Jan. 24, 1956 H. L. HAYES 2,731,996

REMOVABLE INSERT FOR A LUNCH BOX

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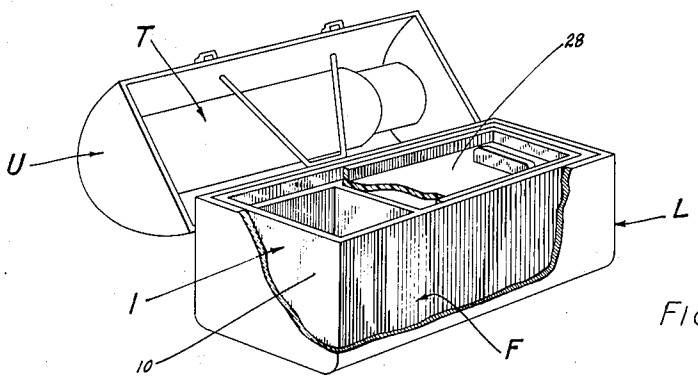
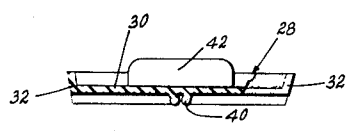


FIG. 1



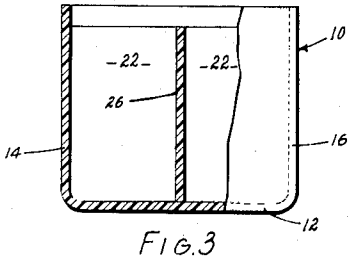
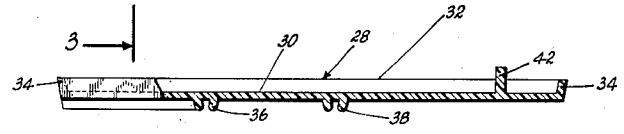


FIG. 3



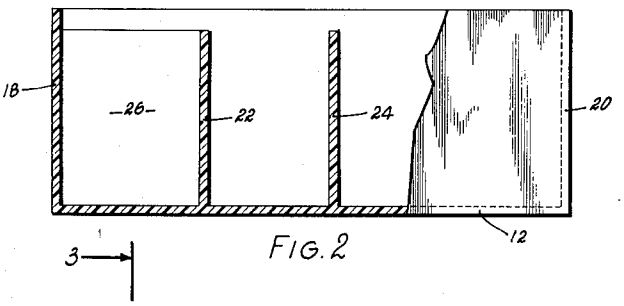


FIG. 2

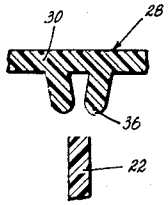


FIG. 5

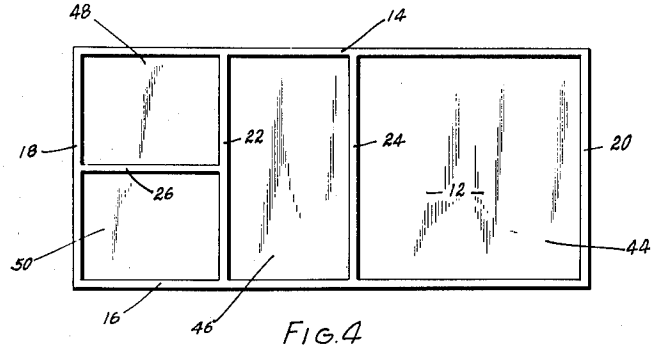


FIG. 4

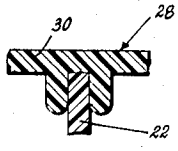


FIG. 6

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REMOVABLE INSERT FOR A LUNCH BOX

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1 Claim. (Cl. 150—.5)

The present invention relates generally to portable food containers and more particularly to a novel insert that may be removably mounted within a lunch box.

The conventional metal lunch box includes a rectangular open-topped food-receiving lower section or compartment and a generally hemispherical upper section for receiving a beverage-filled Thermos bottle. The upper and lower sections are hinged together at the upper edge of the lower section and the lower rear edge of the upper portion. The chief disadvantage of such lunch boxes is that where they are used to carry foods such as soup or salad, the latter must first be sealed within a separate receptacle and then deposited loosely within the food-receiving compartment. This results in a considerable loss of space within the latter section. Additionally, the chance that such receptacles might leak is always present. Another disadvantage of the conventional lunch box results from the fact that solid foods, such as sandwiches, pies or cakes, tend to rapidly dry out after being packed within the food-receiving compartment. This is especially true during periods of dry weather.

A major object of the present invention is to provide a novel insert for the food-receiving compartment of a conventional lunch box which makes it possible to carry foods of a liquid nature in said lunch box.

Another object of the invention is to provide an insert of the aforedescribed nature having an open-topped container and a removable cover therefor with unique sealing means being formed between the container and its cover.

A further object is to provide an insert of the aforedescribed nature which protects solid foods against drying out once they have been packed therein.

