

May 25, 1965

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3,185,578

EASILY OPENABLE PACKAGE AND CLOSURES THEREFOR

Filed Aug. 17, 1962

2 Sheets-Sheet 1

FIG. 1

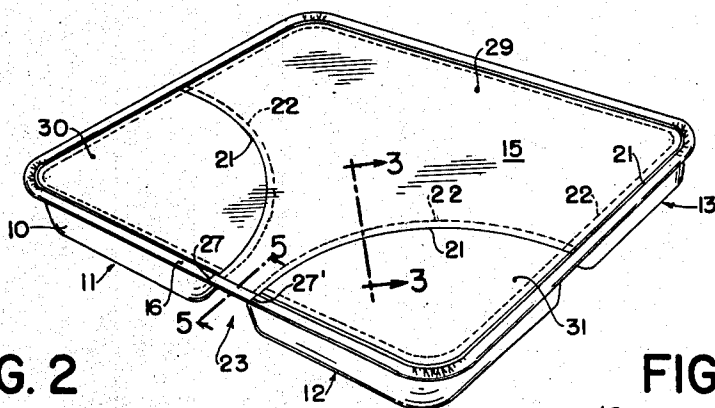


FIG. 2

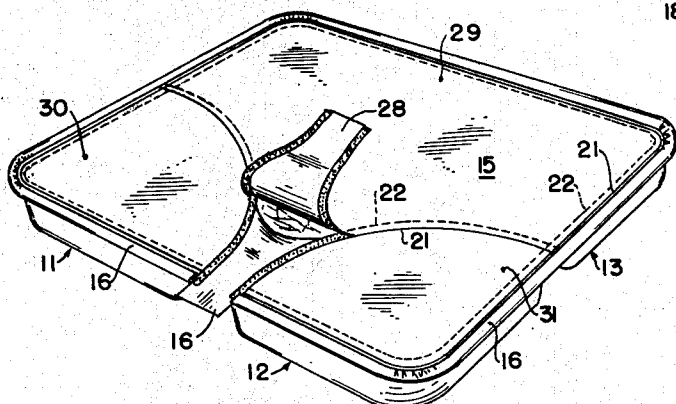


FIG. 3

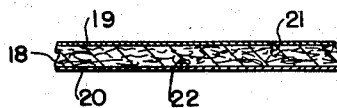


FIG. 4

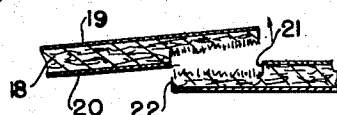


FIG. 5

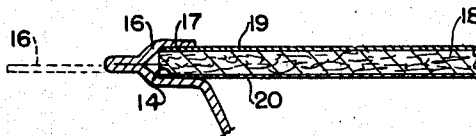


FIG. 7

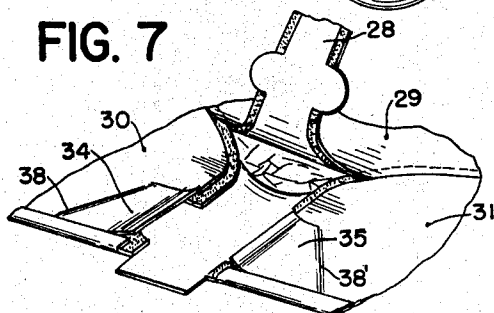
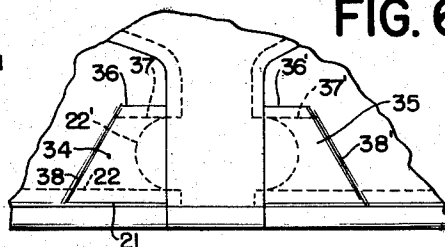


