

[54] BEVERAGE DISPENSING SYSTEM

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[51] Int. Cl. B65d 35/56

[58] Field of Search.....222/78, 105, 183, 530, 535,
222/146 C; 221/24; 220/63, 17; 229/14;
215/12; 24/254; 248/65, 67.5, 700

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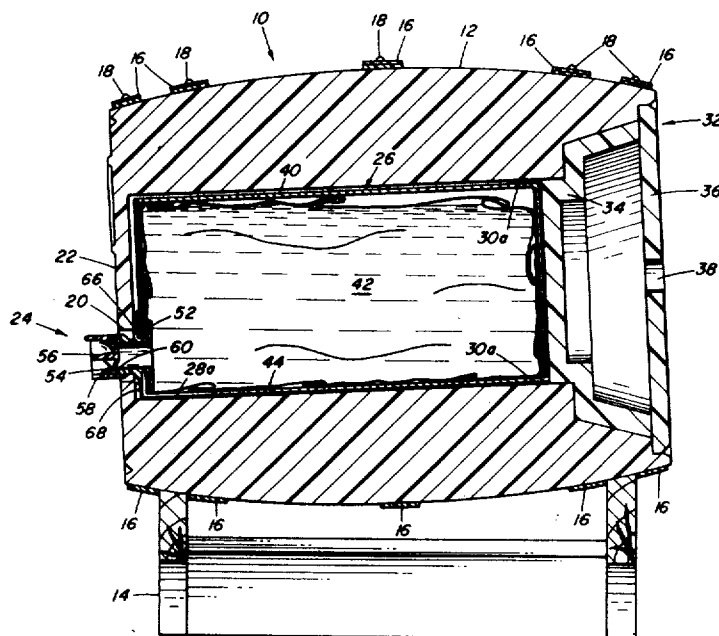
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[57] ABSTRACT

A beverage dispensing system comprising an enclosure in the form of a decorative wine cask, and a disposable beverage container for use within the enclosure. The disposable beverage container comprises an outer box also suitable for shelf display, and an enclosed flexible bag for containing the beverage. An integral tap is provided on the flexible bag, and means are provided for extending the tap through the box and enclosure for dispensing of the beverage.

