CONTAINER ASSEMBLY FOR HOLDING TWO OR MORE PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

A main container includes a bottom, a side wall structure and a neck with a top rim surrounding an access opening which communicates with an interior storage chamber for holding a first product. An insert container with an open top and a peripheral flange holds a second product. The insert container is sized and configured for nested receipt within the access opening of the main container so that the top peripheral flange rests in seated engagement on the top rim of the neck of the main container. A removable lid covers the access opening of the main container and open top of the insert container. The insert container is lifted and removed from the main container to allow removal of the first product.
CONTAINER ASSEMBLY FOR HOLDING TWO OR MORE PRODUCTS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This non-provisional patent application is based on provisional patent application Ser. No. 60/852,484 filed on Oct. 18, 2006.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a container assembly with separate storage compartments for holding two or more products wherein and, more particularly to a container assembly including an outer container with an interior storage compartment for holding a first product and a removable insert container which nests within the open top of the main container for holding a second product in a manner which visibly exposes both products.

DISCUSSION OF THE RELATED ART

Packaging two or more products as a combined unit is an effective marketing strategy for boosting sales and gaining market share, particularly when the products are sold alongside similar type competitive products from other companies. In the past, products have been packaged together using shrink wrap or similar plastic film material which bundles the two or more products as a single unit. This is commonly done with cleaning products such as dish detergent, laundry detergent, bath soap and shampoo. Various food products, such as crackers and cheese, are often packaged together in a molded tray having separate recessed holding areas. Often, a promotional (i.e. free) item is packaged with the main product to provide an incentive for consumers to purchase the product. For instance, cereal products often include a toy inside of the box with a reference to the toy surprise and picture presented on the box packaging. This is a well known marketing strategy, aimed at children, and can be highly effective to influence parents to purchase the particular cereal product that includes the toy inside.

While numerous packaging assemblies and methods are known for combining two or more products together, as described above, there remains a need for a container assembly which is adapted to support an insert container within an outer main container in a manner which visibly exposes all of the products and without increasing the size or altering the form and structure of the main container. In particular, there is a need for a container assembly which provides a main container for holding a food product, such as a snack food product, and an insert container nested within the main container for holding a second food product, such as a condiment, dip, candy, beverage, etc. Alternatively, a non-food product, such as a toy or other object may be packaged in the second container.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to a container assembly which includes a main container having a bottom, a side wall structure and a neck surrounding an access opening which communicates with an interior storage chamber for holding a first product. An insert container with a peripheral flange surrounding an open top is used to hold a second product. The insert container is sized and configured for nested receipt within the access opening of the main container so that the top peripheral flange rests in seated engagement on the top rim of the neck of the main container. A removable lid covers the access opening of the main container and open top of the insert container. The insert container is lifted and removed from the main container to allow access to the first product.

OBJECTS AND ADVANTAGES OF THE INVENTION

With the foregoing in mind, it is a principal object of the present invention to provide a container assembly including a main container formed of a transparent material and a secondary insert container which is removably received within the main container, and wherein a first product is visibly contained within the main container and a second product is visibly contained within the insert container.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a container assembly which includes a main container with an open top and a removable insert container which nests within the open top of the main container in a manner which allows a first product to be stored in the main container and a second product to be stored within the insert container without increasing the size or altering the shape or structure of the main container.

It is yet a further object of the present invention to provide a container assembly which allows use of a conventional outer container for containing a first product, and an insert container which is adapted for receipt within the outer container for holding at least one other product separated from the first product and within the interior of the outer main container.

It is still a further object of the present invention to provide a container assembly which includes a main outer container with an open top and lid and a removable insert container which nests within the open top of the main container in a manner which allows a first product to be stored in the main container and at least a second product to be stored within the insert container, and wherein packaging the products within the container assembly is readily adapted to an existing assembly line process without significant alteration or additional cost.

It is still a further object of the present invention to provide a container assembly which includes a main container with an open top and a removable insert container that is received within the main container in nested engagement with the open top, and wherein a single lid effectively closes both the main container and the removable insert container.

