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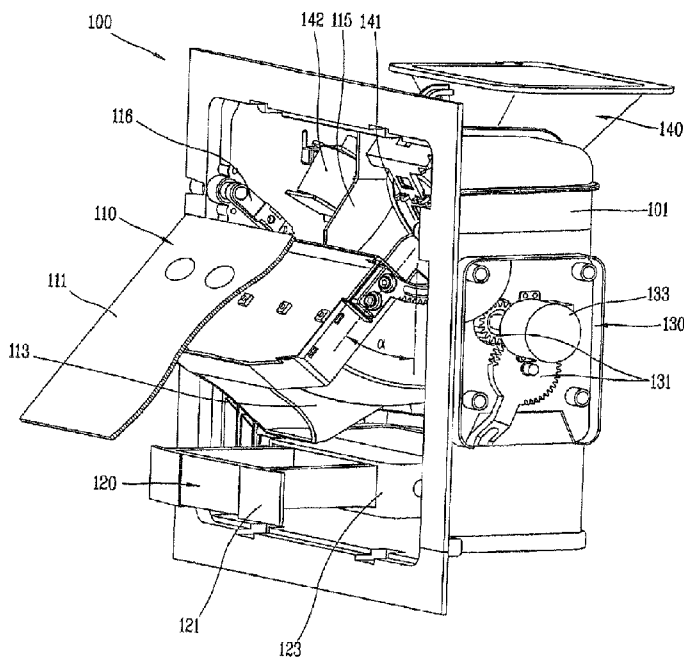
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(54) Title: REFRIGERATOR HAVING DISPENSER

[Fig. 2]



(57) Abstract: A refrigerator includes a cooling chamber, a door that is configured to open and close at least a portion of the cooling chamber, and a dispenser positioned on the door and configured to dispense ice pieces or water through the door when the door is oriented in a closed position. The refrigerator also includes a dispensing button unit configured to control a dispensing start time and a dispensing speed of the ice pieces or water dispensed through the dispenser based on a position of at least a portion of the dispensing button unit that results from movement of the portion of the dispensing button unit.

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Description

REFRIGERATOR HAVING DISPENSER

Technical Field

- [1] The present application claims the benefit of priority to Korean Application 10-2008-0096292, filed on September 30, 2008, which is herein expressly incorporated by reference in its entirety.
- [2] This disclosure relates to a refrigerator having a dispenser capable of dispensing ice and/or water.

Background Art

- [3] In general, a refrigerator serves to store items, such as food and beverage, at a temperature cooler than ambient room temperature. The refrigerator stores the items in a cooled state or in a frozen state.
- [4] To this end, the refrigerator is provided with a refrigeration cycle composed of compression, condensation, expansion, and evaporation processes that use a refrigerant as a fluid. As the refrigeration cycle is repeated, cool air is generated. Then, the cool air is evenly supplied to an interior of the refrigerator, thereby allowing the refrigerator to maintain a relatively cool inner temperature.

Disclosure of Invention

Technical Solution

- [5] In one aspect, a refrigerator includes a cooling chamber, a door that is configured to open and close at least a portion of the cooling chamber, and a dispenser positioned on the door and configured to dispense ice pieces or water through the door when the door is oriented in a closed position. The refrigerator also includes a dispensing button unit configured to control a dispensing start time and a dispensing speed of the ice pieces or water dispensed through the dispenser based on a position of at least a portion of the dispensing button unit that results from movement of the portion of the dispensing button unit. The dispensing button unit is configured to, in response to the portion of the dispensing button unit being moved to a first position, control the dispenser to start dispensing the ice pieces or water at a first speed and is configured to, in response to the portion of the dispensing button unit being moved to a second position that is different than the first position, control the dispenser to change a dispensing speed of the ice pieces or water to a second speed that is different than the first speed.
- [6] Implementations may include one or more of the following features. For example, the portion of the dispensing button unit may include a lever portion that is configured to generate a dispensing start signal when the lever portion is moved, toward the cooling chamber when the door is oriented in the closed position, to the first position

and that is configured to generate a dispensing speed signal when the lever portion is moved, toward the cooling chamber when the door is oriented in the closed position, from the first position to the second position.

- [7] In some implementations, the refrigerator may include a dispensing start switch that is positioned to contact the lever portion when the lever portion is moved to the first position and that is configured to generate the dispensing start signal when contacted by the lever portion and a dispensing speed switch that is positioned to contact the lever portion when the lever portion is moved to the second position and that is configured to generate the dispensing speed signal when contacted by the lever portion. In these implementations, the dispensing button unit may include a lever frame portion configured to move, in a plane perpendicular to a surface of the door, between a stored position at which the lever frame portion is positioned on a side of the surface of the door where the cooling chamber is positioned and an extended position at which at least a portion of the lever frame portion is positioned on a side of the surface of the door opposite of the cooling chamber and a lever portion that is elastically supported by the lever frame portion and that is configured to, when the lever frame portion is oriented in the extended position, move, in response to application of force to the lever portion, toward the surface of the door and move, in response to release of the force applied to the lever portion, away from the surface of the door.
- [8] The refrigerator may include a position informing unit that is configured to enhance user detection that, subsequent to the lever portion being moved to the first position at which the lever portion contacts the dispensing start switch, the lever portion is disposed at a position before contacting the dispensing speed switch. The position informing unit may include a locking protrusion that is elastically supported at one of the lever portion and the lever frame portion and a locking groove that is defined at the other of the lever portion and the lever frame portion and that is configured to contact the locking protrusion subsequent to the lever portion being moved to the first position at which the lever portion contacts the dispensing start switch and prior to the lever portion being moved to the second position at which the lever portion contacts the dispensing speed switch. Contact between the locking protrusion and the locking groove may cause additional resistance in moving the lever portion toward the surface of the door and, thereby, enhances user detection that the lever portion is disposed at a position before contacting the dispensing speed switch.
- [9] The locking protrusion may be elastically supported by a contact surface between the lever portion and the lever frame portion in a vertical direction. The locking protrusion may have sequentially an upward inclination portion and a downward inclination portion along a moving direction of the lever portion.
- [10] In some examples, when the door is oriented in the closed position, the dispenser

may define an ice flow passage that enables passage of ice pieces through the door from an outlet of an ice bank that is disposed in the cooling chamber and that is configured to store ice pieces. In these examples, the dispenser may include a fixed guide portion configured to communicate with the outlet of the ice bank; and a movable guide portion that is configured to rotate between a stored position and a dispensing position and that is configured to communicate the fixed guide portion with an exterior of the cooling chamber when the movable guide portion is oriented in the dispensing position. The movable guide portion may be coupled to a cover portion that is configured to rotate between a stored position at which the cover portion is positioned in a plane of an external surface of the door and a dispensing position at which at least a portion of the cover portion is positioned on a side of the surface of the door opposite of the cooling chamber and at which the movable guide portion communicates with the fixed guide portion. The dispensing button unit may be positioned behind the cover portion when the cover portion is oriented in the stored position, and at least a portion of the dispensing button unit may be positioned on the side of the surface of the door opposite of the cooling chamber when the cover portion is oriented in the dispensing position.

