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(54) **Sausage tray**

Würstchentablett

Plateau pour saucisses

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**EP 2 228 309 B1**

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**Description**

## FIELD OF THE INVENTION

**[0001]** The present invention generally relates to a packaging tray for a meat product, and particularly relates to tray for sausage links.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

**[0002]** Sausage meat is typically provided in bulk, patties, or links. Bulk sausage meat and patties fit neatly on rectangular foam trays that have a clear plastic covering over the sausage meat for viewing by a purchaser such as in US 5 820 104 and EP 1 779 733. Sausage links, such as bratwurst, Italian sausage, and the like, have a cylindrical arcuate shape that can shift or move on a rectangular tray. The shifted links can appear undesirable to a prospective purchaser causing the purchaser to bypass the package having shifted links and choose a package having links in an ordered or more regular appearance. The bypassed package may then sit on a store shelf past its expiration date requiring the vendor to discard the bypassed package resulting in waste. The sausage links also do not cover the entire tray bottom resulting in empty space beneath the clear plastic covering.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

**[0003]** One embodiment of the present invention provides a packaging tray for sausage links. The tray includes a bottom having side edges joined by arcuate end edges. A side wall extends upwardly from each of the side edges. An end wall extends upwardly from each of the arcuate end edges. One of the arcuate end walls is convex and the other of the arcuate end walls is concave. Advantageously, the arcuate end walls secure nested sausages on the tray from shifting and eliminates empty space on the tray.

**[0004]** The foregoing and advantages of the invention will appear in the detailed description which follows. In the description, reference is made to the accompanying drawings which illustrate a preferred embodiment of the invention.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

**[0005]** The invention will hereafter be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein like reference numerals denote like elements, and:

- [0006]** Fig. 1 is a top, side perspective view of a sausage link tray incorporating the present invention;
- [0007]** Fig. 2 is a top view of the tray of Fig. 1;
- [0008]** Fig. 3 is a side view of the tray of Fig. 1;
- [0009]** Fig. 4 is a sectional view along line 4-4 of Fig. 2;
- [0010]** Fig. 5 is an end view of the tray of Fig. 1;
- [0011]** Fig. 6 is a sectional view along line 6-6 of Fig. 2;
- [0012]** Fig. 7 is a top, side perspective view of another

sausage link tray incorporating the present invention;

**[0013]** Fig. 8 is a top view of the tray of Fig. 7;

**[0014]** Fig. 9 is a side view of the tray of Fig. 7;

**[0015]** Fig. 10 is a sectional view along line 10-10 of Fig. 8;

**[0016]** Fig. 11 is an end view of the tray of Fig. 7;

**[0017]** Fig. 12 is a sectional view along line 12-12 of Fig. 8.

## 10 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

**[0018]** Referring to Figs. 1-6, a sausage link tray 10 incorporating the present invention includes a planar tray bottom 12 having side edges 14, 16 joined by end edges 18, 22. The side edges 14, 16 are substantially parallel to each other. The end edges 18, 22 are arcuate conforming to the general curvature of a sausage link 30, such as a bratwurst, Italian sausage, and the like. One of the end edges 18 is concave generally conforming to an inner diameter of an arcuate sausage link 30. Likewise, the other end edge 22 is convex generally conforming to an outer diameter of an arcuate sausage link 30.

**[0019]** Side walls 24, 26 extend upwardly from the side edges 14, 16, and are substantially parallel to each other for receiving sausage links 30 therebetween.

**[0020]** End walls 28, 32 extend upwardly from the end edges 18, 22. Each end wall 28, 32 follows the curvature of the end edge 18, 22 from which the end wall 28, 32 extends. A first end sausage link 30 carried in the tray 10 adjacent the concave end wall 28 extending from the concave end edge 18 nests with the concave end wall 28 along the entire length of the first sausage link 30 on the tray 10. Likewise, a second end sausage link 30 adjacent the convex end wall 32 extending from the convex end edge 22 nests with the convex end wall 32 along the entire length of the second sausage link 30 on the tray 10. Intermediate sausage links interposed between the first and second end sausages nest with each other or one of the first and second end sausage links 30. Advantageously, the nested sausage links are held securely in the tray 10 between the arcuate end walls 28, 32 to prevent shifting of the sausage links on the tray 10. Moreover, the tray end walls 28, 32 conform to the arcuate shape of the sausage links to avoid empty spaces on the tray 10.

