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(54) **FOOD PLATE WITH STRUCTURE FOR ACCOMMODATING FORK TINES**

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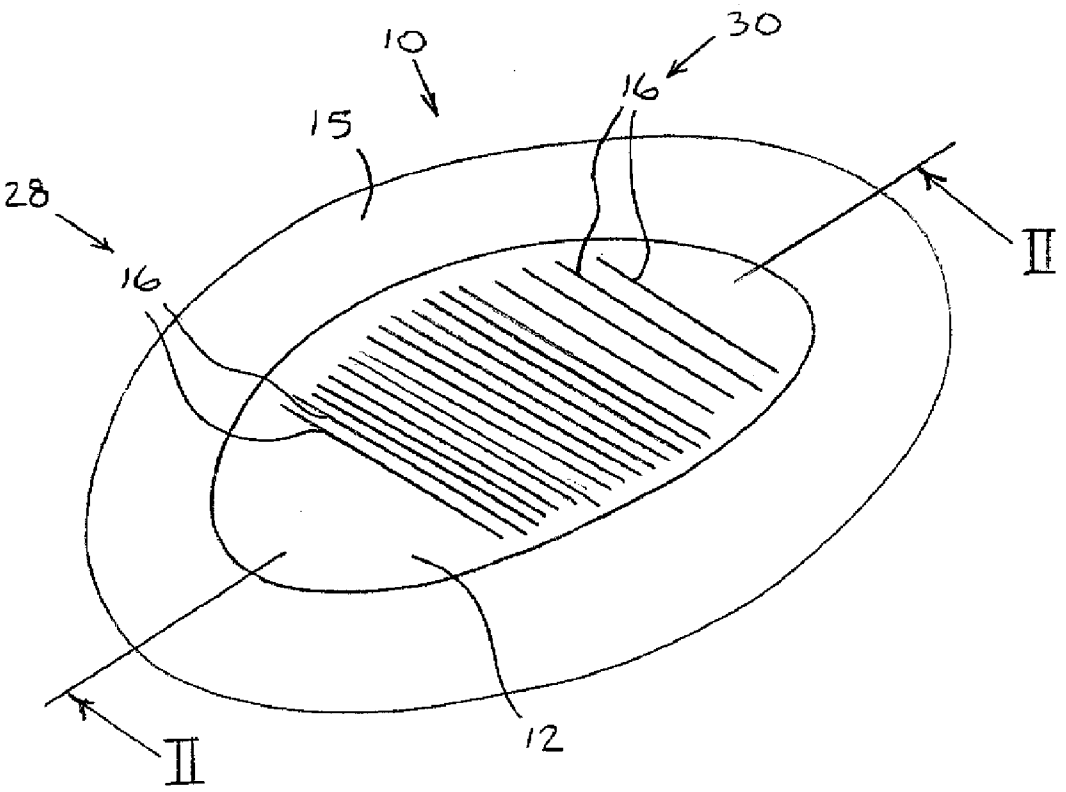
(57) **ABSTRACT**

An article including a food plate including a surface for placing food thereon, the surface including an orderly series of protrusions spaced from one another, wherein a spacing between adjacent protrusions equals a distance between tines of a fork.