4 Claims, 6 Drawing Figures



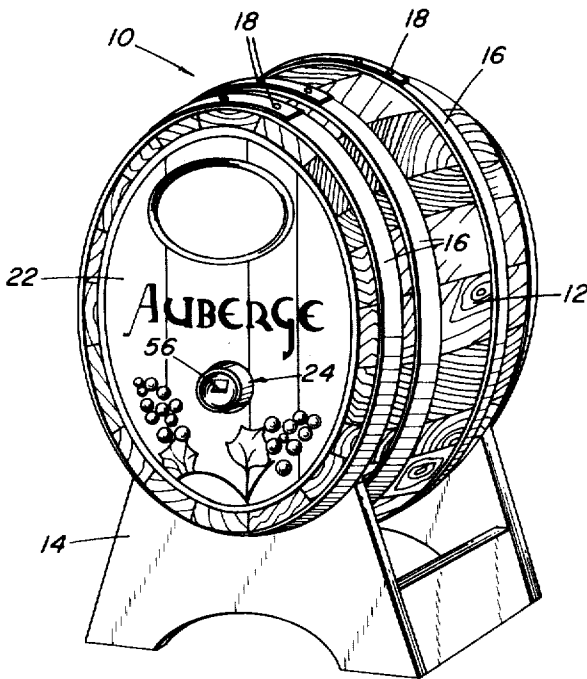


FIG. 1

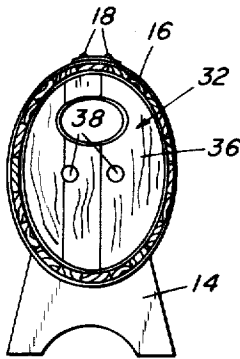


FIG. 2

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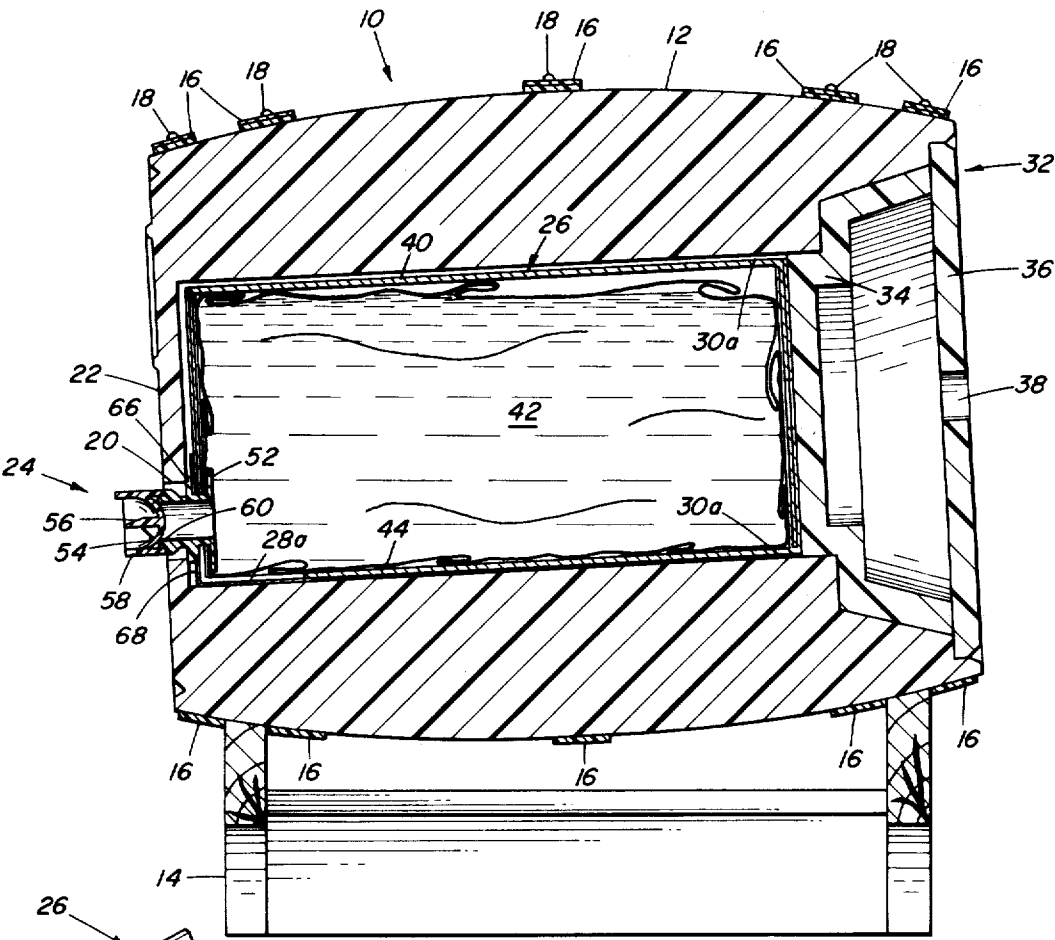