**[0021]** In a second embodiment of the present invention shown in Figs 7-12, the tray 10 has side walls 24, 26 including dividers 34, 36 extending inwardly toward the tray center. Each divider 34 extending from one side wall 24 is paired with a corresponding divider 36 extending from the facing side wall 26. Each pair of dividers 34, 36 separates ends of an individual sausage link 30 on the tray 10 from an adjacent sausage link on the tray 10 to more securely hold the sausage link 30 on the tray 10. Advantageously, the dividers 34, 36 further prevent the sausage links from shifting on the tray 10. Although dividers extending from the side walls are shown, arcuate

dividers extending upwardly from the tray bottom 14 and substantially parallel to the end edges 18, 22 can be provided to prevent the sausage links from shifting without departing from the scope of the invention.

**[0022]** The sausage trays 10 incorporating the present invention are preferably formed from molded foamed plastic foam, also known as Expanded Polystyrene (EPS or foam), using methods known in the art. However, it is possible to form the present invention from the following materials: polyethylene (PE), high-density polyethylene (HDPE), low-density polyethylene (LDPE), linear low-density polyethylene (LLDPE), polypropylene (PP), polypropylene copolymer, high impact polystyrene (HIPS), polyester, polyethylene terephthalate (PET), crystallized polyethylene terephthalate (CPET); polyvinyl chloride (PVC), paperboard, conjugate, and thermoformed corrugate.

**[0023]** Moreover, the radius of the end edges 18, 22 and arcuate end walls 28, 32 need only approximate the actual curvature of the sausage links if sausage links having a high degree of flexibility are placed on the tray 10. The length of the tray 10, i.e. the distance between the tray end walls 28, 32 depends upon the number of sausage links that will be placed on the tray bottom 12.

**[0024]** A preferred embodiment of the invention has been described in considerable detail. Many modifications and variations to the preferred embodiment described will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art. Therefore, the invention should not be limited to the embodiment described, but should be defined by the claims that follow.

## Claims

### 1. A sausage tray characterized by:

a planar bottom (12) having side edges (14, 16) joined by arcuate end edges (18, 22);  
a side wall (24, 26) extending upwardly from each of said side edges (14, 16); and  
an arcuate end wall (28, 32) extending upwardly from each of said arcuate end edges (18, 22), wherein one of said arcuate end walls is convex and the other of said arcuate end walls is concave.

2. The sausage tray as in claim 1, including at least one first divider (34, 36) extending inwardly from at least one of said side walls (24, 26).
3. The sausage tray as in claim 1, in which said arcuate end edges (18, 22) conform to a general curvature of a sausage link.
4. The sausage tray as in claim 1, in which said tray is formed from a plastic foam.

5. The sausage tray as in claim 1, including pairs of dividers (34, 36), each of said pairs of dividers (34, 36) including one divider (34) extending inwardly from one of said side walls (24) and a corresponding divider (36) extending inwardly from the other of said side walls (26), wherein ends of a sausage link are securely received between adjacent pairs of said dividers (34, 36).

6. The sausage tray as in claim 1, in which a sausage link disposed in said tray nests with one of said arcuate end walls (28, 32).

## 15 Patentansprüche

### 1. Würstchenschale, **gekennzeichnet durch:**

einen ebenen Boden (12), der Seitenränder (14, 16) aufweist, die von bogenförmigen Stirnrändern (18, 22) begrenzt sind;  
eine Seitenwand (24, 26), die sich von jedem der Seitenränder (14, 16) nach oben erstreckt; und  
eine bogenförmige Stirnwand (28, 32), die sich von jedem der bogenförmigen Stirnränder (18, 22) nach oben erstreckt, wobei eine bogenförmige Stirnwand konvex und die andere bogenförmige Stirnwand konkav ist.

2. Würstchenschale nach Anspruch 1, umfassend zumindest eine erste Trenneinrichtung (34, 36), die sich von zumindest einer Seitenwand (24, 26) nach innen erstreckt.

3. Würstchenschale nach Anspruch 1, wobei die bogenförmigen Stirnränder (18, 22) der herkömmlichen Rundung einer Strangwurst entsprechen.

4. Würstchenschale nach Anspruch 1, wobei die Schale aus einem Kunststoffschäum ausgeformt ist.

5. Würstchenschale nach Anspruch 1, umfassend Trenneinrichtungspaare (34, 36), wobei jedes Trenneinrichtungspaar (34, 36) eine Trenneinrichtung (34), die sich von einer Seitenwand (24) nach innen erstreckt, und eine zugeordnete Trenneinrichtung (36) umfasst, die sich von der anderen Seitenwand (26) nach innen erstreckt, wobei die Enden einer Strangwurst zwischen benachbarten Trenneinrichtungspaaren (24, 36) sicher aufgenommen sind.

