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(51) **International Patent Classification (Int.Cl.6):** A47J 36/00

(54) **Title:** A Maize-Meal Cooker

(57) **Abstract:**

This invention relates to a maize meal cooker, comprising a cooking bowl, a blender having a paddle with spaced rod mixing elements arranged to stir a mixture of maize meal and water, a heating element and control means arranged to control the heating element to cook maize meal.

A MAIZE MEAL COOKER**INTRODUCTION**

This invention relates to a meal cooker, and more specifically, but not exclusively, to a maize meal cooker.

BACKGROUND TO THE INVENTION

Grains form an important part of the human diet in most areas of the world. Commonly grains are used in the form of a meal which can be cooked in a number of different ways. In Africa maize meal is a staple diet for a large percentage of the population and is often cooked in the form of a porridge. Preparing a porridge generally requires water to be boiled and meal to be added thereto. Hereafter, the mixture has to be stirred and monitored to prevent it being burnt. The process is generally time consuming and often requires a degree of physical labour.

OBJECT OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of this invention to provide a maize meal cooker which at least simplifies the above process.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with this invention there is provided a maize meal cooker comprising a cooking receptacle, a blender having a paddle with a number of mixing elements arranged to mix a mixture of maize meal and water, a heating element and control means arranged to control the heating element to cook maize meal.

A further feature of the invention provides for the paddle to comprise a rectangular frame having a plurality of spaced apart ribs across its width.

The control means may include a thermoswitch connected to the heating element, the thermoswitch being activatable to switch the heating element on until the receptacle reaches a predetermined temperature and then to switch the heating element off and to automatically deactivate.

- 5 A still further feature of the invention provides for the blender to continuously stir, in use, the contents of the receptacle.

A still further feature of the invention provides for the receptacle, the heating element and the control means to be located within a housing and for the blender to be mounted on a lid, the lid being securable, in use, to the housing.

- 10 A yet further feature of the invention provides for the blender to comprise a shaft releasably mounted on a motor, the free end of the shaft having a paddie attached thereto.

A further feature of the invention provides for the receptacle to be removably located within the housing.

- 15 According to one aspect of the invention there is provided for the control means to have a power control function which is selectively operable to allow the heating element to operate at a high or a low heat.

The power control function may comprise a switch, and two heating elements, wired to be connected by the switch between a parallel and a series configuration.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- 20 One embodiment of a maize meal cooker according to the invention will be described, by way of example only, with reference to the drawing which is a sectional side view of a meal cooker.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

A maize meal cooker (1) is shown in Figure 1 and comprises a cooking receptacle (2) removably located within a housing (3). Also located within the housing are two heating elements (4) and control means (5). The control means (5) comprises a thermoswitch (6), and power control function (7). There is furthermore a blender (9) mounted on a lid (10), the lid being removably securable to the housing (3) by means of clasps (11). The blender comprises a shaft (12) releasably secured to a motor (13) and having a paddle (14) attached to its free end. The paddle comprises a rectangular frame (15) having ribs (16) spaced apart along its length and extending across its width. In this embodiment the ribs are manufactured from stainless steel wire.

The meal cooker is powered by electricity and an appropriate cable and plug (20) exist for this purpose. The motor (13) has a lead (21) and plug (22) for releasably connecting the motor to a socket (23) which in turn is electrically connected to the control means (5).

In use a mixture of meal and an appropriate amount of water (not shown) are placed in the cooking receptacle (2). The lid (10) is placed over the receptacle to allow the shaft (12) and paddle (14) to project into the receptacle to stir, in use, the mixture. The lid is secured to the housing (3) by means of clasps (11) to prevent movement of the lid when the motor (13) is switched on and rotates the shaft and paddle.

The heating elements (4) are located operably below the cooking receptacle and allow the contents thereof to be heated in use. The heat supplied by the heating elements is controlled by control means (5). The thermoswitch is activatable by means of a switch (19) to switch the heating elements on until the cooking receptacle reaches a predetermined temperature whereafter it switches the heating elements off and automatically deactivates. The predetermined temperature is that at which the mixture is cooked and is approximately 150° C.

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5 The power control function is a switch which is wired to switch the heating elements between a parallel and a series configuration. In the series configuration the heat output of the heating element is low and the maximum temperature reached by the elements is approximately 35° C. In the parallel configuration the elements operate at a high heat of up to approximately 200° C.

Whenever the thermoswitch is activated the blender will operate. Furthermore, the motor (13) rotates, in use, the shaft (12) at approximately 5 to 6 revolutions a minute.

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10 It is envisaged that instead of having a power control function as described above, the control means could have a thermostat connected in parallel with the thermoswitch. The thermostat could be activatable by means of a switch to measure the temperature of the receptacle and to switch the heating element on below a predetermined minimum temperature, in this embodiment approximately 35° C, and to switch the heating element off when a predetermined maximum is reached, in this embodiment approximately 50° C. The thermostat would operate until manually deactivated by means of the switch. Furthermore, in this case, the meal cooker would only require one heating element.

20 It will be appreciated that many other embodiments of a meal cooker exist which fall within the scope of the invention especially as regards the mounting of the lid on the housing which could, for example, also be by way of a hinge and also as regards the connection of the motor to the power source. Furthermore, the position of the blender and shape of the paddle can be different. The control means can also have a time and/or other components which allow the heating element to be controlled in a similar manner.