- [11] In some implementations, the dispensing button unit may include a pressing portion disposed at an inner side of a concaved region of the door, a dispensing start switch configured to generate a dispensing start signal when contacted, a dispensing speed switch configured to generate a dispensing speed signal when contacted, and a switch operating portion that is configured to move in response to force applied to the pressing portion, that is configured to, when the door is oriented in the closed position and force is applied to the pressing portion, move toward the cooling chamber to the first position at which the switch operating portion contacts the dispensing start switch, and that is configured to, when the door is oriented in the closed position, the switch operating portion is positioned at the first position, and force is applied to the pressing portion, move toward the cooling chamber to the second position at which the switch operating portion contacts the dispensing speed switch. In these implementations, when the door is oriented in the closed position, the dispenser may define an ice flow passage between one side of the concaved region and an outlet of an ice bank that is disposed in the cooling chamber and that is configured to store ice pieces. The pressing portion may be provided on a wall surface inside the concaved region and is elastically supported in a thickness direction of the door. The pressing portion may be coupled to the door by hinges, may be configured to rotate in a thickness direction of the door, may be provided on a wall surface inside the concaved region, and may be elastically supported in a manner that applies a force to rotate the pressing portion toward a front surface of the door.

- [12] In another aspect, a method of controlling a dispenser includes receiving force that moves a portion of a dispensing button to a first position and controlling a dispenser to start dispensing ice pieces or water at a first speed in response to the portion of the dispensing button unit being moved to the first position. The method also includes receiving force that moves the portion of the dispensing button from the first position to a second position that is different than the first position and controlling the dispenser to change a dispensing speed of the ice pieces or water to a second speed that is different than the first speed in response to the portion of the dispensing button unit being moved to the second position.
- [13] Implementations may include one or more of the following features. For example, the method may include providing a physical alert to a user indicating that the portion of the dispensing button unit is approaching the second position at which the dispensing speed of the ice pieces or water changes. The method also may include causing an increase in force needed to complete movement of the portion of the dispensing button from the first position to the second position.
- [14] In yet another aspect, a refrigerator includes a cooling chamber, a door that is configured to open and close at least a portion of the cooling chamber, and a dispenser positioned on the door and configured to dispense ice pieces or water through the door when the door is oriented in a closed position. The refrigerator also includes a dispensing button unit configured to receive force that results in movement of at least a portion of the dispensing button unit. The refrigerator further includes means for controlling the dispenser to start dispensing the ice pieces or water at a first speed in response to the portion of the dispensing button unit being moved to a first position and means for controlling the dispenser to change a dispensing speed of the ice pieces or water to a second speed that is different than the first speed in response to the portion of the dispensing button unit being moved to a second position that is different than the first position.

Brief Description of Drawings

- [15] The details of one or more implementations are set forth in the accompanying drawings and the description below. Other features will be apparent from the description and drawings, and from the claims.
- [16] FIG. 1 is a view showing a refrigerator having a dispenser;
- [17] FIG. 2 is a perspective view showing an inner structure of the dispenser of FIG. 1;
- [18] FIG. 3 is a sectional view taken along line I-I in FIG. 1;
- [19] FIG. 4 is an exploded perspective view of a guide unit of FIG. 2;
- [20] FIG. 5 is an exploded perspective view of a dispensing button unit of FIG. 2;
- [21] FIG. 6 is an exploded perspective view of a driving unit of FIG. 2;

- [22] FIG. 7 is a rear perspective view showing an assembled state of the driving unit of FIG. 6;
- [23] FIG. 8 is a side view of the driving unit when the dispenser is in a standby position state;
- [24] FIG. 9 is a side view of the driving unit when the dispenser is in a dispensing position state;
- [25] FIG. 10 is an exploded perspective view of a dispensing button unit;
- [26] FIG. 11 is an exploded perspective view of a dispensing button unit;
- [27] FIG. 12 is a sectional view of a refrigerator having a dispenser; and
- [28] FIG. 13 is a sectional view of a refrigerator having a dispenser.

Best Mode for Carrying out the Invention

- [29] FIG. 1 illustrates an example of a refrigerator having a dispenser, FIG. 2 illustrates an inner structure of the dispenser of FIG. 1, and FIG. 3 illustrates the dispenser along line I-I in FIG. 1.
- [30] Referring to FIGS. 1 to 3, a refrigerator 10 comprises a cooling chamber 12 for storing items, and a door 13 for shielding the cooling chamber 12 from outside.
- [31] The cooling chamber 12 is positioned in a body 11 that defines an external appearance of the refrigerator 10. A gap exists between an inner surface of the cooling chamber 12 and an outer surface of the body 11, and a heat insulator is positioned within the gap. The heat insulator insulates the inside of the cooling chamber 12 from outside of the body 11.
- [32] The cooling chamber 12 has one opened surface through which items can be received into or taken out of the cooling chamber 12. The opened surface is open and closed by one or more doors 13 that are coupled to the body 11 by hinges.
- [33] The heat insulator is also positioned within the door 13. The heat insulator reduces heat transfer to inside of the cooling chamber 12 through the door 13.
- [34] A door handle 14 is coupled to a front surface of the door 13. The door handle 14 is configured to be grasped by a user and to facilitate opening and closing of the door 13.
- [35] A refrigeration cycle (not shown) for generating cool air to cool the cooling chamber 12 is provided at one side of the body 11. The refrigeration cycle is generally provided on a rear surface of the body 11, and at a lower space of the rear surface (e.g., a mechanic chamber or machine room). The refrigerator 10 may use any type of configuration and operation of the refrigeration cycle.
- [36] Cool air generated by the refrigeration cycle is supplied to the cooling chamber 12 through a cool air supply duct (not shown) of the body 11, thereby cooling inside of the cooling chamber 12. A blower (not shown) may be further provided so as to supply cool air to the cool air supply duct.