FIG. 3

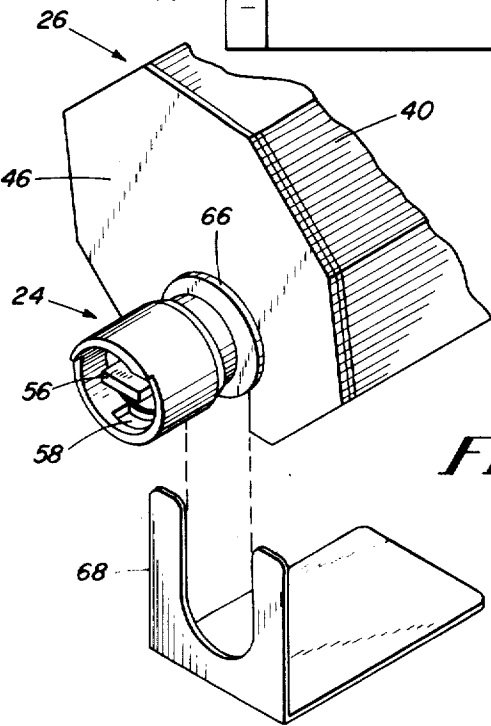


FIG. 6

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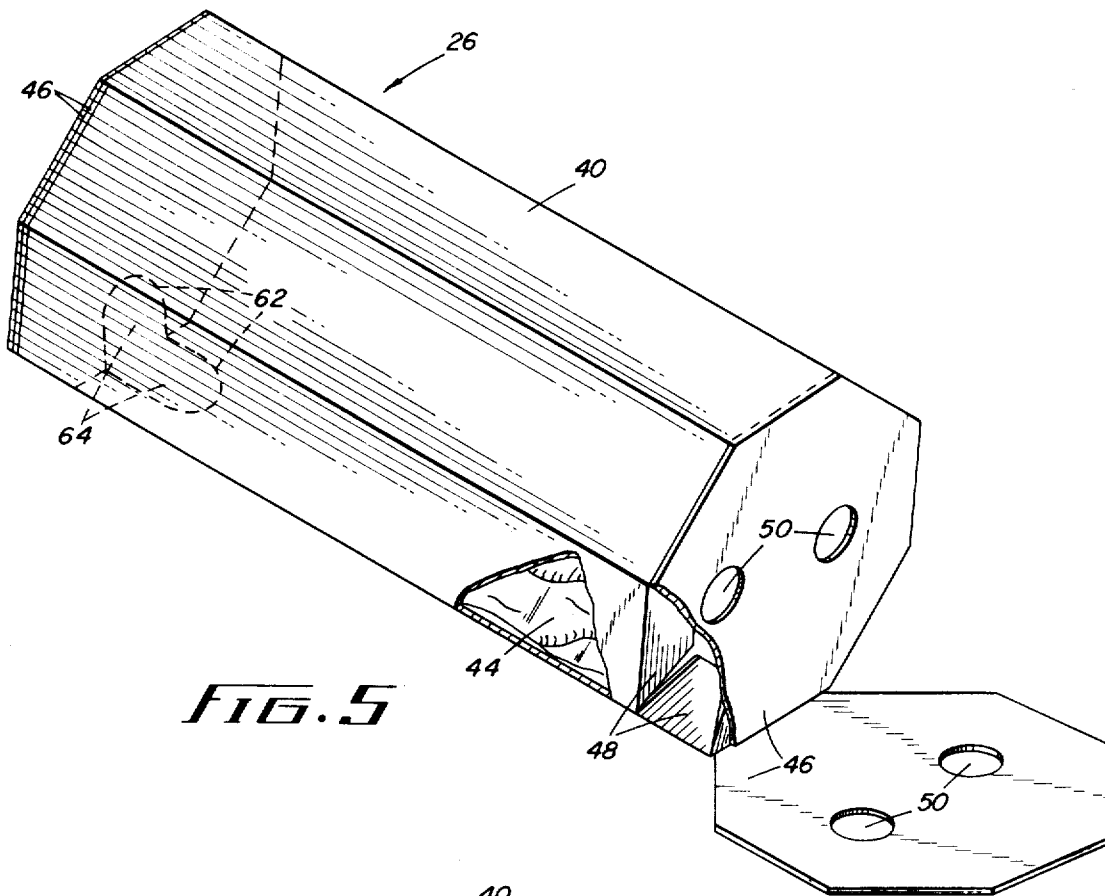


