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POULTRY (TRAY PACK) WRAPPING DEVICE

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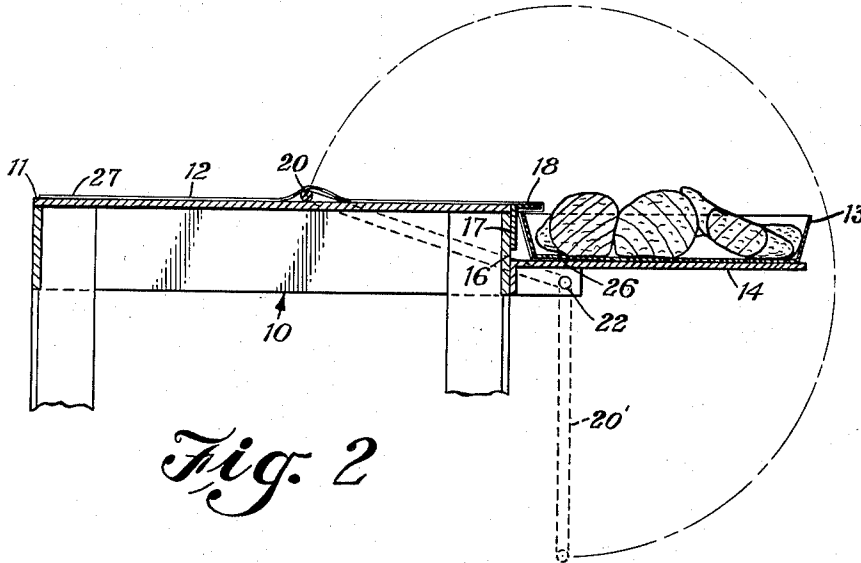


Fig. 2

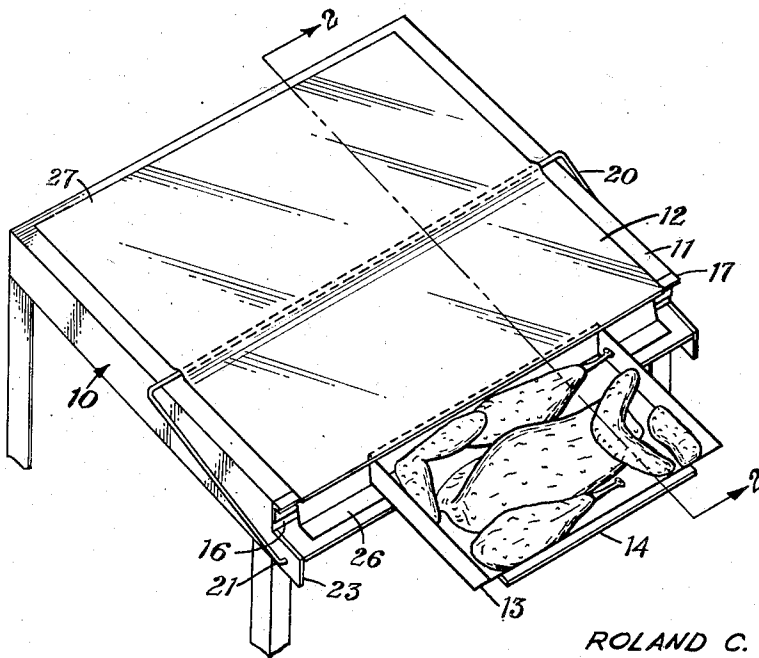


Fig. 1

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POULTRY (TRAY PACK) WRAPPING DEVICE

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1 Claim. (Cl. 53—219)

The present invention relates to an apparatus used in the wrapping of packages.

The present invention was devised to facilitate the wrapping of cut-up poultry packed in trays. Numerous other foods and non-edible products are similarly packed and the particular substance in the trays is not of any real significance. It will also be apparent to those skilled in the art that the invention will be applicable to the wrapping of containers having shapes other than those of the trays described and illustrated in the description and drawings.

During the past decade the merchandising of cut-up poultry has increased significantly and there is a tremendous demand for this product in prepackaged form. One of the forms in which a substantial amount of this product is packaged is to place the cut-up chicken in an open top tray which is then wrapped in a transparent plastic film, such as rubber hydrochloride, commonly sold under the trademark "Pliofilm," or cellophane. Such packaging allows the customer to pick up the product and examine it which facilitates its sale and yet the product is kept in a sanitary condition. Another advantage is that the prepackaging, when done by an organization that specializes therein, is less expensive than similar work performed by the individual stores. Furthermore, many stores do not have the help available to cut up chicken, let alone to attempt to do the packaging.