- [37] The cooling chamber 12 may be divided into a refrigerating chamber 12a for freshly storing items in a cooled state that is above freezing, and a freezing chamber 12b for storing items in a frozen state. The refrigerating chamber 12a and the freezing chamber 12b may include various structures (e.g., shelves, bins, etc.) according to a consumer's usage patterns and the kinds or amount of storage items.
- [38] As shown in FIG. 1, the refrigerating chamber 12a may be disposed above the freezing chamber 12b, so that a user who uses the refrigerating chamber 12a more frequently than the freezing chamber 12b can have enhanced convenience when opening and closing the refrigerating chamber 12a or storing items in the refrigerating chamber 12a.
- [39] In this example, a freezing chamber door 13b for opening and closing the freezing chamber 12b is not coupled to the body 11 by hinges, but is configured to slide in and out in a manner similar to a drawer. Accordingly, a user removes items stored in the freezing chamber 12b from above. This may reduce inconvenience of a user having to lower his or her posture to take out the items stored in the freezing chamber 12b.
- [40] FIG. 1 shows an example of the refrigerator 10 in an ordinary operating orientation. For instance, as shown, when a support structure of the refrigerator 10 rests against the ground, the refrigerating chamber 12a is positioned at a relatively upper portion of the main body 11 and the freezing chamber 12b is positioned at a relatively lower portion of the main body 11. The ordinary operating orientation may reflect the intended orientation of the refrigerator 10 when being used by a consumer.
- [41] In other implementations, the freezing chamber 12b may be disposed above the refrigerating chamber 12a. Alternatively, the refrigerating chamber 12a and the freezing chamber 12b may be oriented and positioned at the left and right sides, respectively, in parallel to each other.
- [42] The refrigerator 10 is provided with a dispenser 100 through which ice pieces and/or water stored in the cooling chamber 12 can be dispensed to an exterior of the refrigerator 10 without opening the door 13.
- [43] An ice making apparatus 15 including an ice maker for freezing ice pieces dispensed through the dispenser 100, and an ice bank for storing the ice pieces made by the ice maker is provided on a surface inside of the cooling chamber 12 or the rear surface of the door 13. The dispenser 100 and the ice making apparatus 15 communicate with each other by a communication unit 140 for communicating an outlet of the ice bank with a guide unit 110 of the dispenser 100.
- [44] An opening/closing member 141 for selectively opening the communication unit 140 when transferring ice pieces through the communication unit 140 is provided in the communication unit 140. The opening/closing member 141 has one side coupled to the communication unit 140 or a concaved region 101 by hinges, and is opened and closed

by being rotated by an additional unit such as a solenoid 142. Any type of ice maker may be used as the ice making apparatus 15.

- [45] Referring to FIGS. 1 to 3, the dispenser 100 is provided on a refrigerating chamber door 13a. In other examples, the dispenser 100 may be provided on the freezing chamber door 13b.
- [46] In the example of the dispenser 100 being positioned on the refrigerating chamber door 13a as shown in FIG. 1, an additional space (e.g., an ice making chamber) having a lower temperature than the refrigerating chamber 12a, which is maintained at a temperature above zero, is configured to maintain a temperature at or below freezing and, thereby, prevent ice pieces from melting at the temperature of the refrigerating chamber 12a. The ice making apparatus 15 and the ice storage bin are installed in the ice making chamber.
- [47] Referring to FIGS. 2 and 3, the dispenser 100 includes a guide unit 110 that guides dispensing of ice pieces and/or water, and a dispensing button unit 120 that controls a dispensing start time and a dispensing speed of the ice pieces and/or water dispensed through the guide unit 110.
- [48] The dispenser 100 is positioned at a concaved region 150 defined at a predetermined region on a front surface of the door 13. The concaved region 150 is a recess within a thickness direction of the door 13.
- [49] The guide unit 110 and the dispensing button unit 120 are accommodated at a stored position in the concaved region 150 when the dispenser 100 is not operated. When water and/or ice pieces are dispensed through the dispenser 100, the guide unit 110 and the dispensing button unit 120 are disposed in a dispensing position with at least a portion (e.g., an outlet) being positioned outside of the concaved region 150 and outside of a front surface of the door 13. The guide unit 110 and the dispensing button unit 120 move between the stored position and the dispensing position based on whether the dispenser is being used to dispense content or not.
- [50] As shown in FIGS. 2 and 3, the guide unit 110 and the dispensing button unit 120 are installed in a casing 101 disposed that corresponds to the concaved region 150. In other examples, the guide unit 110 and the dispensing button unit 120 may be directly installed on a wall surface of the door 13 that defines the concaved region 150.
- [51] The dispenser 100 includes a driving unit 130 that automatically controls accommodated (e.g., stored) and protruding (e.g., dispensing) states of the guide unit 110 and the dispensing button unit 120 by turning on/off power.
- [52] FIG. 4 illustrates an example of the guide unit of FIG. 2. Referring to FIGS. 1 to 4, the guide unit 110 includes a fixed guide portion 115 and a movable guide portion 113 for guiding dispensing of ice pieces and/or water transferred through the communication unit 140. The guide unit 110 includes a cover portion 111 that is coupled to

the movable guide portion 113 and that shields the concaved region 150 when the dispenser 100 is not operated (e.g., when the dispenser 100 is in a stored position).

[53] The fixed guide portion 115 is fixed to the end of the communication unit 140, and guides water and/or ice pieces received from the communication unit 140 to the movable guide portion 113. The movable guide portion 113 has two upper ends coupled to both inner sides of the concaved region 101 by hinges. The hinges enable the movable guide portion 113 to be vertically rotated.

[54] Under this configuration, the movable guide portion 113 rotates in a thickness direction of the door 13, and communicates the fixed guide portion 115 with an exterior of the door 13 when the guide unit 110 is extended to the dispensing position. The movable guide portion 113 and the fixed guide portion 115 define a passage for guiding dispensing of ice pieces and/or water through the door 13 when the guide unit 110 is positioned in the dispensing position.

[55] For example, the movable guide portion 113 is coupled to the cover portion 111 that is at a front surface of the door 13 when the guide unit 110 is in a stored position. The movable guide portion 113 performs a reciprocating motion between a stored position in which the cover portion 111 is disposed on the same plane as a front surface of the door 13, and a dispensing position in which the cover portion 111 is disposed at a front side of the door 13 (e.g., beyond the plane of the front surface of the door 13). In the dispensing position, the movable guide portion 113 communicates with the fixed guide portion 115.

[56] As shown in FIG. 3, in the stored position, the movable guide portion 113 overlaps the fixed guide portion 115 in a thickness direction of the door 13. Based on the overlapping of the movable guide portion 113 and the fixed guide portion 115, a volume of the concaved region 101 needed to accommodate the fixed guide portion 115 and the movable guide portion 113 in the stored position may be reduced. This may minimize volume decrease of the cooling chamber 12 due to the dispenser 100.