FIG. 6



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FIG. 8

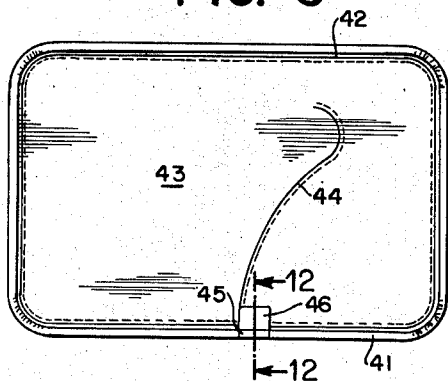


FIG. 9

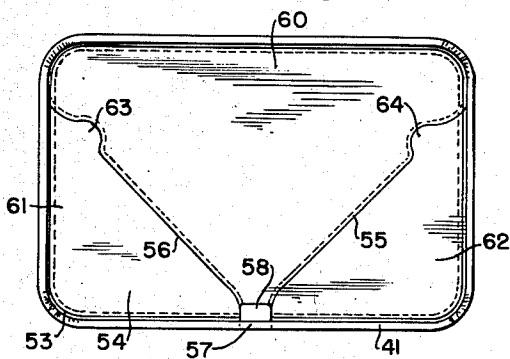


FIG. 10

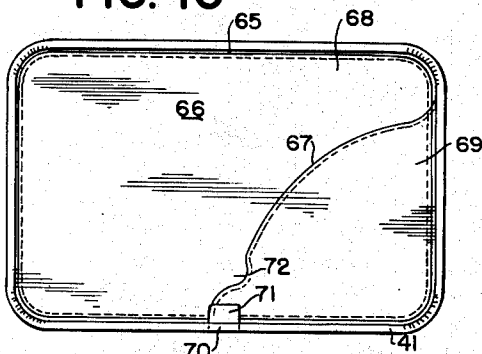


FIG. 11

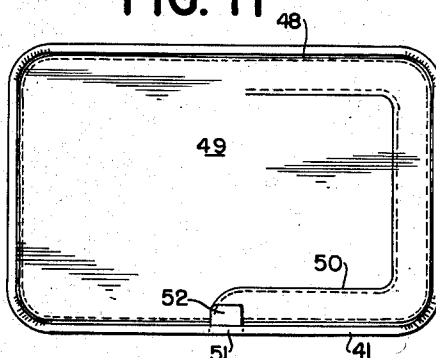


FIG. 12

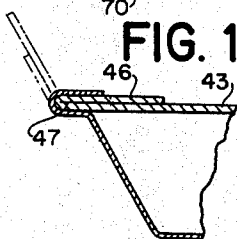


FIG. 13

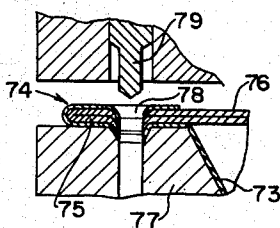


FIG. 14

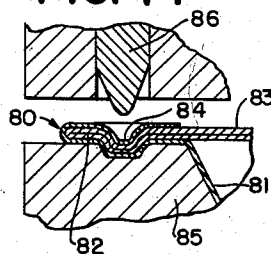
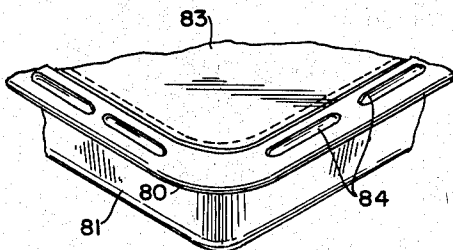


FIG. 15



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1

3,185,578

EASILY OPENABLE PACKAGE AND CLOSURES THEREFOR

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15 Claims. (Cl. 99—171)

This is a continuation-in-part of my prior patent application Serial No. 138,470, filed on September 15, 1961, which is now abandoned.

This invention relates to an easily openable package of foodstuffs and more particularly to such packages having closure members with pairs of cooperating score lines cut into but not through the closure member from opposite sides thereof with each score line on one side generally registering with but slightly offset from a corresponding score line on the other side, and to the arrangement of such score lines whereby a portion of said member is separable along the portion thereof between the cooperating score lines. The invention also relates to the container closures scored in this manner.

