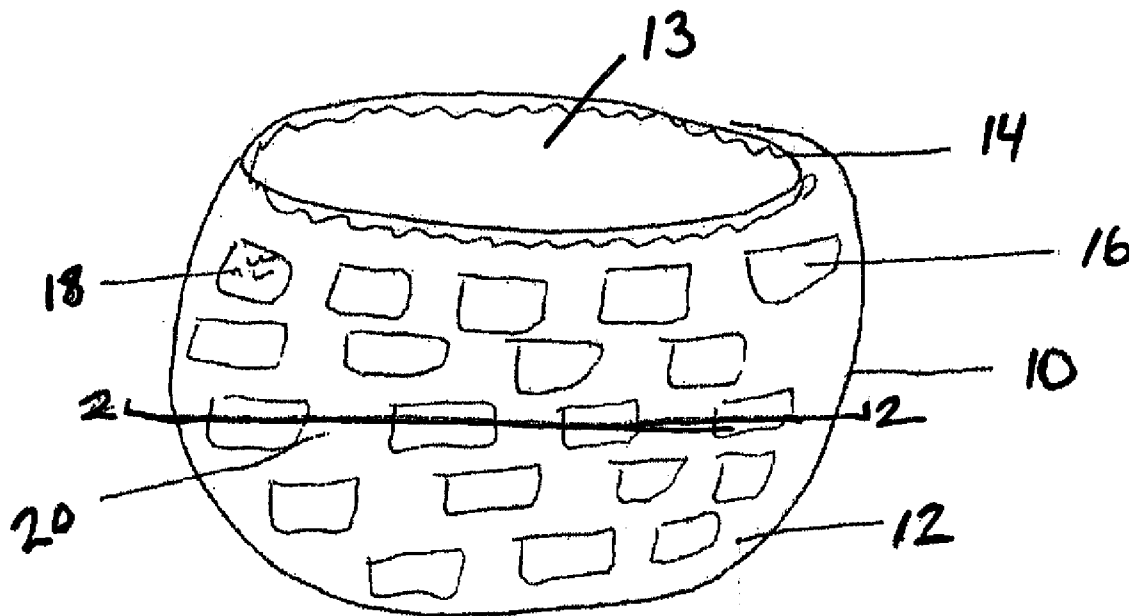
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Figure 1

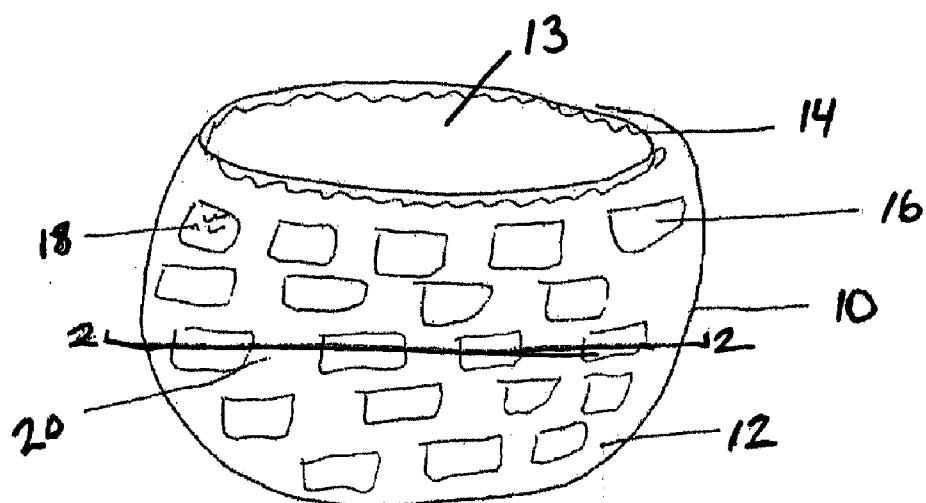
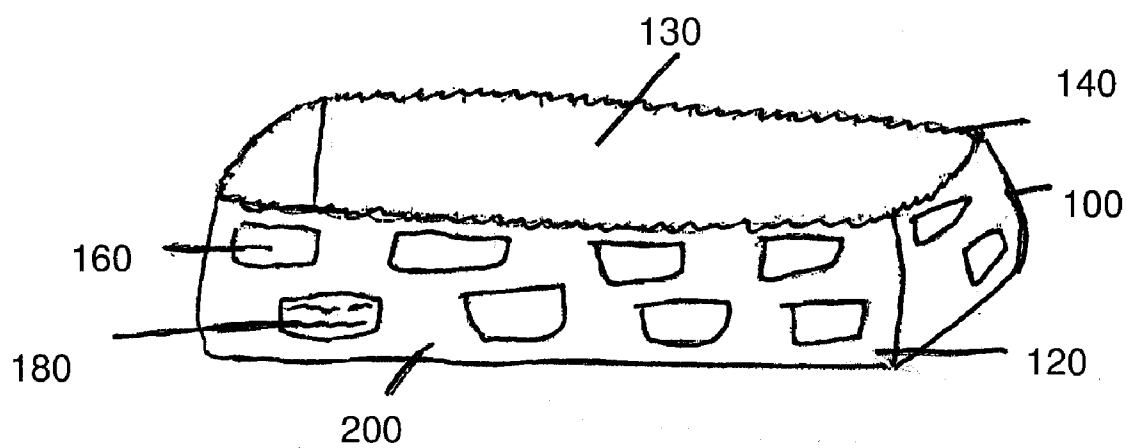