[57] The cover portion 111 is configured to shield the opened front surface of the concaved region 101 in the stored position. The opened front surface of the concaved region 101 shielded by the cover portion 111 may correspond to the entire part of the front surface of the door 13 where the concaved region 101 is defined. In some examples, the cover portion 111 has an upper edge that is high enough for an upper end portion 113u of the movable guide portion 113 to be blocked by an outside of the door 13, and a lower edge that is positioned high enough such that the cover portion 111 does not cause interference with horizontal motion of the dispensing button unit 120. In these examples, a front surface of the door 13 that is not shielded by the cover portion 111 may be shielded by an additional member fixed on the same plane as the front surface of the door 13, or may be shielded by a surface extending from the front

surface of the door 13. In these configurations, power required to drive the movable guide portion 113 may be reduced, and an enhanced appearance when the dispenser 100 is in a stored position may be achieved.

- [58] The movable guide portion 113 may be installed so as to rotate with an axis of rotation being around both sides of a front end of the upper end portion 113u. The rotation center of the movable guide portion 113 with respect to the thickness direction of the door 13 is spaced above the upper end portion 113u of the movable guide portion 113.
- [59] In these examples, the movable guide portion 113 may have a large rotation radius without increasing the height of the cover portion 111. Thus, the end of the movable guide portion 113 may have an increased protruding length in the dispensing position with a small rotation angle () of the cover portion 111. Accordingly, a space available for a container to receive dispensed ice pieces and/or water may be increased. Furthermore, degraded appearance of the dispenser 100 in a dispensing position due to excessive rotation of the cover portion 111 may be reduced. In order to reduce degraded appearance of the dispense 100 in a dispensing position, the cover portion 111 maintains a rotation angle () of 45~60 from the front surface of the door 13.
- [60] A control button unit 118 for controlling the operation of the dispenser 100 may be provided between a rear surface of the cover portion 111 and the movable guide portion 113. The control button unit 118 includes a button printed circuit board (PCB) 118b that generates control signals when pressed by a user, a button accommodation portion 118a positioned at the cover portion 111 and configured to transmit a pressing force to the button PCB 118b, and a PCB accommodation portion 118c that accommodates the button PCB 118b therein.
- [61] The movable guide portion 113 includes a guide body portion 113a that guides and passes ice pieces and/or water therethrough, and a guide fixing portion 113b disposed at both sides of the guide body portion 113a and coupled to a rear surface of the cover portion 111 or the PCB accommodation portion 118c.
- [62] A hinge portion 116 that rotates the movable guide portion 113 is coupled to two side surfaces of the PCB accommodation portion 118c. The hinge portion 116 includes a fixation portion 116c fixed to both ends of the PCB accommodation portion 118c, a hinge-coupled portion 116a that is coupled to the concaved region 101 in a manner that enables rotation, and a driven portion 116b that has a circular arc shape and a saw tooth-shaped outer circumference. The driven portion 116b is coupled to the driving unit 130 and connects the fixation portion 116c to the hinge-coupled portion 116a.
- [63] FIG. 5 illustrates an example of the dispensing button unit of FIG. 2.
- [64] Referring to FIGS. 1 to 5, the dispensing button unit 120 includes a lever frame portion 123 disposed below the guide unit 110 and configured to move inside and

outside of the concaved region 101 in a plane horizontal to the surface of the door 13. The lever frame portion 123 is configured to move with rotation of the cover portion 111. The dispensing button unit 120 also includes a lever portion 121 elastically coupled to the lever frame portion 123. When the dispenser 100 is in a dispensing position, the lever portion 121 is configured to receive force pressing the lever portion 121 toward the concave region 101 to start dispensing of ice pieces and/or water. A restoring force moves the lever portion 121 toward a front side of the concave region 101 when force pressing the lever portion 121 toward the concave region 101 is removed.

[65] In this configuration, the lever portion 121 generates a dispensing signal of ice pieces and/or water when pressed, in a thickness direction of the door 13, by a container in which ice pieces and/or water is to be received. As an inlet of the container is disposed to face the end of the movable guide portion 113, dispensed ice pieces and/or water are received in the container.

[66] The dispensing button unit 120 may further include a frame guide portion 125 that guides horizontal motion of the lever frame portion 123, and reduces motion of the lever frame portion 123 in other directions (e.g., right and left directions).

[67] The frame guide portion 125 is fixed to a lower surface of the concaved region 101, and the lever frame portion 123 is coupled to an upper surface of the frame guide portion 125 in a manner that enables the lever frame portion 123 to move in a sliding motion. For this, a guide protrusion 123a and a guide groove 125a are provided on contact surfaces between the frame guide portion 125 and the lever frame portion 123.

[68] The lever portion 121 is provided with a stopping end 121d at a side of a rear end thereof. The stopping end 121d serves to limit motion of the lever portion 121 by contacting the lever frame portion 123.

[69] In this configuration, a maximum protruding position of the lever portion 121 toward the front side of the concaved region 101 by a restoration force of an elastic member, such as a spring, (S) is determined based on contact of the stopping end 121d with the lever frame portion 123. The stopping end 121d may be installed on any surfaces of the lever portion 121 such as an upper surface and a lower surface, rather than the side surface.

[70] In some implementations, the lever portion 121 includes a tray 121b configured to receive and hold residual content (e.g., ice and/or water) dispensed from the dispenser after a dispensing operation. The tray 121b may be an ice bank configured to receive ice pieces. The tray 121b has an opened upper surface configured to receive content and one or more recesses configured to retain content received through the opened upper surface.

[71] In this configuration, when the pressed state of the lever portion 121 is released

before ice pieces and/or water dispensed through the guide unit 110 are accommodated in a container, the ice pieces and/or water are received and stored in the tray 121b. The tray 121b may reduce contamination of the peripheries of the lever portion 121 or inside of the dispenser 100 caused by residual content that is dispensed, but not received in a container.

[72] A container contact portion 121a configured to receive contact of a container being pressed against the tray 121bis positioned on a front surface of the tray 121b. The container contact portion 121a is an elastic member so that an impact amount transmitted to the container is attenuated by a restoration force applied to the lever portion 121 when pressing the lever portion 121.

[73] The tray 121b of the lever portion 121 may be configured so as to be detachable (e.g., removable and replaceable). For this, the lever portion 121 includes a button body portion 121c separate from the tray 121b, and to which the tray 121b is detachably mounted.

[74] The dispensing button unit 120 includes a ice guide portion 127 disposed between an upper surface of the tray 121b and the fixed guide portion 115. The ice guide portion 127 guides ice pieces and/or water abnormally dispensed from the fixed guide portion 115 of the dispenser 100 to the tray 121b.