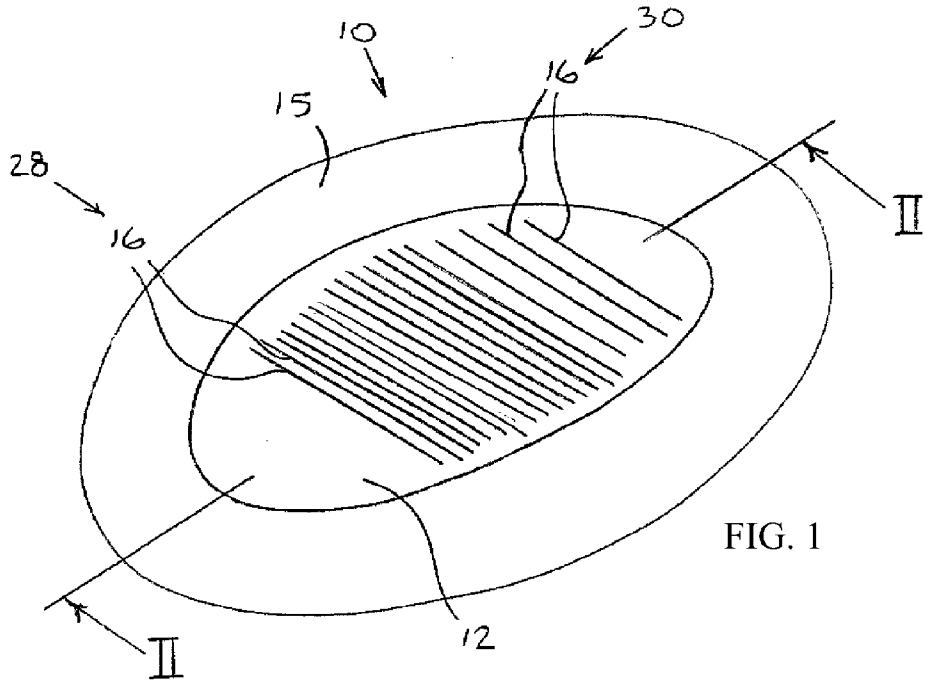


FIG. 1

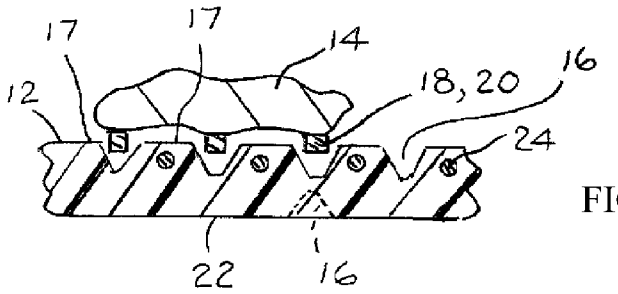


FIG. 2

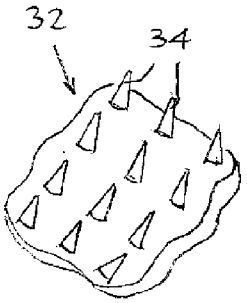


FIG. 3

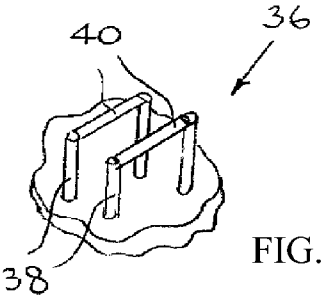


FIG. 4

FOOD PLATE WITH STRUCTURE FOR ACCOMMODATING FORK TINES

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates generally to plates for food, and particularly to a food plate with structure for accommodating fork tines.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Lifting small pieces of food, like chopped vegetable salad, peas, cherry tomatoes and the like, with a fork from a smooth plate is difficult due to low friction between food and plate surface. Since it is difficult to place the fork underneath the food, the food ends up being pushed by the fork all the way to the plate shoulder where it encounters horizontal resistance allowing it to be lifted by the fork.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The present invention seeks to provide an improved food plate that makes picking up pieces of food with a fork a simple and enjoyable task, as described more in detail hereinbelow.

[0004] There is thus provided in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention an article including a food plate including a surface for placing food thereon, the surface including an orderly series of protrusions spaced from one another, wherein a spacing between adjacent protrusions equals a distance between tines of a fork. A height of the protrusions is equal to or greater than a height of tines of the fork.

[0005] In one embodiment, the protrusions are spaced from one another by furrows. The food plate may be corrugated with furrows on another surface opposite to the surface for placing food thereon. One or more heating wires may be disposed in at least one of the protrusions.

[0006] In one embodiment, there are at least two sets of protrusions, wherein in one set the protrusions are spaced from each other by a first distance and in another set the protrusions are spaced from each other by a second distance different from the first distance.

[0007] A fork is also provided whose tines are distanced from each other by the spacing between adjacent furrows.

[0008] In another embodiment, the protrusions include a matrix of spikes arranged in rows and columns. In yet another embodiment, the protrusions include parallel bars held by cross-bars at both ends thereof.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] The present invention will be understood and appreciated more fully from the following detailed description, taken in conjunction with the drawings in which:

[0010] FIG. **1** is a simplified pictorial illustration of a food plate, constructed and operative in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention, formed with furrows;

[0011] FIG. **2** is a simplified sectional illustration of the food plate of FIG. **1**, taken along lines II-II in FIG. **2**;

[0012] FIG. **3** is a simplified pictorial illustration of a food plate, constructed and operative in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention, formed with spaced spikes; and

[0013] FIG. **4** is a simplified pictorial illustration of a food plate, constructed and operative in accordance with yet another embodiment of the present invention, formed with spaced bars.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

[0014] Reference is now made to FIG. **1**, which illustrates a food plate **10**, constructed and operative in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention.

[0015] Food plate **10** includes a surface **12** for placing food **14** thereon. Food plate **10** is of course constructed of a material suitable for serving food thereon, such as but not limited to, porcelain, plastic, stainless steel, wood and others. Surface **12** is corrugated with furrows **16**, which may be formed by molding, machining, carving or any other suitable method. Furrows **16** define protrusions **17** and the spacing between adjacent furrows **16** or protrusions **17** equals a distance between tines **18** of a fork **20**. The depth of the furrows **16** (i.e., height of the protrusions **17**) is equal to or greater than a height of tines **18** of fork **20**. Surface **12** may be bordered by a rim **15**.