Figure 2



Figure 3



COOLING CONTAINER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to a cooling container used to keep food held by various sized containers chilled for serving purposes.

[0003] 2. Discussion of Relevant Prior Art

[0004] The use of various types of self-contained cooling containers is known in the art. Current cooling containers interact with specific sized food containers. The need exists for a more flexible cooling dish that interacts with consumers existing food containers so that a consumer would be able to use one cooling dish for any number of food containers that they currently own. Furthermore, when current cooling containers thaw, some cooling containers double as food containers and must be replaced with another manufactured cooling container requiring emptying food from one cooling container to another. This causes inconvenience for the consumer because they must have multiple cooling containers. A need also exists for an inexpensive cooling container that can be discarded after use.

[0005] While these devices offer cooling for food containers, the need exists for a more flexible, inexpensive cooling dish system that allows for various sized containers.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The present invention provides an inexpensive cooling container that is usable with various sized food containers.

[0007] Still another object of the present invention is to provide a new cooling container that maintains food held in containers cool during serving.

[0008] To this end, the present invention generally comprises a cooling container made of flexible material designed to fit securely around the outer surface of a serving bowl or dish. An opening is provided that is surrounded by an elastic edge. The cooling container has a number of chambers that are filled with a cooling fluid. When the container is placed in a freezer, the cooling fluid freezes. Once frozen, the cooling container may be placed around any food container by placing a food container in the opening of the cooling container. The elastic edge can be stretched to aid in placing the cooling container around the food container. The frozen fluid in the cooling chambers retains the coolness of the food in the food container. When the cooling container has thawed, it may be easily replaced by another cooling container by simply removing the first cooling container and replacing it with a second frozen cooling container. The first cooling container may be refrozen for future use or may be discarded. The material used for the cooling container could be made of washable fabric to allow cleaning of the cooling container prior to re-use.

[0009] The objects of the invention, along with the various features of novelty, which characterize the invention, are pointed out in the claims annexed to and forming a part of this disclosure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] FIG. 1 is a view of the cooling dish according to the present invention.

[0011] FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view of the present invention taken along the 2-2 line of FIG. 1.

[0012] FIG. 3 is a view of a further embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0013] With reference now to FIGS. 1 and 2, a new cooling dish 10 embodying the principles and concepts of the present invention will be described.