Food packages, such as the tray-type which are used for frozen dinners, usually have portions formed therein to section the tray and are ordinarily covered by simply wrapping a light aluminum foil around the marginal edges of the container body. The advantage in the use of foil lies precisely in the fact that light-weight foil can easily be removed by hand and the container can be opened with great facility. When different kinds of foodstuff are contained in separate sections of the packages, and the type of food in one section is best heated by steaming in a closed compartment, while the food in another section may preferably be browned by applying direct heat, the individual sections of the package were heretofore selectively exposed by simply folding or tearing the foil. Owing to the light weight of the foil however, such a package was not strong enough structurally to resist ordinary handling. It was therefore necessary to enclose the package in a wax-coated carton to protect the package from rupture and moisture seepage during shipping and handling. These additional protective measures in the form of a carton proved costly from the standpoint of both material and packaging time, as well as increased bulk and shipping weight.

I have found that a rigid cover which is specially scored can provide structural support sufficient to obviate the need for a protective carton while simultaneously providing means to substantially retain the same cooking procedures currently required for preparation and to partially open the cover to expose individual sections of the container and finally, to be more easily opened in the heated condition than when not subjected to heating. Moreover, packages constructed according to the invention can withstand the moisture attacks during freezing and partial thawing and remain structurally sound and substantially impervious to moisture penetration.

The advantages achieved in the package of the invention are realized principally as a result of the novel construction of the container closure secured to the container body. Broadly stated, the easily openable package for foodstuffs and the like is comprised of a container body having an opening therein, a quantity of foodstuff contained therein and a closure positioned over said opening with its peripheral marginal portion attached to said body. The closure is comprised of a closure member, a first pair of cooperating score lines cut into said member and extending in the plane of the member substantially around its peripheral marginal portion, and a second pair of cooperating score lines extending in the plane of the member generally spaced from the peripheral marginal portion thereof but substantially intersecting said first pair of

2

score lines thereof and defining separable portions of the closure with said first pair of score lines to permit removal of at least a portion of said member. The pairs of cooperating score lines are cut into but not through said member from opposite sides thereof with each score line on one side generally registering with but slightly offset from a corresponding score line on the other side whereby said member is separable along a portion thereof between the cooperating score lines.

The closures are preferably formed of an outer ply of moisture resistant material, at least one central ply of body stock adhesively secured to the outer ply, and an inner ply of moisture resistant material adhesively secured to the body stock. The outer or inner ply may advantageously be formed of aluminum foil.

It is also part of the invention to provide tab means in the cover substantially at the point of intersection of the score lines to permit grasping of the cover to open the container.

These containers and packages require no special gadgets for opening since the score lines are formed to permit this to be done by hand. Moreover, since the opposed score lines are slightly offset from each other in the plane of the cover, the easily opening features are achieved without rendering the cover susceptible to wicking of moisture through the cover. Hence a novel feature of the package resides in the achievement of a rigid package which can be easily opened by hand but is nonetheless strong enough to withstand ordinary handling and normal moisture attack. It will be seen that ordinarily the foodstuff is heated in the container in its closed position and the act of opening the container is simpler after heating. Moreover, the offset scoring precludes penetration of foreign matter into the container as might occur with perforations or cuts. Finally when frozen, the package presents a formidable resistance to abuse since the food essentially comprises the inner body of the package.

A preferred embodiment of the invention is described hereinbelow with reference to the drawing wherein:

FIG. 1 is a perspective of the new tray-type sectioned container showing its cover closed;

FIG. 2 is a perspective of a tray-type sectioned container showing its cover partially open;

FIG. 3 is a fragmentary section taken along lines 3—3 of FIG. 1 showing the manner in which the cover is scored;

FIG. 4 is a fragmentary section of the cover substantially as shown in FIG. 3 showing the fibers of the cover separated along the portion between the opposed scores;

FIG. 5 is a fragmentary section of the cover and body taken substantially along lines 5—5 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 6 is a fragmentary front elevation of alternate easy opening means indicating the manner of scoring;

FIG. 7 is a fragmentary perspective of the alternate opening means of FIG. 6 showing the container partially open;

FIGS. 8—11 are plan views of various scoring arrangements within the closure member;

FIG. 12 is a fragmentary section of tab means of the invention taken substantially along lines 12—12 of FIG. 8;

FIG. 13 is a fragmentary section of means for perforating the edge portion of the container body with the closure attached thereto;

FIG. 14 is a fragmentary section of means for crimping the edge portion of the container body with the closure attached thereto; and

FIG. 15 is a perspective of a package having elongated crimped portions spaced along the peripheral edge of the container.