[75] The ice guide portion 127 includes an opening 127a that allows ice pieces and/or water to pass through the ice guide portion 127, and an inclined portion 127b that is downward inclined toward the circumference of the opening 127a and that guides ice pieces and/or water to the opening 127a.

[76] In some implementations, the dispensing button unit 120 includes a lever locking unit 129 that determines a position where the lever portion 121 is pressed to the maximum state. Accordingly, a pressed position of the lever portion 121 where water or ice pieces start to be dispensed is made known to a user. This may reduce the possibility of dispensed ice pieces or water falling outside of a container due to a misaligned position of the lever portion 121.

[77] The lever locking unit 129 includes a hinge portion 129b disposed below the lever portion 121 and hinge-coupled to the frame guide portion 125, a first extension portion 129a that extends at an angle from the hinge portion 129b in a first direction (e.g., a forward direction), and a second extension portion 129c that extends at an angle from the hinge portion 129b in a second direction (e.g., a backward direction). The first extension portion 129a protrudes upwardly from a horizontal surface. The lever locking unit 129 also includes a third extension portion 129d that extends from an end of the second extension portion 129c and faces a rear surface of the lever portion 121 in the dispensing position. The third extension portion 129d limits motion of the lever portion 121. The hinge portion 129b is coupled to a shaft 125b of the frame guide

portion 125. An installation groove 125c accommodates the lever locking unit 129 therein is further provided at the frame guide portion 125. A pressing protrusion 123c is located on a lower surface of the lever frame portion 123. The pressing protrusion 123c rotates and fixes the lever locking unit 129 by contacting the first extension portion 129a when the lever frame portion 125 moves.

[78] As the lever frame portion 123 moves toward a front side of the door 13, the pressing protrusion 123c located on a lower surface of the lever frame portion 123 pushes the first extension portion 129a. As the first extension portion 129a is pushed, the lever locking unit 129 is rotated centering around the hinge portion 129b. Upon completion of the movement of the lever frame portion 123 to a dispensing position, the third extension portion 129d is disposed in correspondence to a rear surface of the lever portion 121 based on rotation of the lever locking unit 129.

[79] Because, when in the dispensing position, the first extension portion 129a is in a pressed state by the pressing protrusion 123c located on a lower surface of the lever frame portion 123, counterclockwise rotation of the lever locking unit 129 as shown in FIG. 3 is restricted. This allows the third extension portion 129d to limit horizontal movement of the lever portion 121 when pressed because a rear surface of the lever portion 121 contacts the third extension portion 129d and the lever locking unit 129 does not rotate based on the contact.

[80] Once the restricted state of the first extension portion 129a by the lever frame portion 123 is released when the lever frame portion 123 moves into the concaved region 150, the second extension portion 129c and the third extension portion 129d have a larger load than the first extension portion 129a are downwardly rotated into the installation groove 125c. That is, the lever locking unit 129 is rotated in a clockwise direction based on FIG. 3. As a result, the lever frame portion 123 and the lever portion 121 are accommodated in the concaved region 150 without interfering with the lever locking unit 129.

[81] In addition, a switching unit 126 is provided. The switching unit 126 sequentially generates a dispensing start signal and a dispensing speed signal to change a dispensing start time and a dispensing speed of ice pieces or water when the lever portion 121 is moved in a pressed state. The dispensing start signal causes the dispenser to start dispensing ice and/or water at a first speed that is relatively slow. The dispensing speed signal causes the dispenser to increase a dispensing speed of ice and/or water to a second speed that is relatively fast as compared to the first speed. Accordingly, as a user applies force to the dispensing button unit 120, the switching unit 126 controls the dispenser to first start dispensing ice and/or water at a relatively slow speed and then controls the dispenser to dispense ice and/or water at a relatively fast speed as additional force is applied to the dispensing button unit 120.

- [82] The switching unit 126 may be fixed to the frame guide portion 125 so as to be pressed by a side surface of the stopping end 121d of the lever portion 121. In this case, the frame guide portion 125 restricts movement of the lever frame portion 123 and the lever portion 121 in right and left directions. Accordingly, contact reliability between the lever portion 121 and the switching unit 126 is enhanced. In some implementations, the position of the switching unit 126 may be different.
- [83] The switching unit 126 includes a dispensing start switch 126a that generates an electric signal to start dispensing of ice pieces or water. The switching unit 126 also includes a dispensing speed switch 126b that generates an electric signal to change a dispensing speed of the ice pieces or water being dispensed.
- [84] Generally, the ice bank that stores ice pieces is provided with a transfer device that moves and guides the stored ice pieces to an outlet of the ice bank. Ice pieces or water are dispensed based on input to the switching unit 126, which controls the operation and speed of the transfer device.
- [85] The dispensing start switch 126a and the dispensing speed switch 126b are installed so as to be sequentially pressed as the lever portion 121 is pressed. More specifically, the dispensing speed switch 126b is contacted when the lever portion 121 is pressed by a predetermined length after the dispensing start switch 126a has been contacted.
- [86] As shown in FIG. 5, the dispensing start switch 126a and the dispensing speed switch 126b may be installed to be spaced apart from each other by a predetermined length. When the lever portion 121 is pressed, the dispensing start switch 126a is pressed. While the dispensing start switch 126a maintains the pressed state, the lever portion 121 is pressed further by the predetermined length and then presses the dispensing speed switch 126b.
- [87] In the case that contact terminals 126aa and 126bb of the switches 126a and 126b are arranged in a length direction of the lever portion 121, the contact terminal 126aa of the dispensing start switch 126a may be pressed by the lever portion 121 and thereby press the contact terminal 126bb of the dispensing speed switch 126b. In some examples, the contact terminals 126aa and 126bb are installed in parallel to each other at an angle that extends upward or downward. This may reduce an installation space of the switches 126a and 126b necessary to obtain the predetermine length (L).
- [88] The lever portion 121 is elastically supported in the lever frame portion 123. A sliding protrusion 123b transmits a driving force to the lever frame portion 123 to horizontally move the lever frame portion 123. The sliding protrusion 123b is positioned on an outer side surface of the lever frame portion 123.
- [89] FIG. 6 illustrates an example of a driving unit, FIG. 7 shows an assembled state of the driving unit of FIG. 6, FIG. 8 shows the driving unit when the dispenser is in a standby position, and FIG. 9 shows the driving unit when the dispenser is in a

dispensing position.

[90] Referring to FIGS. 6 and 7, the driving unit 130 includes a gear portion 131 having a plurality of gears engaged with each other and connected to the guide unit 110 and the dispensing button unit 120. The gear portion 131 is configured to transmit a driving force to the dispensing button unit 120. The driving unit 130 also includes a driving motor 133 that transmits a driving force to the gear portion 131, and cover members 134a and 134b that house the gear portion 131 and the driving motor 133.