FIG. 5

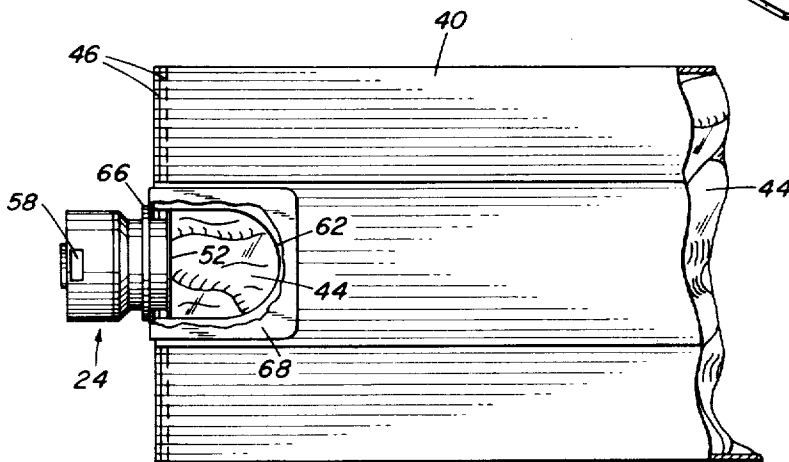


FIG. 4

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BEVERAGE DISPENSING SYSTEM**Background of the Invention**

Beverages and particularly alcoholic beverages such as wine or the like are often stored and dispensed in bulk quantities larger than normally accommodated by bottles. This is done for convenience to reduce the numbers of individual bottles which have to be stored and handled, and for the economies inherent in bulk packaging.

A problem arises however in dispensing such bulk quantities conveniently and in an appetizing manner, especially in commercial establishments. One solution has been the use of attractive bulk containers in which the beverage can be stored in full view of the consumer and from which the beverage can be directly dispensed.

In the case of wine or like beverages, the bulk container may be in the form of a wine cask. The wine is typically poured directly into such prior art containers from a separate vessel, and dispensed on demand through some type of tap or spigot. Dispensing containers of the type described, however, have a number of inherent disadvantages. For one, the necessity of filling such containers from a separate vessel often results in wasteful and unsanitary spillage. In addition the interior of such containers requires frequent cleaning to preserve the quality of the beverages stored therein; this is particularly true where different beverages are dispensed with subsequent fillings. Further, such containers are often poorly insulated, and the normally occurring circulation of air therethrough may accelerate spoilage or lead to contamination of the beverage.

Accordingly, representative objects of the present invention are to provide a beverage dispensing system including a decorative enclosure and a disposable beverage container and dispenser for use therein, said system being attractive in appearance, sanitary, easy to fill and maintain, well insulated and efficient and economical in use.

Other objects of the invention will in part be obvious and will in part appear hereinafter.

The invention accordingly comprises the features of construction, combination of elements, and arrangement of parts which will be exemplified in the construction hereinafter set forth, and the scope of the invention will be indicated in the claims.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention relates to a beverage dispensing system and more particularly to a system comprising a decorative enclosure and a disposable beverage container and dispenser for use in the enclosure.

The enclosure is preferably in the form of a small decorative wine cask made of a foamed polymeric material and which is supported in a horizontal position on a stand or cradle. One end of the cask is removable for access to the interior thereof and the other end contains a dispensing aperture.

The disposable beverage container comprises a substantially rigid box which is preferably also suitable for shelf display. The box is adapted to fit securely but removably within the cask enclosure. The foamed material of the cask acts as an insulator and maintains the beverage temperature for a number of hours. The

beverage is contained by a flexible bag which is packaged and carried within the box. The bag is provided with an integral tap which can be extended both through an opening provided for such purpose in the box, and through the dispensing aperture in the cask enclosure. Means are also provided to secure the tap in such an extended position in order to facilitate the dispensing of the beverage from within the bag.

Preferably, the opening provided in the box for the tap is covered by a removably tab. In this way, prior to mounting the box in the enclosure, the tap may be packaged within the box to keep it sanitary and prevent damage, and to make the entire dispensing container more attractive and suitable for shelf display.

By the use of such a disposable beverage container in the dispensing system of the invention, the heretofore discussed problems of prior art dispensers, particularly the occurrence of spillage, the necessity for frequent cleaning, and the likelihood of contamination and accelerated spoilage are substantially eliminated.

Brief Description of the Drawings

For a fuller understanding of the nature and objects of the invention, reference should be had to the following detailed description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a front perspective view of the dispensing system of the invention showing the decorative enclosure and protruding tap.

FIG. 2 is a rear elevation view of the decorative enclosure.

FIG. 3 is an enlarged side elevation view in section of the dispensing system.

FIG. 4 is a greatly enlarged, partial bottom plan view of the beverage container of the dispensing system.