6. Würstchenschale nach Anspruch 1, wobei eine Strangwurst, die in der Schale platziert ist, an einer der bogenförmigen Stirnwände (28, 32) anliegt.

## Revendications

### 1. Plateau pour saucisses, **caractérisé par**:

un fond plat (12) présentant des bords latéraux (14, 16) qui sont joutés par des bords frontaux arqués (18, 22);  
 une paroi latérale (24, 26) s'étendant vers le haut à partir de chacun desdits bords latéraux (14, 16); et  
 une paroi frontale arquée (28, 32) s'étendant vers le haut à partir de chacun desdits bords frontaux arqués (18, 22), une paroi frontale arquée étant convexe et l'autre paroi frontale arquée étant concave.

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2. Plateau pour saucisses selon la revendication 1, comprenant au moins un premier diviseur (34, 36) s'étendant vers l'intérieur à partir d'au moins une paroi latérale (24, 26).

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3. Plateau pour saucisses selon la revendication 1, les bords frontaux arqués (18, 22) épousant la courbure typique d'un chapelet de saucisse.

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4. Plateau pour saucisses selon la revendication 1, le plateau étant fabriqué d'une mousse plastique.

5. Plateau pour saucisses selon la revendication 1, comprenant des paires de diviseurs (34, 36), chaque paire de diviseurs (34, 36) comprenant un diviseur (34), qui s'étend vers l'intérieur à partir d'une paroi latérale (24), et un diviseur (36) correspondant, qui s'étend vers l'intérieur à partir de l'autre paroi latérale (26), les extrémités d'un chapelet de saucisse étant solidement placées entre des paires de diviseurs (24, 36) adjacentes.

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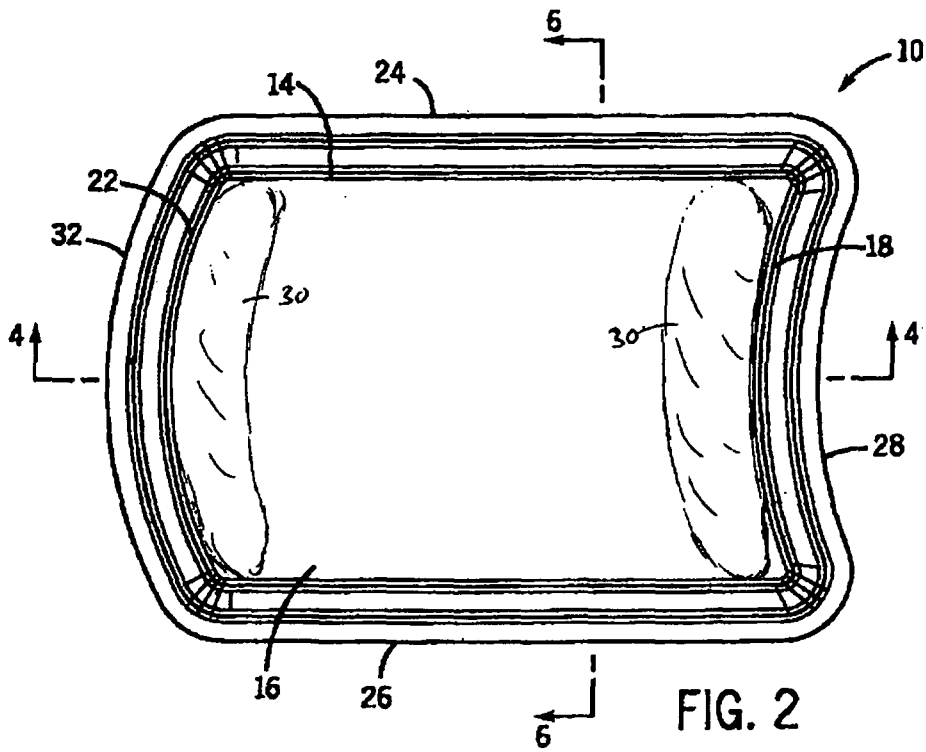
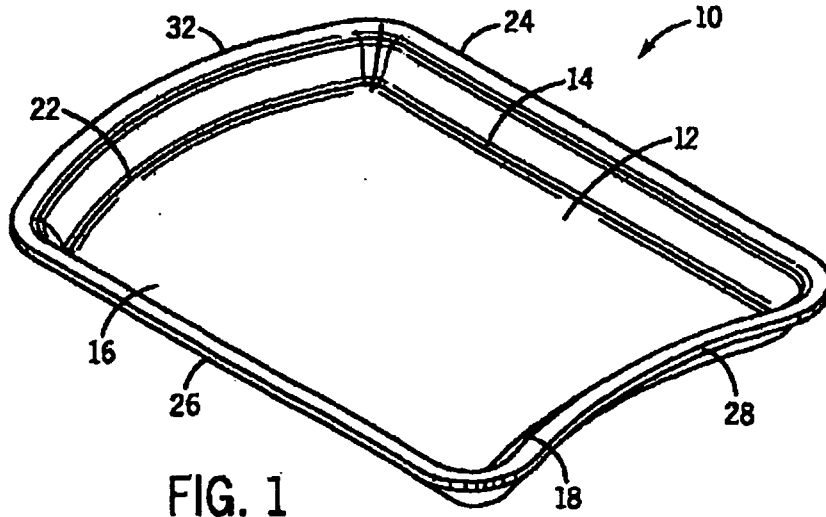
6. Plateau pour saucisses selon la revendication 1, un chapelet de saucisse placé dans le plateau reposant contre l'une desdites parois latérales arquées (28, 32).