CLAIMS**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A maize meal cooker comprising a cooking receptacle, a blender having a paddle with a number of mixing elements arranged to stir a mixture of maize meal and water, a heating element and control means arranged to control the heating element to cook maize meal.
2. A maize meal cooker as claimed in claim 1 in which the paddle comprises a rectangular frame having a plurality of spaced apart ribs across its width.
3. A maize meal cooker as claimed in either of the above claims in which the control means comprises a thermostwitch connected to the heating element, the thermostwitch being activatable to switch the heating element on until the receptacle reaches a predetermined temperature and then to switch the heating element off and to automatically deactivate.
4. A maize cooker as claimed in claim 3 in which the control means has a power control function which is selectively operable to allow the heating element to operate at a high or a low heat.
5. A maize cooker as claimed in claim 4 in which the power control function is a switch, and two heating elements, wired to be connected by the switch between a parallel and a series configuration.
6. A maize meal cooker as claimed in any one of the above claims in which the blender continuously stirs, in use, the contents of the receptacle.
7. A maize meal cooker as claimed in any one of the above claims in which the receptacle, the heating element and the control means are located within a housing.
8. A maize meal cooker as claimed in claim 7 in which the blender is mounted on a lid, the lid being securable, in use, to the housing.

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9. A maize meal cooker as claimed in any one of the above claims in which the blender comprises a shaft releasably mounted on a motor, the free end of the shaft having the paddle attached thereto.
10. A maize meal cooker as claimed in claim 7 or claim 8 in which the

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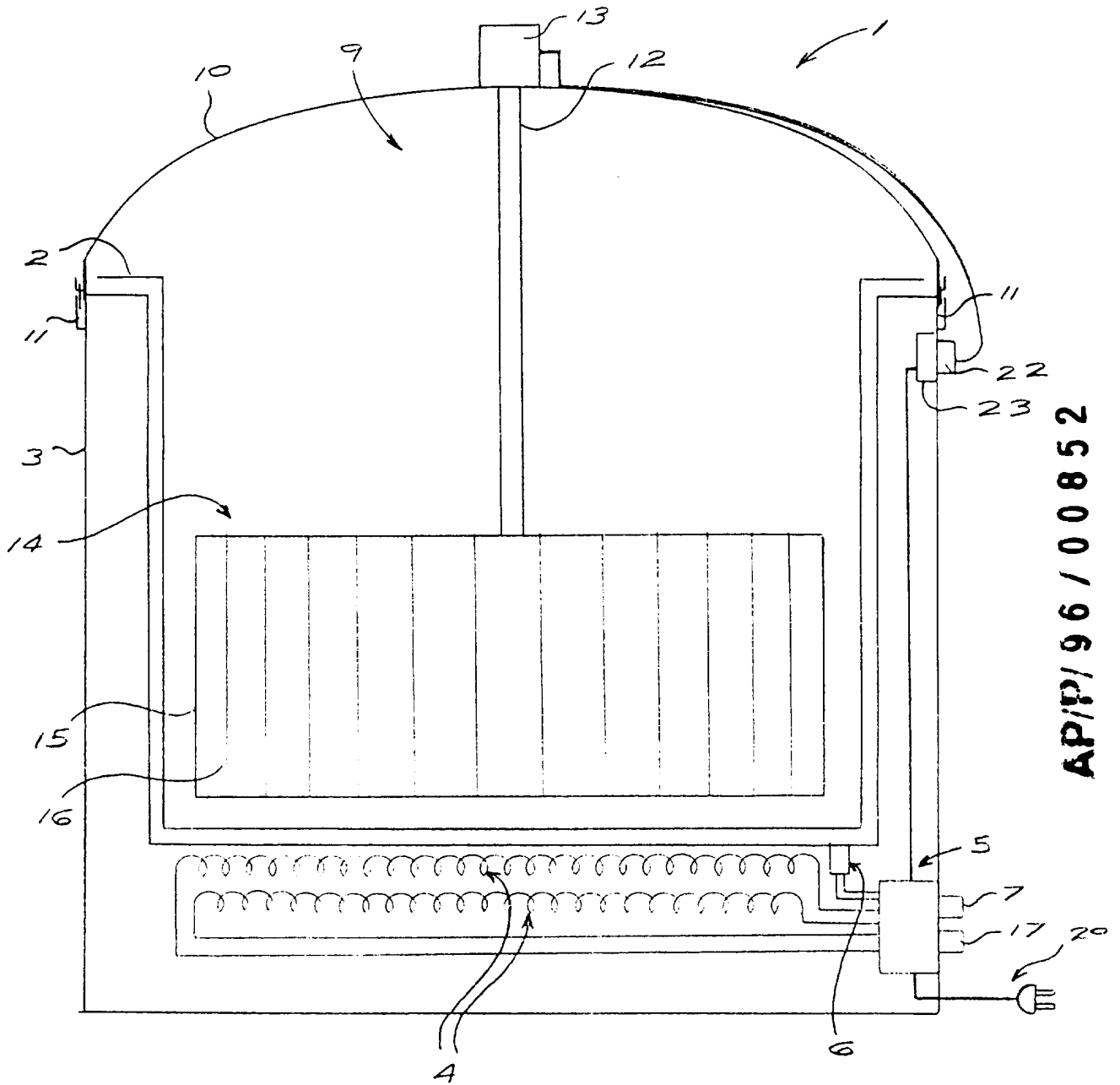


FIG 1