A tray-type sectioned container as shown in FIG. 1 is the kind often used to package frozen dinners. The body 10 of the container is ordinarily stamped from a thin

3

gauge aluminum ranging from .002 to .008 inch in thickness to form partitions therein which divide the body into three distinct sections. Depending upon the manner in which the tray is stamped, any number of sections can be formed. In the embodiment shown, two smaller sections 11 and 12 are provided to contain, for example, frozen vegetables while a larger section 13 usually contains meat, fish or the like. Overlying the sections and securely crimped on the body 10 along its shoulder portion 14 to close the container is a substantially rigid cover 15. As shown in FIG. 5 the edge portion 16 of the body 10 is folded over and crimped tightly along the marginal portion 17 of the cover 15 and thereby securely holds the cover on the shoulder portion 14 of the body.

The cover 15 shown in this embodiment consists of a fibrous paperboard ply 18 with an outer aluminum foil ply 19 adhesively laminated to one side of the paperboard ply and an inner aluminum foil ply adhesively laminated to the opposite side of the paperboard ply. Alternatively this cover could be a fibrous paperboard laminated with foil on one side and plastic on the other, or both sides plastic, or both sides wax. It is also contemplated that the cover could be constructed of a fibrous material alone or any other material which will permit ease of opening consistent with the invention. However, by providing a laminated cover as described, it is relatively impervious to moisture and is not likely to be affected by either moisture seepage of the contents, or from condensation occurring during freezing and thawing operations.

The easy opening means of the container are made possible by a unique scoring arrangement. As shown in FIG. 3 and as indicated in FIGS. 1 and 2, a first elongated score line 21 extends through the outer aluminum foil ply 19 substantially into the center of the paperboard ply 18. It is to be noted that ordinarily the scores will not go more than 50% through the cover and preferably not more than 35% in offset scoring. The reason for this is to retain the structural resistance of the cover to opening upon impact during storage or shipping which might otherwise occur if the scores were cut into the cover too deeply. Generally registering with score line 21 but slightly offset therefrom in the plane of the cover, and extending substantially into the center of the paperboard through the inner aluminum foil ply 20 on the opposite side of the cover 15 is a second score line 22. The resultant pair of cooperating score lines 21 and 22, which are substantially parallel to each other, extend in the plane of the cover to overlie the periphery of the sections. In this embodiment the cooperating score lines begin at substantially the mid-point of opposed sides of the container and substantially intersect at a mutual terminal point 23 underlying the overlapping edge portion 16 at substantially the mid-point of the third side, with a similar pair of score lines extending around substantially the peripheral marginal portion of the container closure. It is contemplated that it might be desirable in some embodiments to construct a container in which the score lines overlie the periphery or part of the periphery of only one section and thereby permit ease of opening of one section only.

Owing to the type of food packaged in these containers it is often necessary and desirable to expose the food in an individual section to direct heating while maintaining the food in the other sections in a substantially closed container so that they will be steam heated. The container of the invention is adapted to provide means which not only render the container itself easily openable, but also facilitate uncovering individual sections of the container. The cover shown is adapted to open in three stages. Means are formed at the terminal point 23 by cutting through the overlapping edge 16 of the body 10 at 27 and 27'. These means permit the marginal edge 16 to be folded back away from the marginal portion of

4

the cover (as indicated in FIG. 5) so that a tab portion 28 of the cover 15 can be grasped. By lifting the tab portion 28 and thereby applying a force substantially perpendicular to the plane of the cover, the fibers of the paperboard ply 18 will separate along the portion between the cooperating score lines 21 and 22 as shown in FIG. 4. Continued lifting of the tab portion 28 will cause the entire large portion 29 to be completely separated from the container as defined by the configuration of the score lines, and thereby expose the large section 13 of the tray. The means for opening the container which consist essentially of cutting the edge 16 substantially overlapping the terminal point 23, could also be achieved by perforating or in some other manner weakening this overlapping edge.

