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DuMolin

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[54] **PACKAGE AND CENTER-PIECE**

[76] Inventor: **Henry J. DuMolin,** Rt. 1, Hwy. 23, Port Sulphur, La. 70083

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[52] **U.S. Cl.**..... **206/45.33,** 108/101, 224/45 R, 312/6

[51] **Int. Cl.**. **B65d 65/16,** B65d 77/26, A47b 47/00

[58] **Field of Search**..... 206/45.33; 224/45 R, 45 G, 224/48 F; 211/135; 108/101; 312/6

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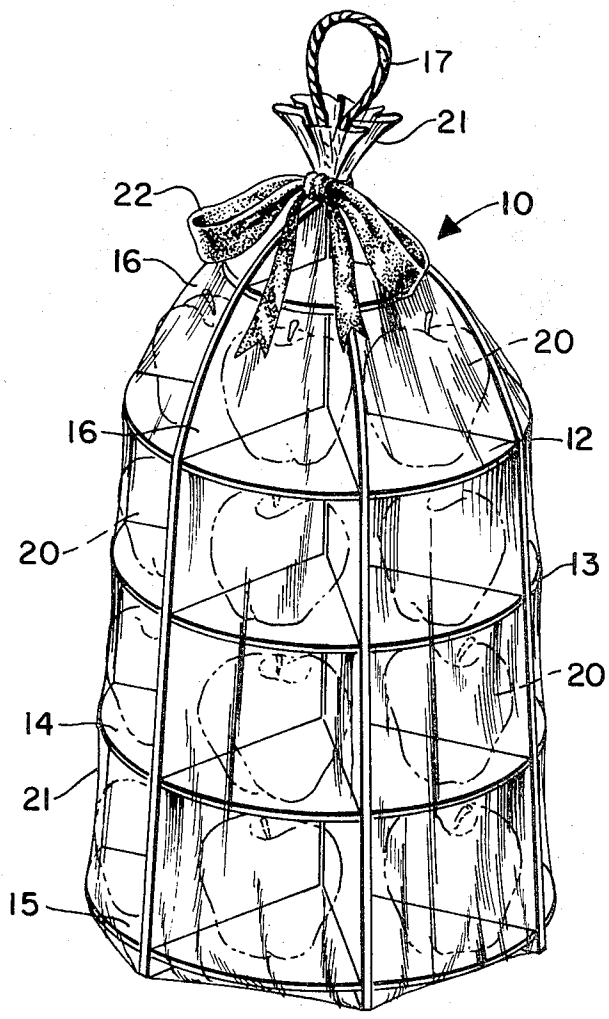
Primary Examiner—Leonard Summer

Attorney, Agent, or Firm—James B. Lake, Jr.

[57] **ABSTRACT**

Circular horizontal members and approximately triangular vertical members, sized, shaped and slotted with reference to numbers, types and grade sizes of contents to be packed, interfit by means of associated slots to form a package structure and provide a package and center-piece comprising a plurality of sector cubicles defined between interfitting adjacent horizontal and vertical members, said sector cubicles having side openings and arranged by size in a plurality of vertically spaced circular tiers, the cubicles of each tier being similar and smaller than in the tier below and sized in each tier for a particular grade size of the desired type of contents. A loop engaging a rod under the lowest tier and passing through center holes defined in said circular horizontal members provides a carrying handle at the top of the package and center-piece. A clear plastic bag drawn over the package and contents and with an open end tied at the top of said package retains the contents in their respective cubicles, each of the contents being supported in respective cubicles by said package structure and visible through the plastic bag covered side openings.