[91] As the driving motor 133 rotates, the guide unit 110 and the dispensing button unit 120 move with each other based on rotation of the gear portion 131. The gear portion 131 includes a driving gear 131a coupled to the driving motor 133, and a driven gear 131b that is engaged with the driving gear 131a. The driven gear 131b is rotated by the driving gear 131a and moves the dispensing button unit 120 based on the rotation.

[92] The driving gear 131a also is engaged with the driven portion 116b coupled to the movable guide portion 113. The driven portion 116b is rotated by the driving gear 131a and, thereby, rotates the movable guide portion 113.

[93] The driving gear 131a, the driven portion 116b, and the driven gear 131b are installed so that rotation surfaces thereof are perpendicular to the cover portion 111. Also, a diameter (D1) of the driven portion 116b is smaller than a diameter (D2) of the driven gear 131b.

[94] Since an angular speed of the driven portion 116b due to rotation of the driving gear 131a is faster than that of the driven gear 131b, a speed difference between the movable guide portion 113 and the dispensing button unit 120 occurs when moving from a stored position to a dispensing position. The speed difference may prevent the dispensing button unit 120 from interfering with the cover portion 111 while the movable guide portion 113 and the dispensing button unit 120 are being moved from a stored position to a dispensing position.

[95] In some examples, a diameter (D3) of the driving gear 131a is smaller than the diameter (D1) of the driven portion 116b and the diameter (D2) of the driven gear 131b. In these examples, protruding speeds of the movable guide portion 113 and the dispensing button unit 120 are decreased to reduce noise. In addition, impact amounts applied to the movable guide portion 113 and the dispensing button unit 120 are reduced.

[96] The driving gear 131a, the driven gear 131b, and the driving motor 133 are installed at an inner side of the first cover portion 134a and the second cover portion 134b. A part of the driving gear 131a is exposed through one side of the first cover portion 134a, and the driven portion 116b is engaged with the exposed part of the driving gear 131a.

[97] The driven portion 116b is part of a hinge connecting member 116. The hinge

connecting member 116 also includes a hinge-coupled portion 116a and a fixation portion 116c, and has a circular arc shape with a central angle. One end of the driven portion 116b is coupled to the hinge-coupled portion 116a, which is hinge-coupled to the concaved region 150. Another end of the driven portion 116b is coupled to the fixation portion 116c, which is fixed to the movable guide portion 113. The central angle of the hinge connecting member 116 is larger than a motion angle of the cover portion 111.

- [98] The driven portion 116b is provided at a side surface of the concaved region 150. Here, the driven portion 116b is supported by idle gears (not shown) rotated by being engaged with the driven portion 116b.
- [99] The driven gear 131b is provided with a sliding lever portion 132 extending in a radius direction of the driven gear 131b. The sliding lever portion 132 drives horizontal movement of the lever frame portion 123.
- [100] The sliding lever portion 132 is provided with a sliding slot 132a in a length direction thereof. A sliding protrusion 123b protruding from a side surface of the lever frame portion 123 is inserted into the sliding slot 132a.
- [101] As the driven gear 131b is rotated, the sliding lever portion 132 pushes the sliding protrusion 123b. The sliding protrusion 123b horizontally moves while performing a sliding motion along the sliding slot 132a.
- [102] The guide unit 110 and the dispensing button unit 120 of the dispenser 100 may be manually accommodated into or protruded from the door 13 by an elastic member, and a locking member. When the guide unit 110 and the dispensing button unit 120 are in a protruding or dispensing state, the elastic member serves to elastically support the guide unit 110 and the dispensing button unit 120 so as to maintain the protruding or dispensing state. When the guide unit 110 and the dispensing button unit 120 are in an accommodated or stored state, the locking member serves to maintain the accommodated or stored state.
- [103] Referring to FIGS. 8 and 9, when the dispenser 100 is in a standby or stored position accommodated in the door 13, the dispenser 100 is completely shielded by the cover portion 111 when viewed from outside of the refrigerator 10. In the standby or stored position, the movable guide portion 113 is disposed so as to overlap the fixed guide portion 115 in a thickness direction of the door 13. Also, the dispensing button unit 120 is accommodated in the concaved region 150 by the sliding lever portion 132.
- [104] In the standby or stored position, once a user inputs a signal through the control button unit 118 of the cover portion 111, the driving gear 131a is rotated by the driving motor 133 in a counterclockwise direction with reference to FIG. 8. The driven portion 116b and the driven gear 131b that are each engaged with the driving gear 131a are each rotated in a clockwise direction based on rotation of the driving gear 131a.

- [105] Accordingly, the cover portion 111 and the movable guide portion 113 are rotated around the hinge-coupled portion 116a with the center of rotation being at the hinge-coupled portion 116a. Based on the rotation, the cover portion 111 and the movable guide portion 113 move toward the front side of the concaved region 150.
- [106] The sliding protrusion 123b of the lever frame portion 123 is pushed by rotation of the driven gear 131b. In response, the sliding protrusion 123b horizontally moves toward the front side of the concaved region 150 along the sliding slot 132a of the sliding lever portion 132.
- [107] When the lever portion 121 is pressed, the dispensing start switch 126a and the dispensing speed switch 126b disposed on a moving path of the lever portion 121 are sequentially pressed, thereby changing a dispensing start time and a dispensing speed of ice pieces or water. More specifically, when the dispensing start switch 126a is pressed, water or ice pieces start to be dispensed. When the lever portion 121 is pressed further into the concaved region 150, the dispensing speed switch 126b is also pressed to change a dispensing speed of the water or ice pieces.
- [108] The operation to move the dispenser 100 from the dispensing position to the standby position is the reverse of the operation to move the dispenser 100 from the standby position to the dispensing position (e.g., the driving gear 131a is rotated by the driving motor 133 in a reverse or opposite direction). Accordingly, the operation to move the dispenser 100 from the dispensing position to the standby position is apparent from the above description of the operation to move the dispenser 100 from the standby position to the dispensing position.
- [109] FIG. 10 illustrates another example of a dispensing button unit. Referring to FIG. 10, the refrigerator having a dispenser has features similar to those described above, except for a switching unit 226.
- [110] The switching unit 226 is installed so that a dispensing start switch 226a and a dispensing speed switch 226b are disposed above and below one another at the same horizontal position with respect to the lever portion 121. The dispensing start switch 226a and the dispensing speed switch 226b have contact terminals 226aa and 226bb, respectively.
- [111] At the stopping end 121d of the lever portion 121 that operates the switches 226a and 226b, a switch groove 226c is provided. The switch groove 226c accommodates the dispensing speed switch 226b when the lever portion 121 is pressed. The switch groove 226c is opened toward a rear surface of the lever portion 121, and has a predetermined length (L) in a length direction of the lever portion 121.
- [112] As the lever portion 121 is pressed, the dispensing start switch 226a is pressed by the stopping end 121d. At the same time, the dispensing speed switch 226b is accommodated into the switch groove 226c and, therefore, is not pressed.