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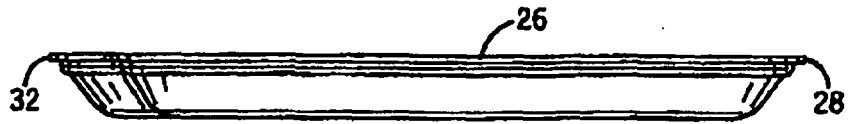


FIG. 3

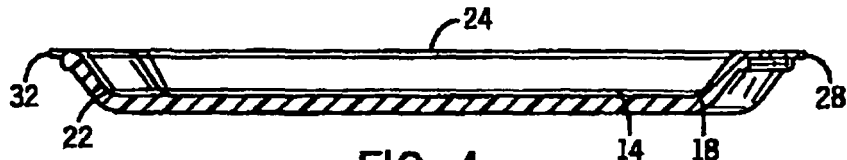


FIG. 4

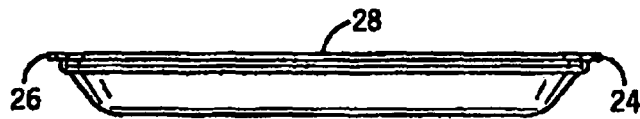


FIG. 5

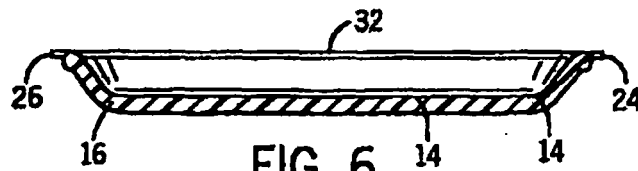
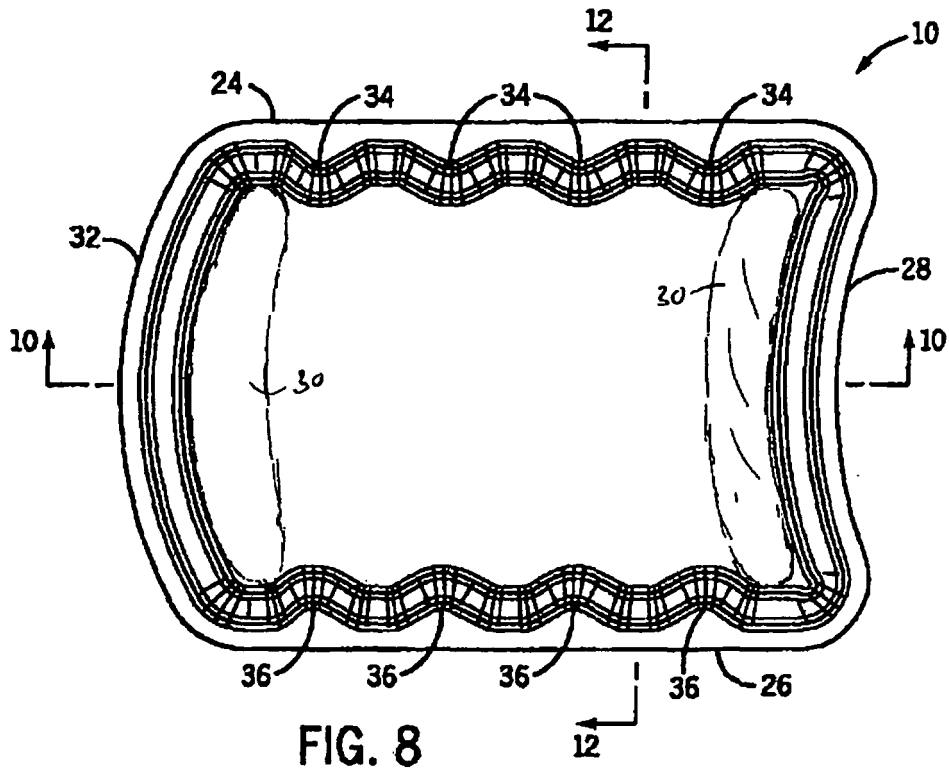
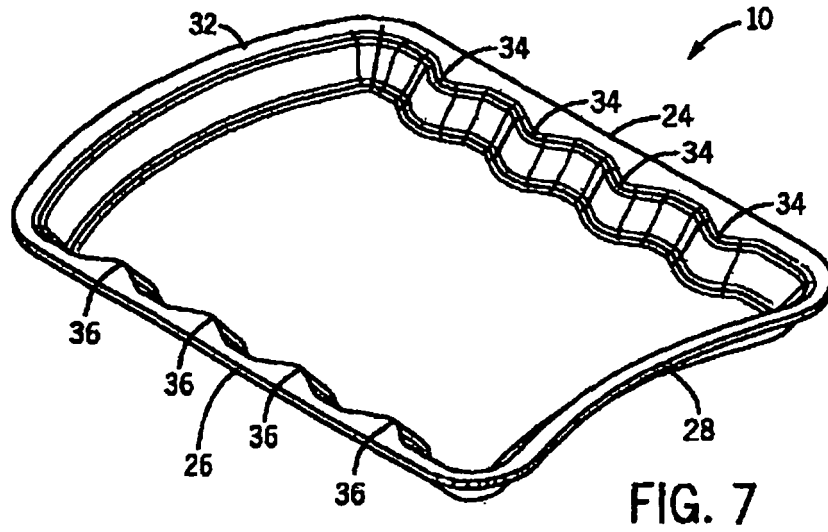