4 Claims, 2 Drawing Figures



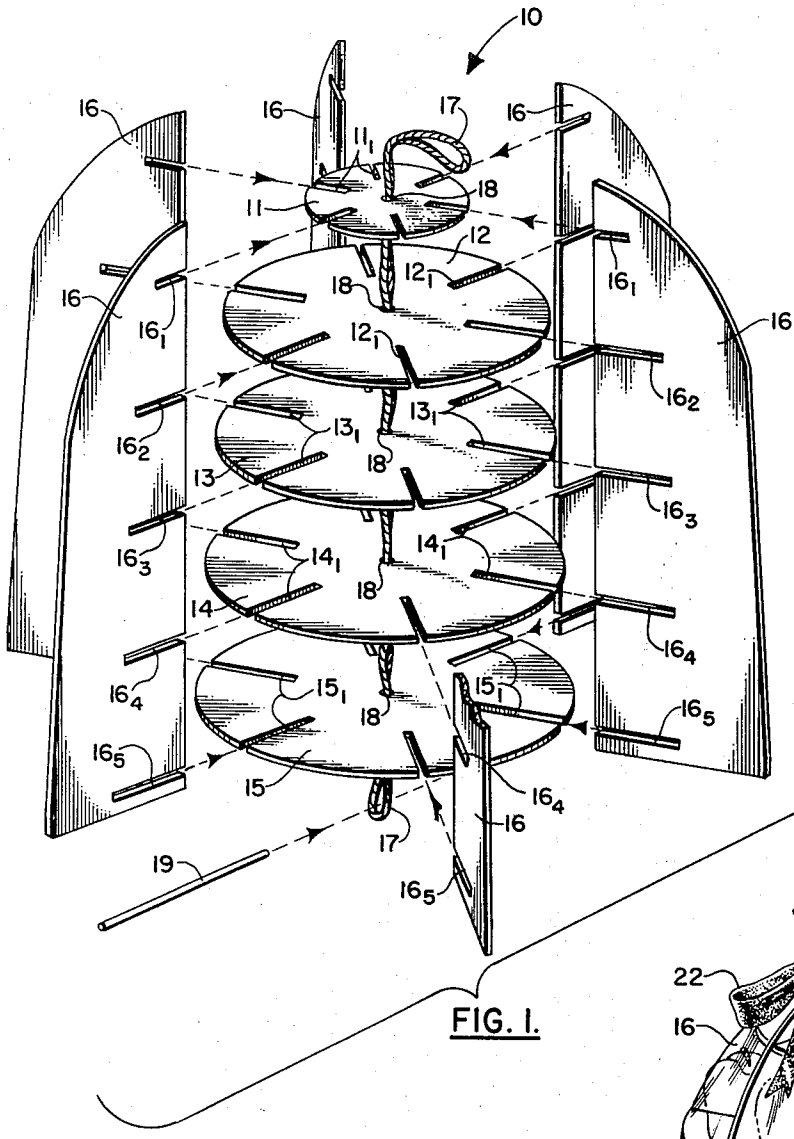

10
16
17
11
18
12
12_1
16_1
16_2
13_1
13
16_3
14_1
14
16_4
15_1
16_5
15
19

FIG. 1.

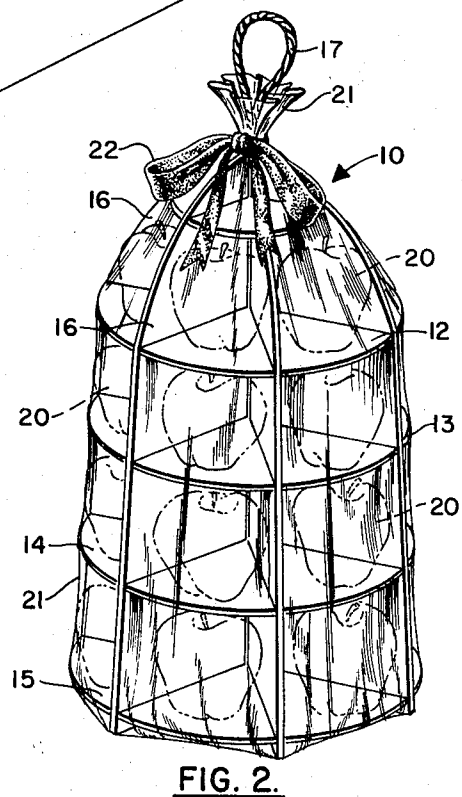

17
21
22
10
16
20
12
13
14
15

FIG. 2.

PACKAGE AND CENTER-PIECE

The invention relates generally to packaging and more particularly to the visible packaging of a content individually and by grade sizes in open-sided cubicles arranged in graduated vertically-spaced tiers for additional use as on ornamental display.

Heretofore, the packaging of fruit for gifts and displays has been confined to baskets and other open-topped containers wherein only the top layer of fruit was visible. Where several layers of fruit were packed together, the lower layers were hidden from view and also supported the weight of the fruit resting on them. In such arrangements most of the fruit cannot be seen and the spoilage rate is high because of weight of the supported fruit and its fruit to fruit contact. The invention will be described with respect to fruit.

It is an object of the invention to provide a portable package for a plurality of fruit of a number of grades for packaging by grades in vertically spaced tiers for the largest grade size to be on the lowest tier and in diminishing ratio upward in size of tiers and fruit for each piece of fruit to be visible and supported by package structure.

Another object of the invention is to provide a package for fruit having side opening cubicles arranged in groups, and with the cubicles of each group conforming in size to a different grade size of fruit.

Other objects and a fuller understanding of the invention may be had by referring to the following specification and claims and drawings, in which:

FIG. **1** is a three dimensional elevational exploded view of a package structure of the invention, and

FIG. **2** is a three dimensional elevation of the invention with packaged fruit shown in phantom.