FIG. 5 is a partly broken away rear perspective view of the beverage container.

FIG. 6 is partial front perspective view of the beverage container and the reinforcing collar therefor, and indicating their assembled positions.

Similar reference characters refer to similar parts throughout the several views of the drawings.

Description of the Preferred Embodiments

Referring now to FIG. 1, the enclosure 10 of the dispensing system preferably takes the form of a small, decorative wine cask 12. Cask 12 is supported in a substantially horizontal position by a sturdy support stand or cradle 14 of, for example, wood, which may be secured thereto or separate as desired. Preferably as shown in FIG. 3, cask 12 is tilted slightly forward on cradle 14 to facilitate the dispensing of beverages therefrom. Wine cask 12 is preferably molded from wood-simulating plastic which is generally less expensive and easier to maintain than wood. For example, cask 12 may be formed from foamed polyurethane with a wood-simulating skin. The decorative hoops 16 may be separately provided and formed from strip material secured by rivets 18 or they may be integrally molded from the same plastic.

As shown in FIG. 3, a dispensing aperture 20 is provided through the front cask end 22 to accommodate the tap 24 of a beverage container 26 which will subsequently be discussed in greater detail. Beverage container 26 is preferably supported in a substantially

horizontal position within cask 12 in a matching bore 28 provided at the interior of the cask. Alternatively, integral or separately secured support members may be provided within the interior of a hollow cask to support container 26.

The rear of cask 12 as shown in FIG. 3 is closed by a removable cap 32 which is configured to snugly interfit with the rear 30 of bore 28. As shown, cap 32 may comprise a molded plastic plug 34 having a configuration matching the configuration of bore 28, and an end plate 36 in the shape of a cask end secured to plug 34 as by adhesive or the like. To facilitate the manual removal of cap 32 for purposes of changing beverage containers, a pair of finger holes 38 may be provided in plate 36 as shown in FIG. 2.

Beverage container 26 mounts within cask 12 as shown in FIG. 3, and serves as a container and dispenser for a particular beverage 42. Container 26 is also preferably both suitable for shelf display and disposable; it thus serves both as a package for marketing the beverage, and as an inexpensive, sanitary and convenient throwaway dispensing receptacle for use within cask 12.

As shown in FIG. 5, container 26 comprises an outer, substantially rigid box 40 which is preferably formed from a disposable material such as, for example, paperboard or plastic. Box 40 is also preferably polygonal in cross section as shown so that it can be mounted within cask 12 in a closely conforming polygonal bore 28 and thereby secured against slipping or rotation. Although box 40 and bore 28 have been shown as octagonal in cross section, other conforming polygonal shapes can also be used; for example, square, rectangular or hexagonal cross sections will work equally as well and still provide an attractive box for shelf display.

As is further shown in FIG. 3, when container 26 is mounted in bore 28, it is surrounded by a relatively thick layer of foamed polymeric material which serves to insulate the beverage contained therein from rapid temperature changes. This is particularly important with white wines which are best served chilled to refrigerator temperature, and with red wines which are best served at cellar temperature.

The beverage 42 to be dispensed (FIG. 3) is contained within a flexible bag 44 packaged and carried within box 40. Accordingly, as shown in FIG. 5, box 40 is preferably provided with foldable end flaps 46 at either end to allow bag 44 to be readily inserted therein. A plurality of bent-over supporting segments 48 may also be provided at each end of box 40 to reinforce end flaps 46 against accidentally being pushed into box 40. Rear end flaps 46 are further preferably provided with a pair of finger holes 50 to facilitate the insertion and removal of box 40 from cask 12.

Flexible bag 44 is preferably made from a plastic sheet material such as polyethylene. Accordingly, bag 44 will collapse under the force of air pressure as the beverage is withdrawn. The collapse of bag 44 facilitates further dispensing of the beverage, and minimizes the amount of air permitted to circulate around the beverage thus retarding spoilage and minimizing the chances of contamination.