It is noteworthy that after heating or steaming, the paper matrix along the score line is weakened, thereby less force is required to separate the cover between the offset scores and opening of the sections is facilitated. This loss of strength in the paper matrix near the offset scores is particularly assisted by the transfer of ice crystals at and around the scores during the freezing operation. Upon heating, the entrapped ice crystals will melt and soak the adjacent fibres to further assist in separation along the score lines.

By means of this arrangement, the food contained in the large section can be browned by direct exposure to heat at any time during the heating operation. Smaller portions 30 and 31 of the cover remain attached to the container and overlie sections 11 and 12 respectively. These portions can be selectively removed by simply grasping the tab portion 28 provided by folding back of the marginal portion 16 and lifting upward and causing the fibres of the paperboard between opposed cooperating score lines to separate in a similar manner as described above. Obviously, the cover could be scored to permit either of the portions 29, 30, or 31 to be removed first since the portion which can be removed first between any two adjoining portions will be the closest to the score cut into the paperboard ply 18 through the inner ply 20. Moreover, the means which are shown at the terminal point 23 could in an alternative arrangement be positioned elsewhere on the marginal portion 16 or in some manner incorporated into the body of the cover 15. However, when the means mentioned above are provided on the overlapping edge 16 overlying the terminal point 23, it is considered to be within the scope of the invention to secure a cover scored as described on a non-partitioned body, since the easy opening features are achieved on such a container as well. In such a case, the extension of the score lines in the plane of the cover can take substantially any shape since there are no partitions to overlie.

In FIG. 6 and FIG. 7 an alternate means for opening the container is shown. Here portions 29, 30, and 31 of the cover 15 are scored similarly as described above thereby permitting portion 29 to open first. In this embodiment however, secondary tabs 34 and 35 are provided on portions 30 and 31 respectively, adjacent the portion 28. These secondary tab portions 34 and 35 are defined on one side in this embodiment by additional offset cooperating score lines 36 and 37 and 36' and 37' respectively (these additional score lines are cut into the cover from the opposite sides thereof in a similar manner as score lines 21 and 22) and on the other side by a portion of score lines 21 and 22 which extend around the periphery of the cover 15. The cooperating score lines 21 and 22 and the additional cooperating score lines 36 and 37 substantially define secondary tab portion 34 and a weakened embossed line 38 is provided which joins the score lines and additional score lines. A similar embossed line 38' is provided adjacent tab portion 35. Tab lifters 39 and 40 are formed on tab portion 28 by a divergence of score line 21 out

5

of registry with score line 22 into the secondary tabs 34 and 35. As shown in FIG. 7, by means of this scoring arrangement lifting of tab portion 28 causes tension to be built up between the tab lifters 39 and 40 and the secondary tabs 34 and 35. Continued lifting of the tab portion 28 causes the secondary tabs to be lifted and folded along embossed line 38, and separated along the score lines which substantially define the tab. Ultimately this lifting causes the tab lifters 39 and 40 to be separated from the secondary tabs 34 and 35 along that portion between score line 21 and the divergent score line 22'. As shown in FIG. 7 the secondary tabs are then lifted slightly and can be easily grasped, thereby facilitating stripping of portions 30 and 31. It is also proposed that these easy opening means can be comprised of a single secondary tab and tab lifter to facilitate opening one secondary portion only.