- [113] Once the lever portion 121 is pressed further by a predetermined length (L), the dispensing speed switch 226b is no longer accommodated into the switch groove 226c, and is pressed by the lever portion 121. In some examples, the end of the switch groove 226c has an inclined surface or a curved surface, thereby allowing the dispensing speed switch 226b to be easily detached from the switch groove 226c.
- [114] FIG. 11 illustrates another example of a dispensing button unit. Components having the same configurations as those of described above are provided with the same reference numerals. The refrigerator having a dispenser has features similar to those described above, except for a dispensing button unit 320.
- [115] The dispensing button unit 320 is further provided with a position informing unit 324 provides output to a user that indicates a position of the lever portion 121. For instance, the position informing unit 324 informs the user when the lever portion 121 is disposed at a position prior to pressing the dispensing speed switch 126b.
- [116] The position informing unit 324 includes a locking protrusion 324a elastically supported at one of the lever portion 121 and the lever frame portion 123, an elastic member 324b that elastically supports the locking protrusion 324a, and a fixing member 324c that fixes the elastic member 324b. The position informing unit 324 may be further provided with a locking groove located at the other of the lever portion 121 and the lever frame portion 123 in correspondence to the locking protrusion 324a.
- [117] Once the dispensing start switch 126a is pressed as the lever portion 121 is pressed, a relative motion between the lever portion 121 and the lever frame portion 123 is limited by the position informing unit 324. This may allow a user to sense a changed dispensing speed when more pressing the lever portion 121.
- [118] Referring to FIG. 11, the position informing unit 324 is located at one side surface of the lever portion 121. However, the position informing unit 324 may be located at both side surfaces of the lever portion 121. Any installation position of the position informing unit 324 may be used according to the positions of the dispensing start switch 126a and the dispensing speed switch 126b.
- [119] The locking protrusion 324a may have an upward inclined portion and a downward inclined portion in a direction in which the lever portion 121 is pressed. This may reduce limitations of a relative motion between the lever portion 121 and the lever frame portion 123 by the locking protrusion 324a.
- [120] FIG. 12 illustrates another example of a dispenser 400. Referring to FIG. 12, the refrigerator having a dispenser 400 includes a concaved region 450 (e.g., a dispensing cavity that accommodates insertion of a container) concaved in a thickness direction of the door 13 so as to be opened toward a front side of the door 13. The dispenser 400 also includes a guide unit 410 disposed in the concaved region 450 in communication with a communication port 440 that communicates with an outlet of an ice bank 15.

The guide unit 410 and the communication port 440 guide water or ice pieces dispensed from the ice bank 15. The guide unit 410 receives ice and/or water when an opening/closing member 441, which selectively opens and closes the communication port 440, opens the communication port 440. The opening/closing member 441 has one side coupled to the communication port 440 or the concaved region 450 by hinges, and is opened and closed by being rotated by an additional unit such as a solenoid 442.

[121] The dispenser 400 further includes a dispensing button unit 420 for controlling a dispensing start time and a dispensing speed of water or ice pieces dispensed through the guide unit 410. The dispensing button unit 420 includes a pressing portion 421 disposed at an inner side of the concaved region 450, and a switch operating portion 422 that operates a switching unit 426. Specifically, the switch operating portion 422 sequentially operates a dispensing start switch 426a and a dispensing speed switch 426b.

[122] The dispensing start switch 426a and the dispensing speed switch 426b generate a dispensing start signal and a dispensing speed signal of water or ice pieces, respectively, based on how much the pressing portion 421 is pressed. The pressing portion 421 and the switch operating portion 422 extend from a hinge shaft that is hinge-coupled to one side surface of the concaved region 450, respectively, toward an inside of the concaved region 450 and inside of the door 13.

[123] FIG. 13 illustrates another example of a dispenser 500. Referring to FIG. 13, the dispenser 500 includes a concaved region 550 (e.g., a dispensing cavity that accommodates insertion of a container) concaved in a thickness direction of the door 13 so as to be opened toward a front side of the door 13. The dispenser 500 also includes a guide unit 510 disposed in the concaved region 550 in communication with a communication port 540 that communicates with an outlet of an ice bank 15. The guide unit 510 and the communication port 540 guide water or ice pieces dispensed from the ice bank 15. The guide unit 510 receives ice and/or water when an opening/closing member 541, which selectively opens and closes the communication port 540, opens the communication port 540. The opening/closing member 541 has one side coupled to the communication port 540 or the concaved region 550 by hinges, and is opened and closed by being rotated by an additional unit such as a solenoid 542.

[124] The dispenser 500 further includes a dispensing button unit 520 that controls a dispensing start time and a dispensing speed of water or ice pieces dispensed through the guide unit 510. The dispensing button unit 520 includes a pressing portion 521 disposed at an inner side of the concaved region 550, and a switch operating portion 522 that sequentially operates a dispensing start switch 526a and a dispensing speed switch 526b. The dispensing start switch 526a and the dispensing speed switch 526b generate a dispensing start signal and a dispensing speed signal of water or ice pieces,

respectively, based on how far the pressing portion 521 has been pressed.

[125] The pressing portion 521 is fixed to a rear inner side of the concaved region 550 with a plurality of elastic members 523 coupled to a rear surface 524 thereof. This structure allows the pressing portion 521 to be elastically supported in a thickness direction of the door 13.

[126] The switch operating portion 522 upwardly extends from an upper side of the pressing portion 521. When the pressing portion 521 is pressed, the switch operating portion 522 serves to first contact the dispensing start switch 526a and then contact the dispensing speed switch 526b as the pressing portion 521 is pressed.

[127] Although the above disclosure has described a single dispensing start switch and a single dispensing speed switch, some implementations may include multiple switches. For instance, multiple, different dispensing speed switches may be provided to enable user control of multiple, different dispensing speeds depending on how much force the user applies to the dispensing button unit. In this regard, in some examples, the dispenser includes a dispensing start switch, a first dispensing speed switch, and a second dispensing speed switch. In these examples, as the dispensing button unit is pressed by a user, the dispensing button unit first contacts the dispensing start switch, then contacts the first dispensing speed switch, and finally contacts the second dispensing speed switch. When the dispensing button unit contacts the dispensing start switch, the dispenser begins dispensing of ice and/or water at a relatively slow speed. As the dispensing button unit is pressed further by the user and contacts the first dispensing speed switch, the dispenser increases a dispensing speed of ice and/or water to a relatively medium speed that is faster than the relatively slow speed. As the dispensing button unit is pressed further by the user and contacts the second dispensing speed switch, the dispenser further increases a dispensing speed of ice and/or water to a relatively fast speed that is faster than the relatively medium speed.