It is still a further object of the present invention to provide a container assembly which includes a main container having an open top and a removable insert container that is received through the open top of the main container for nested engagement therewith, and wherein a first food product is contained within the main container and a complementary product is contained with the removable insert container, and wherein the overall appeal and value of the first product is enhanced by the inclusion of the second product within the same container package.

These and other objects and advantages of the present invention are more readily apparent with reference
to the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] For a fuller understanding of the nature of the present invention, reference should be made to the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

[0014] FIG. 1 is an exploded perspective view of the container assembly of the present invention in accordance with a first embodiment thereof;

[0015] FIG. 2 is a partially exploded perspective view of the container assembly of FIG. 1, showing the removable insert container received in nested engagement within the main outer container, and wherein a food product is contained within the insert container;

[0016] FIG. 3 is an isolated cross-sectional view taken from the area indicated as 3-3 in FIG. 2;

[0017] FIG. 4 is an exploded perspective view of the container assembly in accordance with a second embodiment thereof;

[0018] FIG. 5 is a partially exploded view of the container assembly in accordance with a third embodiment thereof;

[0019] FIG. 6 is an isolated, exploded perspective view of the container assembly in accordance with a fourth embodiment thereof;

[0020] FIG. 7 is an isolated cut-away view of an insert container of the invention, showing an embodiment of the top flange which is angled slightly downward; and

[0021] FIG. 8 is an isolated cut-away view of an insert container of the invention, showing a further embodiment of the top flange which includes a downwardly extending lip that hooks over the rim of the main container.

[0022] Like reference numerals refer to like parts throughout the several views of the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0023] The container assembly of the present invention is shown throughout the drawings, in accordance with various embodiments thereof, and is generally indicated as 10.

[0024] Referring initially to FIGS. 1-3, a first embodiment of the container assembly 10 is shown and includes a main container 20a. The container 20a is preferably formed of a transparent molded plastic material which may be similar to the outer container 20a, except for a thinner gauge. The insert container 40a is particularly adapted for holding a second product 50 which complements the first product (not shown) contained in the interior storage chamber 32 of the main container 20a. In particular, the second product 50 may be a condiment or dip, such as salsa, mustard or onion dip for consumption with a snack food product contained in the main container 20a. Referring to FIGS. 2 and 3, when the insert container 40a and second food product 50 are dropped into nested receipt within the open top 30 of the main container 20a, a lid 60 is secured to the neck 26 (e.g. by screw threads) to effectively enclose the insert container 40 and second food product 50 within the interior of the main container 20a. Accordingly, a single lid 60 is used to close both the main container 20a and removable insert container 40a.

[0025] A removable insert container 40b, generally in the form of a cup or bowl, is sized and configured for receipt within the open top 30. More specifically, the insert container 40b includes a bottom 42, a side wall structure 44, including an upper side wall structure 45 which is congruently configured in relation to the shape of the open top 30, as defined by the neck 26, so that the upper side wall structure 45 fits neatly within the open top 30 in sliding engagement with the interior surface of the neck 26. The insert container 40b further includes a top peripheral flange 46 which extends about an open top 48. The top peripheral flange 46 is sized and configured to engage the top rim 28 of the neck 26 when the insert container 40b is fully nested within the open top 30, thereby supporting the insert container 40b in nested position within the open top 30 and preventing the insert container 40b from falling completely through the open top and into the interior chamber 32. In the embodiment of FIG. 7, the top peripheral flange 46b is angled slightly downward to resist flexing and collapsing when supporting the insert container and weight of contents within the insert container on the rim 28 of main container 20a. In FIG. 8, a further embodiment of the top flange 46b includes a downwardly depending lip 47 that hangs over the rim 28 of main container 20a. Much like the embodiment of FIG. 7, this embodiment of the top flange 46b is designed to support the weight of the insert container and its contents while resisting upward flexing and collapsing which would cause the insert container to fall through the open top 30 of the main container 20a and down into the interior storage chamber 32.