The appearance of the finished package has a great deal to do with its salability. Even if the product in two packages is identical, it will be found that the more attractive package will sell in greater volume than will a less attractively prepared package. This is particularly true in self-service departments where the packages are picked up by the housewives from a supply in a suitable display case. One factor that is important in the attractiveness of the finished package is the tightness with which the transparent film is drawn over the product in the tray. Obviously cut-up chicken comprises a number of units very irregular in size and shape with the dimensions varying for each chicken which units are difficult to fit into a standard packaging procedure. This, coupled with the necessity of keeping the tray relatively small so that the chicken does not appear to be "lost" therein, creates a problem in drawing the film smoothly and tightly about the protruding portions of the chicken in the tray.

The principal object of the present invention is to provide a simple structure to facilitate the wrapping of such packages in the face of the problems previously discussed, and to enable the wrapper to produce an attractive, readily salable package of product.

Obviously the films of transparent material are quite light, with a smooth slick surface. These factors tend to cause the film to continually slide out of position and to cause the wrapper lost motions in positioning the film and pulling it tight about the package. A further object

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of the present invention is to eliminate these lost motions to speed the wrapping of the packages.

An additional object is the simplicity and low cost of the invention plus the fact that its use is readily understandable to the least clever of employees engaged in such operations.

Other objects and advantages will be apparent from the following description taken in conjunction with the drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of an embodiment of the invention; and

Figure 2 is a section taken at line 2—2 of Figure 1.

In the embodiment illustrated in Figure 1, the invention is mounted on a suitable base structure in the form of a table, generally 10, to raise the device to a suitable height for easy manipulation by the wrapper. Table 10 has a top 11 on which the film 12 to be employed in the wrapping of the tray 13 is laid out. Projecting from the front of table 10 is a shelf 14 which forms a support for the tray 13 during the wrapping procedure.

The front wall 16 of the table 10, which in effect rises vertically from shelf 14, has a forwardly projecting overhang 17 secured to the top thereof. The overhang may be formed from a piece of angle iron. Preferably the upper leg 18 of the angle iron 17 is about 1/4" wide. The vertical position of leg 18 with respect to top 11 of the table is not particularly significant. However, the spacing between the bottom of leg 18 and the top of shelf 14 is rather important. The tray 13 and the film 12 should be a fairly snug fit between the leg 18 and the shelf 14. Preferably the width of shelf 14, as measured across the front of the table, is a little less than the distance between the two ends of the tray 13.

If desired a wrapping bar 20 having a generally U-shaped configuration may be employed to speed the pulling of the film 12 about the package. The two ends 21 and 22 of bar 20 are turned inwardly and are pivotally mounted in brackets 23 and 24, respectively, secured to table 10.

The wrapping of the package is performed by first taking a film 12 from a suitable stack of sheets of such film and laying it on table top 11 with an end 26 hanging down onto shelf 14. The tray 13 filled with product is laid over end 26 of the film and the tray is then pushed away from the wrapper and under leg 18 of the angle iron 17. This draws the film smoothly against the rearward side of the tray and holds end 26 in place. If a wrapping bar is used the bar is then swung in an arc into the position shown at 20' in Figure 2, drawing the film about the top of the tray with the original rearward end 27 of the film hanging downward from the front of the tray. The wrapper then may grasp the portions of end 26 projecting to either side of the tray and draw the tray forward from under leg 18. The opposite end 27 of the film is tucked under the tray in overlapping position with respect to end 26 of the film. Preferably the ends of the film are then secured together as by means of a hot iron in the case of a rubber hydrochloride film or by other suitable means in the case of other types of films. Subsequently the two projecting sides of the film are folded down over the ends of the tray and suitably closed and fastened.

The foregoing description of a specific embodiment is for the purpose of compliance with 35 U. S. C. 112, and I do not desire to be limited to the exact details shown and described, for obvious modifications will occur to a person skilled in the art.

I claim:

A device for use in wrapping open topped trays of a predetermined height containing a food product with a wrapping material of a given thickness, said device in-

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cluding a table having a horizontal tray supporting surface, an upright projecting above said surface, a fixed holding member attached to said upright and projecting generally horizontal in a direction over a small portion of said surface, said member being spaced from said surface an amount such that the distance between the underside of said member and the adjacent portion of said surface is about twice said given thickness of said wrapping material plus the height of said tray whereby a tray with a piece of wrapping material about one side and above and below said tray may be wedged between said member and said surface to hold the wrapping material in place while the wrapping material is drawn about the tray, means beyond said member in the reverse of said direction to

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support a sheet of said wrapping material prior to and at the start of the wrapping process, and means to draw said sheet from said last mentioned means and about said tray after one edge of said sheet has been wedged about said tray between said surface and said member.

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