FIG. 6



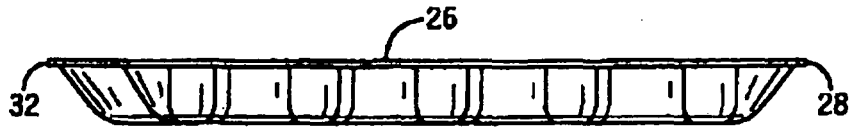


FIG. 9

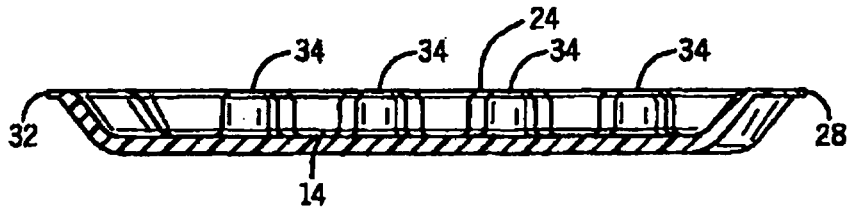


FIG. 10

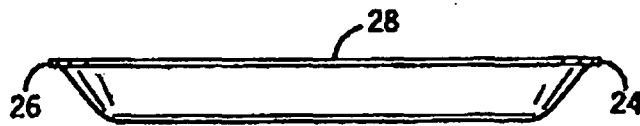


FIG. 11

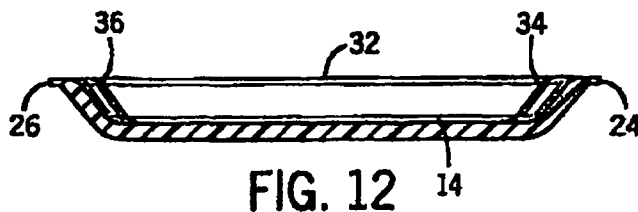


FIG. 12

**REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION**

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