Bag 44 is provided with a tap 24 adjacent one end for dispensing beverage 42 (FIG. 3). Tap 24 is integral with bag 44 in the sense that it is secured thereto in a

fluid-tight manner to prevent leakage. As further shown in FIG. 3, tap 24 may be a molded plastic member having an enlarged inner flange 52 secured to the interior of bag 44, for example, by adhesive or plastic welding. Tap 24 terminates in a valve comprising an integrally molded flexible diaphragm 54 provided with a forward protruding actuator 56. Tap 24 further has an aperture 58 (FIG. 4) which communicates with the interior of bag 44 through one side of the tap just below diaphragm 54. As shown in FIG. 3, when the tap is not in use diaphragm 54 is biased against an interior rim 60 to prevent any flow of beverage 42 through aperture 58. It can be seen, however, that by pressing actuator 56 upward (see FIG. 3) flexible diaphragm 54 can be drawn away from rim 60 to open aperture 58 to the flow of beverage from within bag 44.

To be effective, tap 24 must be extended out through box 40 and through the dispensing aperture 20 in cask 12 as shown in FIG. 3. For this purpose, box 40 is provided with an opening 62 extending partially along one side and partially up one end as shown in FIGS. 4 and 5. Opening 62 is also preferably provided with a removable tab 64 (FIG. 5) so that tap 24 may be packaged within box 40 prior to use. In this way tap 24 can be kept sanitary and free from damage during storage, shipment or display of container 26, and it also makes the entire dispensing container more attractive and suitable for shelf display purposes. Once tab 64 is removed from box 40, however, tap 24 may be extended therefrom as shown in FIG. 4; it is secured in such an extended position by a flange 66 which fits over the edge of aperture 62 and abuts the outer surface of the outer end flap 46. Where desired, a separate reinforcing collar 68 of metal, plastic or the like may be inserted between flange 66 and outer end flap 46 as shown in FIG. 6. Collar 68 serves to further reinforce the relatively fragile end flaps and thus minimizes the chances of tap 24 being accidentally pushed back into an inaccessible position within box 40. Collar 68 may be conveniently marketed together with container 26 by either securing it to the exterior of box 40 or by packaging it therein.

It will thus be seen that the objects set forth above, among those made apparent from the preceding description, are efficiently attained and, since certain changes may be made in the above construction without departing from the scope of the invention, it is intended that all matter contained in the above description or shown in the accompanying drawing shall be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense.

It is also to be understood that the following claims are intended to cover all of the generic and specific features of the invention herein described, and all statements of the scope of the invention, which, as a matter of language, might be said to fall therebetween.

Having described our invention, what we claim as new and desire to secure by Letters Patent is:

1. A beverage dispensing system comprising, in combination:

A. a decorative enclosure structure in the form of a cask,

1. means supporting said enclosure structure in a substantially horizontal plane with the cask ends thereof in substantially vertical planes,

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2. one said cask end having an aperture therein, and
3. means forming a polygonal bore within said enclosure structure,
 - a. said cask being formed of a foamed polymeric material which provides thermal insulation for said bore,
- B. a disposable beverage container removably mounted within said enclosure structure in said bore, said container comprising
 1. a substantially rigid box of polygonal shape closely matching said bore in shape and size so as to be secured against rotation when mounted therein and thermally insulated by the surrounding foamed polymeric material to maintain the temperature of the beverage over a substantial period of time, said box being suitable for shelf display and having means forming an opening adjacent one end thereof,
 2. a flexible beverage bag of plastic sheet packaged and carried within said box and having an integral tap communicating with the interior of said bag,

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- a. said tap being extendable through the opening in said box and the aperture in said cask for dispensing of the beverage therefrom, and
- b. means for maintaining said tap in such an extended position comprising an L-shaped reinforcing collar having a bifurcated end removably secured about said tap and abutting the end of said box over said opening to prevent said tap from being accidentally pushed back through said opening once it is extended.

2. A beverage dispensing system as defined in claim 1 including a removable flap covering the opening in said box whereby said tap can be enclosed in said box prior to use and subsequently extended for use upon removal of said flap.

3. A beverage dispensing system as defined in claim 1 wherein said bore and box have octagonal cross-sections.

4. A beverage dispensing system as defined in claim 1 wherein said bore and box have hexagonal cross-sections.

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