[0026] In a preferred embodiment, the wall structure 44 of the insert container 40b is formed of a transparent molded plastic material which may be similar to the outer container 20a, except for a thinner gauge. The insert container 40b is particularly adapted for holding a second product 50 which complements the first product (not shown) contained in the interior storage chamber 32 of the main container 20a. In particular, the second product 50 may be a condiment or dip, such as salsa, mustard or onion dip for consumption with a snack food product contained in the main container 20a. Referring to FIGS. 2 and 3, when the insert container 40b and second food product 50 are dropped into nested receipt within the open top 30 of the main container 20a, a lid 60 is secured to the neck 26 (e.g. by screw threads) to effectively enclose the insert container 40 and second food product 50 within the interior of the main container 20a. Accordingly, a single lid 60 is used to close both the main container 20a and removable insert container 40b.
60 is secured to the neck 26 to effectively enclose the interior chamber 32, insert container 40b and beverage bottle 52. Preferably both the wall structure 22 of the main container 20a and the wall structure 44 (including the upper wall structure 45) of the insert container 40b are transparent so that the beverage product 52 is visibly exposed through the containers 40b, 20a when contained therein.

FIG. 5 illustrates yet a further embodiment of the container assembly 10 wherein the main container 20c is formed in a generally square or rectangular shape having side walls 22. The remainder of the assembly, including the insert container 40c, is essentially identical as described in connection with the embodiment of FIGS. 1-3.

FIG. 6 illustrates yet a further embodiment of the container assembly 10 wherein the main container 20c is formed in a generally square or rectangular shape, similar to the embodiment in FIG. 5. In this particular embodiment (FIG. 6), the main container 20c includes a square shaped neck 26 with top rim 28. The insert container 40c includes a side wall structure 44 which is shaped and configured for congruent sliding receipt against the inner surface of the square shaped neck 26. The top peripheral flange 48 is sized and configured to rest in supported engagement on the top rim 28 of the neck 26 so that the insert container 40c is supported in nested receipt within the open top 30 of the container 20c. A lid 60' removably attaches to the neck 26 to enclose the main container 20c and insert container 40c. As shown in FIG. 6, the product contained in the insert container 40c may be a toy 54 such as a toy car or other non-food item. The first product (not shown) contained within the interior storage chamber of the main container 20c may be either a food product or non-food product. Similar to the previously described embodiments, the wall structure 22 of the container 20c and the wall structure 44 of the insert container 40c are preferably of a transparent material so that both the first product in the container 20c and second product 54 in the insert container 40c are visibly exposed when contained in the container assembly 10 with the lid 60' attached.

In each of the above-described embodiments, the insert container 40a-40c is removed from the open top 30 of the main container 20a-20c by grasping the top peripheral flange with the fingertips and lifting the insert container upwardly from the open top of the main container, thereby effectively removing both the insert container and the product contained therein.

While the instant invention has been shown and described in accordance with several preferred and practical embodiments, it is recognized that departures from the instant disclosure are contemplated within the spirit and scope of the present invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A container assembly comprising:
   - a main container with a bottom, a neck, and a side wall structure extending upwardly from the bottom to the neck, and said neck including a top rim surrounding an access opening, and said access opening communicating with an interior storage chamber;
   - an insert container with a bottom, a top peripheral flange surrounding a top, and a side wall structure extending upwardly from said bottom to said top peripheral flange, said bottom and said side wall structure being sized and configured to permit passage through said access opening of said main container, and said top peripheral flange being sized, structured and configured for supported, seated engagement on said top rim of said main container with said insert container received through said access opening and nested within said main container; and
   - a lid removably attachable to said neck of said main container for covering said access opening and said top of said insert container nested within said main container.

2. The container assembly as recited in claim 1 wherein said top of said insert container is open.

3. The container assembly as recited in claim 1 wherein said main container is structured and disposed to contain a first product in said interior storage chamber and said insert container is structured and disposed to hold a second product isolated from said first product.