In FIGS. 8-11 there are shown various scoring patterns which illustrate several embodiments of the package of the invention, in which the easy opening features have been achieved. In each embodiment a closure member is shown attached to a container in which the edge portion 41 thereof is crimped about the marginal portion of the closure member. The container here does not have partitions formed therein. As shown in FIG. 8, as in each of the embodiments, there is a first pair of cooperating score lines 42 cut into a closure member 43 in a similar manner as the pair of cooperating score lines described above in relation to FIG. 1. This first pair of cooperating score lines 42 extends in the plane of the closure member 43 completely around the peripheral marginal portion thereof. As shown, when the closure member 43 is attached to the container body 12 such that the overlapping edge portion 41 overlies the marginal edge of the closure member 43, the first pair of cooperating score lines 42 is spaced slightly from the overlapping edge 41 of the container body. A second pair of cooperating score lines 44 are cut into the closure member 43 and extend in the plane of the closure member such that this pair is generally spaced from the peripheral marginal portion of the closure member but substantially intersects the first pair of cooperating score lines 42 at a point of intersection 45 along one side of the closure member 43. In FIG. 8, the second pair of cooperating score lines 44 extends in a rather general curve which tends to follow the extension of the first pair of cooperating score lines 42 but is substantially spaced therefrom.

As shown in FIG. 12 a tab portion 46 of the closure member 43 is folded back against itself at the intersecting point 45 and is overlapped along a fold 47 formed by the folded back tab portion 46 with the edge 16 of the container body. The tab portion 46 thereby extends inwardly from the peripheral portion of the container and is exposed at the surface of the closure member 43 so that it can easily be grasped by hand and lifted so as to effect separation between the cooperating score lines of each pair. Owing to the manner in which the second pair of cooperating score lines 44 generally follows the first pair of cooperating score lines 42, lifting of the tab portion 46 will effect substantially complete opening of the package by removal of a marginal center portion of the closure member 43 which is substantially defined by the first pair of cooperating score lines 42.

In FIG. 11 a first pair of cooperating score lines 48 also extends around the peripheral marginal portion of a closure member 49. A second pair of cooperating score lines 50 substantially intersects the first pair of cooperating score lines 48 at intersecting point 51 at which a tab portion 52 is provided. In this design, the second pair of cooperating score lines 50 is spaced from the peripheral marginal portion of the closure 49 and extends substantially parallel to the first pair of cooperating score lines 48 for a limited extent. By this arrangement lifting of the tab portion 52 will also effect complete

6

removal of the major central portion of the closure member 49 which is defined between first pair of cooperating score lines 48.

In FIG. 9 a first pair of cooperating score lines 53 extends substantially around the peripheral marginal portion of a closure member 54. In this embodiment a second pair of cooperating score lines 55 is cut into the closure member and extends in the plane thereof, and a third pair of cooperating score lines is also cut into the closure member 54 and extends in the plane thereof. The second pair 55 and third pair 56 of cooperating score lines intersect the first pair 53 of cooperating score lines substantially adjacent each other at an intersecting point 57. A tab portion 58 is provided at the intersecting point 57. It is to be noted that the manner of scoring in FIG. 9 is substantially the same as shown in FIGS. 1 and 2. The pairs of cooperating score lines serve to define the closure member 54 into three distinct portions. Thus, this arrangement would be particularly suitable for a partitioned container body such as described in relation to FIGS. 1 and 2. Owing to the manner in which the score lines of the respective pairs are arranged, a larger portion 60 will be removed upon lifting of the tab portion 58. A first secondary portion 61 and a second secondary portion 62 will remain attached to the container body in a similar manner as that described in relation to FIG. 1 and FIG. 2. Here however owing to the nonlinear extent of the second and third pairs of cooperating score lines 55 and 56, secondary tab portions 63 and 64 are defined after removal of portion 60. Thus, by simply grasping one of the secondary tab portions 63 or 64 either of the secondary portions 61 or 62 can be selectively removed.