[0016] Food plate **10** may be further corrugated with furrows **16** on another surface **22** opposite to surface **12**, as indicated by the broken lines in FIG. **2**.

[0017] One or more heating wires **24** may be disposed in one or more protrusions **17** between adjacent furrows **16**. Heating wires **24** may be connected to a power source (not shown) for heating plate **10**.

[0018] Food plate **10** may be corrugated with at least two sets of furrows and protrusions, as shown in FIG. **1**, wherein in one set **28** the furrows and protrusions are spaced from each other by a first distance and in another set **30** the furrows and protrusions are spaced from each other by a second distance different from the first distance. In this manner, different sets of tableware and cutlery can be accommodated by a single food plate. The food plate may be provided and sold as part of a tableware set, including one or more sets of forks matched to the furrows and protrusions.

[0019] Reference is now made to FIG. **3**, which illustrates a food plate **32**, constructed and operative in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention. Food plate **32**, instead of having furrows like food plate **10**, is formed with spaced spikes **34**. In accordance with an embodiment of the invention, food plate **32** includes a matrix of spikes **34** arranged in rows and columns. The height of spikes **34** is generally equal to or greater than the fork tine height. The spacings between the rows and columns of the matrix are generally equal to fork inter-tines spacings, and may be different to accommodate different inter-tines spacings. It is noted that "spike" **34** can be pointed, but alternatively can be rounded, and in general can have a variety of shapes and sizes.

[0020] Reference is now made to FIG. **4**, which illustrates a food plate **36**, constructed and operative in accordance with yet another embodiment of the present invention. Food plate **36** includes parallel bars **38**, which may be held and connected by cross-bars **40** at both ends thereof. The height of parallel bars **38** is generally equal to or greater than the fork tine height. The inter-bars spacing is generally equal to a fork inter-tines spacing, and may be different to accommodate different inter-tines spacings. The bars **38** and **40** can have a variety of shapes and sizes.

[0021] All the embodiments of the invention may be constructed as an integral part of a plate. Alternatively, any of the embodiments of the invention may be constructed as an insert

designed to be placed in a conventional plate. Accordingly, the insert of the embodiment of FIG. **1** would have furrows as shown, the insert of FIG. **3** would have spikes and the insert of FIG. **4** would have bars. As before, the inserts would of course be constructed of a material suitable (hygienic) for serving food thereon, such as but not limited to, porcelain, plastic, stainless steel, wood and others. The inserts may be disposable.

[0022] The present invention may be used with a fork with sharp-tipped tines or with round-tipped tines. Thus the present invention provides a safety feature of permitting use of a safety fork with rounded tips, designed to lift food from a plate with furrows, spikes or adequate inserts. Prior art plates are not so useful with such round-tipped forks. Round-tipped forks are described, for example, in U.S. Pat. No. 4,896,423 to Kinsey, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

[0023] The scope of the present invention includes both combinations and subcombinations of the features described hereinabove as well as modifications and variations thereof which would occur to a person of skill in the art upon reading the foregoing description and which are not in the prior art.

What is claimed is:

1. An article comprising:

a food plate comprising a surface for placing food thereon, said surface comprising an orderly series of protrusions spaced from one another, wherein a spacing between adjacent protrusions equals a distance between tines of a fork.

2. The article according to claim **1**, wherein said protrusions are spaced from one another by furrows.

3. The article according to claim **1**, wherein a height of said protrusions is equal to or greater than a height of tines of the fork.

4. The article according to claim **1**, wherein said food plate is corrugated with furrows on another surface opposite to said surface for placing food thereon.

5. The article according to claim **1**, further comprising at least one heating wire disposed in at least one of said protrusions.

6. The article according to claim **1**, comprising at least two sets of protrusions, wherein in one set the protrusions are spaced from each other by a first distance and in another set the protrusions are spaced from each other by a second distance different from said first distance.

7. The article according to claim **1**, further comprising a fork whose tines are distanced from each other by the spacing between adjacent furrows.

8. The article according to claim **7**, wherein a width of said tines of said fork is at least double a height of said tines substantially over a length of said tines.

9. The article according to claim **7**, wherein tips of said fork are blunt.

10. The article according to claim **1**, wherein said protrusions comprise a matrix of spikes arranged in rows and columns.

11. The article according to claim **1**, wherein said protrusions comprise parallel bars held and connected by cross-bars at ends thereof.

12. An article for use with a food plate, comprising:

parallel bars held and connected by cross-bars at ends thereof, wherein a spacing between adjacent parallel bars equals a distance between tines of a fork, said parallel bars and said cross-bars being made of a material suitable for serving food thereon.

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