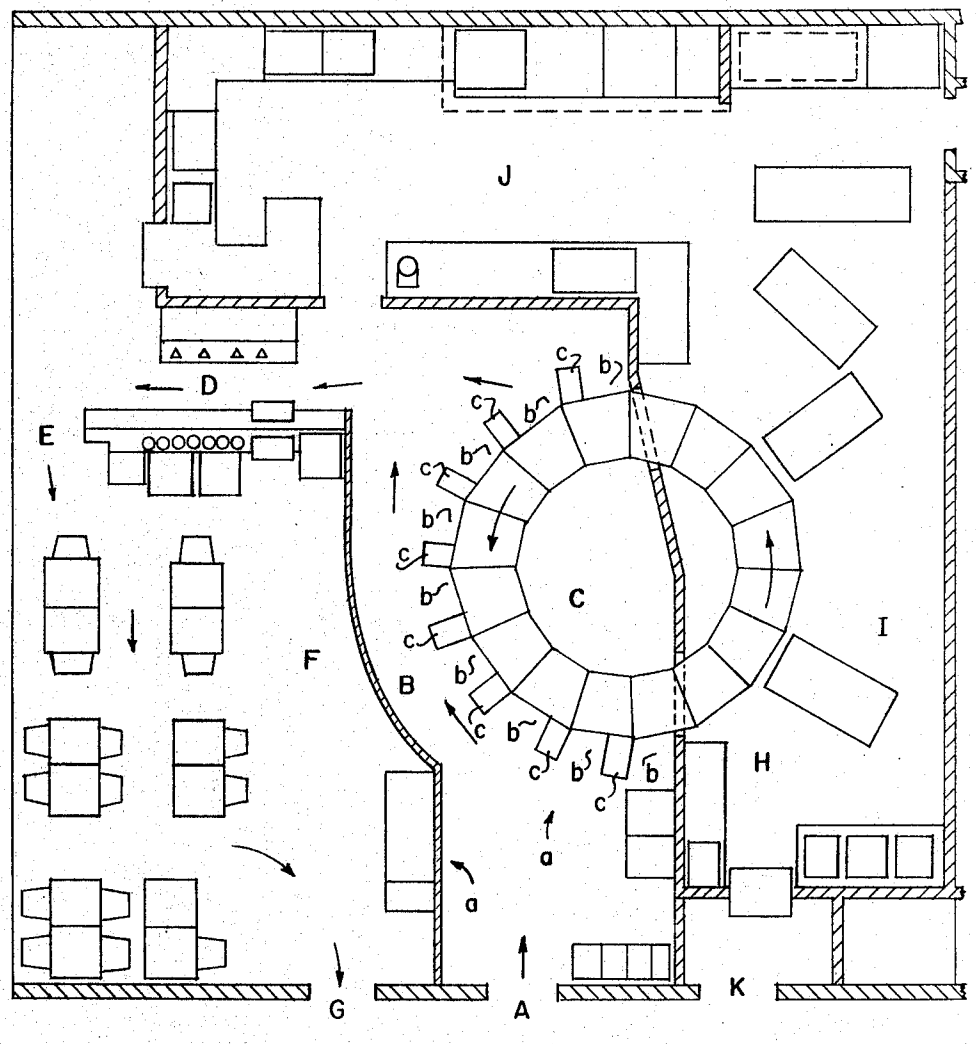
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PROCESS FOR DISPENSING MERCHANDISE AND FOODS

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PROCESS FOR DISPENSING MERCHANDISE AND FOODS

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My invention relates to that type of process whereby a multiple of persons can self-serve themselves from a circular rotating counter without moving from a fixed location around said counter and no one of the persons can interfere with other persons during the selection of merchandise around said counter because each person is held in captive position while in place around said rotating counter.

It is an object of my invention to provide a process for dispensing merchandise and foods utilizing a rotating counter having a display of a variety of merchandise readily removable from said counter during its rotation and said counter having a multiple of barriers extending from the outer periphery of said counter to provide stalls that prevent any person selecting and taking merchandise from said counter from moving along and about said counter during the selection of merchandise from said counter.

The primary object of my invention is to provide a process whereby numerous customers can arrange themselves around the rotating counter at the same time and whereby the customers are held captive during the selection of a variety of food as it passes in front of them in multiple tiers one above the other and whereby each customer is prevented from following around the counter in front of other customers positioned around the counter.

These and other objects will become apparent from the specifications and the drawing forming part of this application.

In the drawing:

The drawing is a diagrammatic plan view of a cafeteria generally illustrating my process.