In FIG. 10 the package is provided with a first pair of cooperating score lines 65 which extend around the peripheral marginal portion of a closure member 66. A second pair of cooperating score lines 67 is cut into the closure member 66 and extends in the plane of the closure member. Here, the second pair of cooperating score lines 67 serves to define a major portion 68 and a secondary portion 69 in the closure member 66. The second pair of cooperating score lines 67 are generally spaced from the first pair of cooperating score lines 65 and intersect at an intersecting point 70 at which a tab portion 71 is provided. The second pair of cooperating score lines 67 extends from the intersecting point 70 to another side of the closure member 66 and here intersects the first pair of cooperating score lines 65 for a second time. According to this arrangement, upon lifting the tab portion 71, a secondary portion 69 of the closure member can be completely removed. This will leave the major portion 68 of the closure member 66 securely attached to the container body. A secondary tab portion 72 is defined therein by means of the nonlinear extent of this second pair of cooperating score lines 67. By simply grasping the tab portion 72 the major portion 68 of the closure member 66 may also be easily removed.

In FIGS. 13-15 alternative preferred means of attaching the closure member to the container body are shown. In FIG. 13 a container body 73 is shown with its edge portion 74 folded over the peripheral edge portion 75 of a closure member 76. The edge portion 74 of the container body is resting on a die 77 and has a perforation 78 punched completely therethrough. This is accomplished by a punch 79 which is shown overlying the perforation 78. It has been found that by forming spaced perforations along the edge portion 74 of the container body and the edge portion 75 of the closure member, the closure member 76 is securely held on the container body 73 thereby facilitating removal of the select portions of the closure member. In FIG. 14, instead of perforations being formed through an edge portion 80 of a container body 81 and through an edge portion 82 of a closure member 83, spaced crimped portions 84 are formed therealong by placing the edge portion 80 of the container body on a die 85 and then crimping crimped portions with a

suitable punch 86. As shown in FIG. 15 it has particularly been found desirable to form elongated spaced crimped portions 84 in this manner.

It is to be noted that despite the fact scores are formed in the cover, it nevertheless remains substantially impervious to moisture penetration. Any wicking of moisture will be minimized by the offsetting of the scores and will not follow a straight-line path through the cover for the simple reason that the score does not extend completely therethrough. Rather, any moisture seepage will be confined to the fibrous paperboard ply 18. Furthermore, owing to the unique arrangement of the pairs of cooperating score lines, opening of the package either partially or wholly is a simple operation which can be performed by hand.

I claim:

1. An easily openable container closure comprising:

- (a) a paper-board closure member,
- (b) a first pair of cooperating score lines cut into said member and extending in the plane of said member substantially around its peripheral marginal portion, and
- (c) a second pair of cooperating score lines cut into said member and extending in the plane of said member generally spaced from the peripheral marginal portion thereof but substantially intersecting said first pair of score lines at one point thereof and associated with said first pair of cooperating score lines to permit removal of at least a portion of said member, said pairs of cooperating score lines being cut into but not through said member from opposite sides thereof with each score line on one side generally registering with but slightly offset from a corresponding score line on the other side whereby said member is separable along a portion thereof between the cooperating score lines, and
- (d) tab means at the intersecting point and defined along a portion of the cover wherein the score lines of the respective first and second pairs of score lines which are cut into the inner side of the cover lie between score lines of the respective first and second pairs of cooperating score lines cut into the outer side of the cover, and said tab defined by a first cut extending from an edge of the closure to said first pair of cooperating score lines and a second cut peripherally spaced from the first cut and extending from the edge of the closure to said second score line at said intersecting point to define a tab extending inwardly from the edge of the closure to said second score line at said intersecting point to define a tab extending inwardly from the edge of the container and terminating at the peripheral extent of the first score lines, whereby said closure is free from any openings extending completely therethrough along that portion of the closure inward of the first pair of score lines and tearing of the closure is initiated by lifting said tab means so that the cover separates along said portion thereof between said pairs of cooperating score lines.

2. A closure as in claim 1 wherein a third pair of said cooperating score lines are cut into said member and extend in the plane of said closure member from a point substantially intersecting said first score lines and diverging outwardly therefrom substantially to define three sections in said closure member.