Yet another object of the invention is to provide an insert of the aforedescribed nature which may be molded from a plastic material at a very low cost per unit.

An additional object is to provide an insert of the aforedescribed nature which will afford a long and useful service life.

Another object is to provide an insert which is readily removable from the lunch box for washing.

These and other objects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment thereof, when taken in conjunction with the appended drawings wherein:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a conventional lunch box wherein is mounted a preferred form of insert embodying the present invention;

Figure 2 is a side elevational view of said insert, partly broken away in vertical section;

Figure 3 is a vertical sectional view taken along line 3—3 of Figure 2;

Figure 4 is a top plan view of the lower portion of said insert; and

Figures 5 and 6 are enlarged fragmentary vertical sectional views of a unique sealing means incorporated in said insert.

Referring to the drawings, the insert I embodying the present invention is adapted to be used in conjunction with a conventional lunch box L. The lunch box L includes a rectangular open-topped food-receiving compartment F and a generally hemispherical upper compartment U adapted to removably receive a Thermos bottle T. The two compartments F and U are hingedly secured together at their rear portions.

The insert I includes a rectangular container, generally designated **10**, and having a bottom wall **12**, side walls **14** and **16** and end walls **18** and **20**. The intermediate portion of the side walls **14** and **16** are interconnected by a pair of vertically extending transverse spacers **22** and **24**. A longitudinal vertically extending spacer **26** interconnects the midportion of the spacer **22** and the adjacent end wall **18**. It will be noted that the upper ends of the spacers **22**, **24** and **26** terminate a short distance below the upper ends of the side and end walls, as indicated in Figures 2 and 3.

The insert I also includes a cover, generally designated **28**, for the container **10**. This cover **28** incorporates a flat horizontal plate **30** which corresponds in plan view to the horizontal cross-section of the container **10** whereby it may telescopically interfit within the confines of the upper end of the container. The plate **30** is formed along its side edges with flanges **32** and along its end edges with flanges **34**. These flanges **32** and **34** slant outwardly and upwardly relative to the plate **30**. The intermediate portion of the underside of the plate **30** is formed with two pairs of depending transverse sealing lips **36** and **38** for receiving the upper portion of the spacers **22** and **24**. The underside of the plate **30** is likewise formed with a pair of similar longitudinally extending sealing lips **40** for receiving the longitudinally extending spacer **26**. An upstanding lifting tab **42** is formed adjacent the right-hand end of the plate **30**. The lower ends of the lips **36**, **38** and **40** are normally disposed closer to each other than the upper ends thereof.

Preferably, both the container **10** and the cover **28** will be completely formed of a washable, heat and moisture-resistant plastic material. This plastic material will also be pliable yet form-retaining. Two suitable plastic materials are polystyrene and polyesterene, however other materials may also prove to be suitable. Where such plastic materials are utilized, both the container and the cover may be formed by molding or casting whereby the cost per unit will be comparatively small.

Referring now to Figures 2 and 4, with the arrangement shown, the spacers **22**, **24** and **26** define food-receiving sections **44**, **46**, **48** and **50**. The section **44** may conveniently be utilized for sandwiches. The section **46** is suitable for use in receiving cake or other pastries. The section **48** may receive foods such as salads. The section **50** may conveniently receive a soup or broth. In order to restrain foods of a liquid nature from leaking from within the container **10**, the cover **28** must be sealed thereto. In this regard, the flanges **32** and **34** will form a liquid-tight seal with the side and end walls, respectively, of the container, such seal being effected by the wedging of these flanges within the upper extremities of the side and end walls of the container as the cover is urged downwardly within the upper portion of the container. Similarly, referring to Figures 5 and 6, the lower ends of the sealing lips **36**, **38** and **40** will be wedged apart so that these lips will frictionally encompass the upper extremities of the spacers **22**, **24** and **26** as the cover **28** is urged downwardly into the upper portion of the container. This arrangement not only prevents leakage of foods of a liquid nature from within the container **10**, but it also restrains drying out of foods disposed therewithin.

While there has been shown and described hereinabove what is presently considered to be the preferred form of

the present invention it will be apparent that various changes and modifications may be made thereto without departing from the spirit of the invention and the scope of the following claim.

I claim:

A removable insert for a lunch box having a rectangular open-topped compartment, said insert being formed entirely of a pliable form-retaining, washable and liquid-resistant material, comprising: a rectangular container having integral bottom, side and end walls; integral vertical spacers interconnecting said walls so as to define food-receiving chambers; and a cover for said container, said cover having a rectangular flat plate which telescopically interfits within the upper portion of said container, flanges formed on the sides and ends of said plate which slant upwardly and outwardly relative to said plate so as to be wedgeable within the upper portions of the side and end walls of said container, and sealing lips depending from the underside of said cover for frictionally engaging the upper portions of said spacers, the lower ends of said lips being normally spaced closer together than the upper ends thereof whereby said lower ends will be wedged apart as said cover is fitted upon said container.

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