Present day cafeterias utilize line counters arranged in straight line, angular and other formations that require customers to form in single file column lines along the counter. The customers must traverse from the beginning to the end of the counter. This method of serving is time consuming and the rate of movement of customers through the line is regulated by the time with which anyone of the customers require to select a certain item on display. Customers who are slow in selecting keep all other customers in back of them from moving through the line. This also causes a wide gap between the slow selector and those in front of them thereby causing an irregular movement of the line. Customers who desire only one or two items must pass through the entire line. Each of these counters involve the use of considerable help to assist in serving and re-stocking the various assortments of foods that are placed along the counter, in addition to other help required to bring the food from the kitchen to the various stations along these counters.

My process is a development from the use of dispensing merchandise by individual self-service exemplified in my Patent No. 2,968,363, dated January 17, 1961.

Referring to the drawing, A is the Main Entrance into the area of self-service for customers. After entering the customer proceeds to stations *a—a* and takes a tray and silverware from a supply previously prepared. The customer then enters the one way passage or aisle designated as the service area B delineated by a wall or rail, preferably curved concentric with the axis of the circular counter and immediately takes a fixed position in any vacant stall *b* which in this case there is illustrated nine stalls. The barriers C in the form of the invention comprise small tray rests suitable to support customers' trays while they are making selections. The customers are now in position around a Rotating Counter indicated at C. The customers cannot move about the counter since the barriers *c* are snug against the outer perimeter of the Rotating Counter. The counter is arranged in sections in which food is on display i.e. there are sections each having multiple individual portions of meats, vegetables, soups and desserts.

In the preferred arrangement the counter has duplicate portions in sections diametrically opposite each other on the counter. This duplication around the counter serves to provide an ample supply and also enables persons slow in selecting a chance to deliberate and have a second chance at selection with each single revolution of the counter. The counter arrangement is such that all the food on display is visible from any position around the periphery of the counter. As the food passes in front of the customers selections are removed and placed on the tray previously taken by the customer. Each of the customers can serve themselves simultaneously and thereby increase the number of servings in any given time. Regardless of the time consumed by any one customer other customers will not be delayed. Customers choosing only one item do not have to wait but can leave immediately. After leaving the Rotating Counter the customer passes through the area D which is the beverage section and selects the desired beverage.

Having obtained all of the desired meal the customer then passes before the cashier in section E pays for the food and proceeds to the Dining Area F and is seated at tables in the Dining Area to eat the meal. After finishing the customer leaves through a one way Exit G. The area H is the kitchen area and in my process is more compact being so arranged that the prepared foods are close to a counter replenishing area I where the foods are portioned and placed on the Rotating Counter while it is in motion. As the counter rotates through the area I any empty spaces will be filled so that the counter while rotating through area B will always have a complete supply of foods from which the customers will select.

The area J has the usual auxiliary equipment for storage and dishwashing apparatus. My process uses a special separate section K for carry out service distinct and separate from the self-serving area for those customers who do not wish to enter and dine on the premises.

Customers using my process enter the serving area and help themselves to trays and silverware. They enter any vacant stall surrounding the rotating counter and select whatever dish or dishes of food they desire and place them on the trays. The customers cannot move along with the counter since there is a barrier to prevent them from following around it. After selecting the food they go and select beverages and pay for the food, after which they go into the dining area, leaving it at will. During the rotation of the counter other portions of food will be placed on the counter as it rotates through the kitchen and counter replenishing area from where the counter is kept fully stocked.

Having thus described my invention, I claim:

The process for the self-service of dished foods to individual customers concurrently comprising:

providing generally a circular counter and rotating the counter about a vertical axis, the counter having an annular peripheral area disposed in a horizontal plane;

providing a kitchen area enclosing one portion of the peripheral area of the rotating counter and placing the dished foods on said horizontal peripheral area;

providing a customer area having an entrance and a one-way customer passageway which is constricted and which includes a portion which is curved in an arc concentric with the axis of the rotating counter

and spaced outwardly from the peripheral area thereof;

guiding the customers from the customer area and through said constricted passageway and about the peripheral area of the counter to a dining area, said constricted passageway providing a curved dispensing portion accessible to the peripheral area of the counter and disposed generally opposite to the kitchen area;

the direction of rotation of the counter being opposite to the direction of movement of the customers through said curved one-way constricted to prevent the customer in the constricted area from following the rotating peripheral area of the counter;

providing a plurality of spaced stationary tray rests

on fixed barriers about the peripheral area of the rotating counter in said constricted passageway, said stationary tray rests delineating generally radial stalls;

utilizing said stalls to prevent customers from moving about and along the peripheral area of the counter, said stalls holding the customers captive while selecting dished foods from the peripheral area of the rotating counter.

References Cited by the Examiner

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2,968,363	1/1961	Kinkaid	186—1

ANDRES H. NIELSEN, *Primary Examiner.*