3. A closure as in claim 1 wherein said member has an outer ply of moisture resistant material, at least one central ply of body stock adhesively secured to the outer ply, and an inner ply of moisture resistant material adhesively secured to the body stock.

4. A closure as in claim 3 wherein at least one of said outer and inner plies is aluminum foil.

5. An easily openable food package comprising:

- (a) a container body having an opening therein,
- (b) a quantity of foodstuffs contained therein, and

(c) a closure positioned over said opening with its peripheral marginal portion attached to said body, said closure comprising:

- (i) a paperboard closure member,
- (ii) a first pair of cooperating score lines cut into said member and extending in the plane of said member substantially around its peripheral marginal portion, and
- (iii) a second pair of cooperating score lines extending in the plane of the member generally spaced from the peripheral marginal portion thereof but substantially intersecting said first pair of score lines at one point thereof and defining separable portions of the closure with said first pair of cooperating score lines to permit removal of at least a portion of said member, said pairs of cooperating score lines being cut into but not through said member from opposite sides thereof with each score line on one side generally registering with but slightly offset from a corresponding score line on the other side whereby said member is separable along a portion thereof between the cooperating score lines, and
- (d) tab means at the intersecting point and defined along a portion of the cover wherein the score lines of the respective first and second pairs of score lines which are cut into the inner side of the cover lie between score lines of the respective first and second pairs of cooperating score lines cut into the outer side of the cover, and said tab defined by a first cut extending from an edge of the closure to said first pair of cooperating score lines and a second cut peripherally spaced from the first cut and extending from the edge of the closure to said second score line at said intersecting point to define a tab extending inwardly from the edge of the closure to said second score line at said intersecting point to define a tab extending inwardly from the edge of the container and terminating at the peripheral extent of the first score lines, whereby said closure is free from any openings extending completely therethrough along that portion of the closure inward of the first pairs of score lines and tearing of the closure is initiated by lifting said tab means so that the cover separates along said portion thereof between said pairs of cooperating score lines.

6. An easily openable package as in claim 5 wherein a third pair of said cooperating score lines are cut into said member and extend in the plane of said closure member from a point substantially intersecting said first score lines and diverging outwardly therefrom substantially to define three sections in said closure member.

7. An easily openable package as in claim 6 wherein a tab portion is defined by one of said second and third pairs of cooperating score lines so as to facilitate separation of the remaining portion of the member after separation of one portion thereof.

8. An easily openable package as in claim 5 wherein said member has an outer ply of moisture resistant material, at least one central ply of body stock adhesively secured to the outer ply, and an inner ply of moisture resistant material adhesively secured to the body stock.

9. An easily openable package as in claim 7 wherein at least one of said outer and inner plies is aluminum foil.

10. An easily openable package as in claim 5 wherein an edge portion of said body which substantially defines said opening therein is crimped about and overlaps the peripheral marginal portion of said closure.

11. An easily openable package as in claim 9 wherein said edge portion of said body and said peripheral marginal edge portion of said cover have spaced perforations extending therethrough.

12. An easily openable package as in claim 10 wherein said edge portion is cut at said point of intersection whereby the edge portion can be folded back away from the

marginal edge portion of the cover to permit grasping of the cover to open the container.

13. An easily openable package as in claim 5 wherein said tab means comprises a first tab portion of the cover defined by said cooperating score lines, at least one secondary tab portion substantially defined by additional cooperating score lines interconnected with said cooperating score lines, and a tab lifter formed by extending out of registry into said secondary tab portion whereby lifting of said first tab portion causes said secondary tab portion to be partially lifted.

14. A package as in claim 5 wherein said tab portion is comprised of an extended portion of said cover which is folded back against itself such that an edge of said folded back portion extends outwardly from said body edge portion to permit grasping thereof.

15. An easily openable package as in claim 5 wherein said container body has partitions therein dividing the

body into open sections, and said cooperating score lines substantially overlie said partitions whereby each of said sections can be uncovered individually.

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