4. The container assembly as recited in claim 3 wherein said side wall structure of said main container is transparent to reveal said first product and said insert container from an exterior of said main container.

5. The container assembly as recited in claim 4 wherein said side wall structure of said insert container is transparent to reveal said second product from an exterior of said main container.

6. The container assembly as recited in claim 1 wherein said side wall structure of said insert container has a transverse dimension that is less than a transverse dimension of said access opening of said main container, and said top peripheral flange extends outwardly from said side wall structure of said insert container to provide a maximum transverse dimension that is greater than the transverse dimension of said access opening.

7. The container assembly as recited in claim 1 wherein said top rim of said main container is round and said access opening has a first diameter, and said side wall structure of said insert container is round and has a maximum transverse dimension defining a second diameter, and said top peripheral flange is round and extends outwardly from said side wall structure of said insert container at said top and defining a third diameter, and wherein said first diameter of said access opening is greater than said second diameter of said side wall structure and said third diameter of said top peripheral flange is greater than said first diameter of said access opening.

8. The container assembly as recited in claim 1 wherein said top peripheral flange extends outwardly from said side wall structure of said insert container at said top and wherein said top peripheral flange is angled downwardly relative to said top.

9. The container assembly as recited in claim 1 wherein said top peripheral flange includes a downwardly extending lip structured and disposed to hang over said top rim and extend downwardly on an exterior of said neck of said main container when said insert container is received through said access opening and nested within said main container.

10. A container assembly comprising:
    - a main container with a bottom, a neck, and a transparent side wall structure extending upwardly from the bottom to the neck, and said neck including a top rim surrounding an access opening, and said access opening communicating with an interior storage chamber;
    - an insert container with a bottom, a top peripheral flange surrounding a top, and a side wall structure extending upwardly from said bottom to said top peripheral flange, said bottom and said side wall structure being sized and configured to permit passage through said access opening of said main container, and said top peripheral flange being sized, structured and configured for supported, seated engagement on said top rim of said main container with said insert container received through said access opening and nested within said main container; and
    - a lid removably attachable to said neck of said main container for covering said access opening and said top of said insert container nested within said main container.
flange, said bottom and said side wall structure being sized and configured to permit passage through said access opening of said main container, and said top peripheral flange being sized, structured and configured for supported, seated engagement on said top rim of said main container with said insert container received through said access opening and nested within said main container, and a lid removably attachable to said neck of said main container for covering said access opening and said top of said insert container nested within said main container.

11. The container assembly as recited in claim 10 wherein said top of said insert container is open.

12. The container assembly as recited in claim 10 wherein said main container is structured and disposed to contain a first product in said interior storage chamber and said insert container is structured and disposed to hold a second product isolated from said first product.

13. The container assembly as recited in claim 10 wherein said side wall structure of said insert container is transparent.

14. The container assembly as recited in claim 10 wherein said side wall structure of said insert container has a transverse dimension that is less than a transverse dimension of said access opening of said main container, and said top peripheral flange extends outwardly from said side wall structure of said insert container to provide a maximum transverse dimension that is greater than the transverse dimension of said access opening.

15. The container assembly as recited in claim 10 wherein said top rim of said main container is round and said access opening has a first diameter, and said side wall structure of said insert container is round and has a maximum transverse dimension defining a second diameter, and said top peripheral flange is round and extends outwardly from said side wall structure of said insert container at said top and defining a third diameter, and wherein said first diameter of said access opening is greater than said second diameter of said side wall structure and said third diameter of said top peripheral flange is greater than said first diameter of said access opening.

16. The container assembly as recited in claim 10 wherein said top peripheral flange extends outwardly from said side wall structure of said insert container at said top and wherein said top peripheral flange is angled downwardly relative to said top.

17. The container assembly as recited in claim 10 wherein said top peripheral flange includes a downwardly extending lip structured and disposed to hang over said top rim and extend downwardly on an exterior of said neck of said main container when said insert container is received through said access opening and nested within said main container.

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