Referring to FIG. **1**, the invention **10** comprises circular horizontal members **11–15** and approximately triangular vertical members **16.** The members **11–15** and **16** are cooperatively slotted to interfit and form a package structure of vertically spaced tiers that will be more fully described hereinafter. A rope handle **17** passes through center holes **18** in the respective horizontal members **11–15** to engage a rod **19** under member **15** and define a handle loop above member **11.**

Circular horizontal members **11–15** comprise discs with progressively larger radii, disc **11** having the smallest radius and disc **15** the largest. The discs are slotted with respective slots 11_1, 12_1, 13_1, 14_1 and 15_1, angularly spaced equally around the respective discs' perimeters and extending radially inward for slightly less than half the radius of their respective discs.

Vertical members **16** are approximately right triangular in shape having two straight sides and a convexly curved third side. Vertical members **16** are identical and define vertically spaced slots 16_1–16_5 along respective straight sides and parallel with the other straight sides. The slots 16_1–16_5 respectively extend toward their respective curved sides for half the radius of their respective associated discs **11–15** and half the distance to the curved side.

The equal angular spacing of the radial slots 11_1–15_1 are coordinated with the respective progressively differing radii of discs **11–15** and both are keyed to the horizontal components of the grade sizes of the fruit to be packed and the number thereof in each grade size. The vertical spacing of the parallel slots 16_1–16_5 are

keyed to the vertical components of the respective grade sizes of said fruit.

The package and center-piece is assembled by interfitting parallel slots 16_1–16_5 of the vertical members with the respective radial slots 11_1–15_1 of the horizontal members, and associated in accordance with the subscript numerals **1–5** of the parallel slots to the last digits **1–5** of the radial slots designation numbers. Because the radial slots are slightly less than half their respective radii, the vertical members will only extend to the holes **18** and define therewith a vertical center passageway through the package structure. The rope handle **17** extends through said passageway to tightly engage rod **19** against the bottom of disc **15,** said rod passing between the vertical members and across hole **18** defined in disc **15.**

Referring to FIG. **2,** a clear plastic bag **21** is drawn up over the package and center-piece and tied at the top with a ribbon **22** for closing the side opening cubicles when carrying the invention as a package. When uses as a center-piece the bag is removed to allow easy access to any piece of fruit **20** in the package.

It is understood that the invention can be used for the packaging and ornamental display of other articles, and that sector cubicles of the same size can be provided by making te vertical the rectangular in shape. Square cubicles can be provided by making horizontal members square in shape.

What is claimed is:

1. A package and center-piece for packing and ornamental display of contents individually and by grade sizes comprising in combination: a plurality of horizontal members each defining a plurality of slots equally spaced around the perimeter of each said horizontal member, and extending inward for less than a quarter of the distance between opposite points on each said perimeter; a plurality of vertical members, each having the same plurality of vertically spaced parallel slots as there are horizontal members for association therewith and each slot extending for a quarter of the distance between opposite points on the perimeter of the associated horizontal member, the slots of said horizontal members and the slots of said vertical members interfitting and forming vertical tiers of side-opening cubicles to receive, support and display said contents; and a clear plastic bag open at an end and enclosing said interfitting members, said open end being tied at the top thereof for the retention of contents therein in visible ornamental display.

2. A package and center-piece as described in claim **1** wherein said horizontal and vertical members respectively comprise: discs having radii respectively varying as grade sizes of said contents and said slots extending radially for less than half said radii and delimiting angularly and numerically equal sectors varying in size as said radii; said vertical members having and two straight sides at right angles to each other, one of said sides defining slots, one for each of said discs, parallel to the other of said sides, and spaced apart therein as grade sizes of said contents, said parallel slots extending for half the radii of respectively associated discs, the remaining side of the respective vertical member being delimited by the projected lines of said parallel slots for an additional half of said radii.

3. Horizontal members as described in claim **2** wherein the length of said slots are less than half the radii of the respective discs in which they are defined

by the radius of a center hole defined in each said disc, thereby defining in combination with the slotted sides of said vertical members a center passageway through said interfitting parts, and a rope handle mounted in said center passageway and secured at the bottom thereof for carrying said package and center-piece.

4. An improved method of packaging and forming with the contents of said packaging an ornamental center-piece comprising the following steps: slotting perimeters of a plurality of horizontal members, sizing said horizontal members and spacing said slotting in accordance with the number of said contents; slotting an equal number of vertical members as there are slots in each horizontal member, said vertical member having vertical and horizontal sides and said slottings being defined in said vertical side and parallel to said horizontal side and spaced vertically apart, said spacing and extent of said slottings in accordance with grade sizes fo said contents; interfitting said horizontal and vertical members with associated slottings congruent to form a supporting structure defining side-opening cubicles arranged in tiers by grade sizes of contents; placing contents individually in said cubicles according to grade sizes; and enclosing said interfitted members and cubicle contents with a clear plastic bag, open at an end for said enclosing and tied thereafter at the top for retaining said contents in said cubicles.

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