[0014] A cooling container 10 is made from flexible material and forms a flexible sheet 12. The flexible sheet 12 must have enough elasticity to permit the material to conform to the shape of various containers. The flexible sheet 12 further can be made from washable fabric which would allow for cleaning the cooling container 10 prior to re-use. The flexible sheet 12 has a plurality of closed chambers 16. The chambers 16 are space about the flexible sheet 12. As can be seen in FIG. 2, the chambers 16 are bubble like in appearance and protrude from the flexible sheet 12. Spaces 20, see FIG. 2, are provided between chambers 16 to allow the flexible sheet to have flexibility when frozen. These chambers 16 can have any number of shapes not limited to round, oval, rectangular or square. These chambers 16 are filled with cooling fluid 18 during manufacturing. The fluid 18 can comprise any known cooling substance such as water, gel, or the like. When the cooling container 10 is placed in a freezer, the cooling fluid 18 in the cooling chambers freezes offering greater cooling when in use as the back surface 22 of the cooling chamber is placed in direct contact with a food container. The cooling dish 10 is provided with elastic 14 about its opening 13. The elastic 14 insures a snug fit of the cooling container around bowl when in use by keeping the cooling container aligned with the food container. The shape of the cooling container resembles a shower cap having a plurality of bubble shaped cooling chambers disposed about its surface.

[0015] To employ the cooling container 10, the container 10 is placed in a freezer to freeze the cooling fluid 18 disposed in cooling chambers 16. Once frozen, the cooling container 10 is placed around a food container (not shown) so that the back portions 22 of the cooling chambers is in direct contact with the food container. The opening 13 of the cooling container is aligned with an opening of the food container so that food can be easily removed from the food container without restriction. The elastic portion 14 may be stretched to help place the food container in the cooling container. The elastic portion is then released and aligned with the edge of a food container insuring a snug fit about the container. If the cooling fluid 18 in the chambers 16 thaws, the cooling container may be removed and replaced with a second cooling dish from the freezer. The cooling container may be used multiple times or may be it may be disposed of.

[0016] FIG. 3 shows an alternative embodiment of the invention. Here the cooling container 100 has a more rectangular shape. This rectangular shape is more advantageous for rectangular shaped food containers. As the shape of the cooling container will more closely match that of the food container this insures that the back sides of cooling chambers 160 have better contact with the food containers. Like the embodiment described hereinabove, the cooling chambers 160 are filled with cooling fluid 180 that freezes when the cooling container 100 is placed in a freezer. The opening 130 of the cooling container 100 is surrounded with elastic 140. The elastic 140 can be stretched to aid in placing the cooling container 100 around a food container. As this elastic retracts, it reduces the size of the opening securing the cooling container about the food container. The cooling container 140 is

further supplied with spaces **120** between the cooling chambers **160** so that the cooling container maintains flexibility when frozen.

[0017] With respect to the above description, it is to be realized that the cooling container may be made in a variety of sizes and shapes to accommodate different sized food containers and that all such suitable modifications and equivalents fall with the scope of the invention.

We hereby claim:

1. A cooling container comprising:
flexible sheet having an edge and a plurality of cooling chambers; and,
an elastic means disposed about the edge of said flexible sheet.
2. The cooling container of claim 1, further comprising a cooling medium disposed in said cooling chambers.
3. The cooling container of claim 1, wherein said cooling medium comprises water or gel.
4. The cooling container of claim 1, wherein said cooling chambers have no contact with adjacent cooling chambers.
5. A method of keeping a food container chilled comprising:

freezing a cooling container having an edge and a plurality of cooling chambers disposed thereon, said cooling chambers being filled with cooling fluid;
stretching an elastic edge of said cooling container to increase the opening of said cooling container;
placing a food container into the opening of said cooling container.

6. The method of keeping a food container chilled of claim 5, further comprising:
aligning the opening of said cooling container with an opening of a food container.
7. The method of keeping a food container chilled of claim 5, further comprising:
aligning a back side of said cooling chambers with an outside surface of a food container.
8. The method of keeping a food container chilled of claim 5, further comprising:
removing said cooling container upon thawing of said cooling fluid and replacing said cooling container with a second cooling container having a plurality of cooling chambers filled with cooling fluid wherein said cooling fluid of said second cooling container is frozen.

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