[128] In some implementations, as a user releases force applied to a dispensing button unit, the dispensing button unit stops contacting a dispensing speed switch, but continues to contact a dispensing start switch. In these implementations, the dispenser decreases dispensing speed of ice and/or water when the dispensing button unit stops contacting a dispensing speed switch, but continues to contact a dispensing start switch. As such, a user is able to control the dispenser to decrease dispensing speed by releasing force applied to a dispensing button unit.

[129] Although the above disclosure has described a dispensing speed switch that is contacted subsequent to a dispensing start switch to increase a dispensing speed of ice and/or water, in some examples, contacting the dispensing speed switch causes the dispenser to decrease a dispensing speed of ice and/or water. In these examples, the dispensing start signal causes the dispenser to start dispensing ice and/or water at a first

speed that is relatively fast, and the dispensing speed signal causes the dispenser to decrease a dispensing speed of ice and/or water to a second speed that is relatively slow as compared to the first speed. Accordingly, as a user applies force to the dispensing button unit, the switching unit controls the dispenser to first start dispensing ice and/or water at a relatively fast speed and then controls the dispenser to dispense ice and/or water at a relatively slow speed as additional force is applied to the dispensing button unit.

[130] It will be understood that various modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the claims. For example, advantageous results still could be achieved if steps of the disclosed techniques were performed in a different order and/or if components in the disclosed systems were combined in a different manner and/or replaced or supplemented by other components. Accordingly, other implementations are within the scope of the following claims.

Claims

- [1] A refrigerator having a dispenser, comprising:
a cooling chamber;
a door that is configured to open and close at least a portion of the cooling chamber;
a dispenser positioned on the door and configured to dispense ice pieces or water through the door when the door is oriented in a closed position; and
a dispensing button unit configured to control a dispensing start time and a dispensing speed of the ice pieces or water dispensed through the dispenser based on a position of at least a portion of the dispensing button unit that results from movement of the portion of the dispensing button unit, the dispensing button unit being configured to, in response to the portion of the dispensing button unit being moved to a first position, control the dispenser to start dispensing the ice pieces or water at a first speed and being configured to, in response to the portion of the dispensing button unit being moved to a second position that is different than the first position, control the dispenser to change a dispensing speed of the ice pieces or water to a second speed that is different than the first speed.
- [2] The refrigerator having a dispenser of claim 1, wherein the portion of the dispensing button unit comprises a lever portion that is configured to generate a dispensing start signal when the lever portion is moved, toward the cooling chamber when the door is oriented in the closed position, to the first position and that is configured to generate a dispensing speed signal when the lever portion is moved, toward the cooling chamber when the door is oriented in the closed position, from the first position to the second position.
- [3] The refrigerator having a dispenser of claim 2, further comprising:
a dispensing start switch that is positioned to contact the lever portion when the lever portion is moved to the first position and that is configured to generate the dispensing start signal when contacted by the lever portion; and
a dispensing speed switch that is positioned to contact the lever portion when the lever portion is moved to the second position and that is configured to generate the dispensing speed signal when contacted by the lever portion.
- [4] The refrigerator having a dispenser of claim 3, wherein the dispensing button unit comprises:
a lever frame portion configured to move, in a plane perpendicular to a surface of the door, between a stored position at which the lever frame portion is positioned on a side of the surface of the door where the cooling chamber is positioned and

an extended position at which at least a portion of the lever frame portion is positioned on a side of the surface of the door opposite of the cooling chamber; and a lever portion that is elastically supported by the lever frame portion and that is configured to, when the lever frame portion is oriented in the extended position, move, in response to application of force to the lever portion, toward the surface of the door and move, in response to release of the force applied to the lever portion, away from the surface of the door.

- [5] The refrigerator having a dispenser of claim 4, further comprising a position informing unit that is configured to enhance user detection that, subsequent to the lever portion being moved to the first position at which the lever portion contacts the dispensing start switch, the lever portion is disposed at a position before contacting the dispensing speed switch.
- [6] The refrigerator having a dispenser of claim 5, wherein the position informing unit comprises:
a locking protrusion that is elastically supported at one of the lever portion and the lever frame portion; and
a locking groove that is defined at the other of the lever portion and the lever frame portion and that is configured to contact the locking protrusion subsequent to the lever portion being moved to the first position at which the lever portion contacts the dispensing start switch and prior to the lever portion being moved to the second position at which the lever portion contacts the dispensing speed switch, wherein contact between the locking protrusion and the locking groove causes additional resistance in moving the lever portion toward the surface of the door and, thereby, enhances user detection that the lever portion is disposed at a position before contacting the dispensing speed switch.
- [7] The refrigerator having a dispenser of claim 6, wherein the locking protrusion is elastically supported by a contact surface between the lever portion and the lever frame portion in a vertical direction.
- [8] The refrigerator having a dispenser of claim 6, wherein the locking protrusion sequentially has an upward inclination portion and a downward inclination portion along a moving direction of the lever portion.
- [9] The refrigerator having a dispenser of claim 4, wherein, when the door is oriented in the closed position, the dispenser defines an ice flow passage that enables passage of ice pieces through the door from an outlet of an ice bank that is disposed in the cooling chamber and that is configured to store ice pieces.
- [10] The refrigerator having a dispenser of claim 9, wherein the dispenser comprises:
a fixed guide portion configured to communicate with the outlet of the ice bank;
and

a movable guide portion that is configured to rotate between a stored position and a dispensing position and that is configured to communicate the fixed guide portion with an exterior of the cooling chamber when the movable guide portion is oriented in the dispensing position.

- [11] The refrigerator having a dispenser of claim 10, wherein the movable guide portion is coupled to a cover portion that is configured to rotate between a stored position at which the cover portion is positioned in a plane of an external surface of the door and a dispensing position at which at least a portion of the cover portion is positioned on a side of the surface of the door opposite of the cooling chamber and at which the movable guide portion communicates with the fixed guide portion.
- [12] The refrigerator having a dispenser of claim 11, wherein the dispensing button unit is positioned behind the cover portion when the cover portion is oriented in the stored position, and at least a portion of the dispensing button unit is positioned on the side of the surface of the door opposite of the cooling chamber when the cover portion is oriented in the dispensing position.
- [13] The refrigerator having a dispenser of claim 2, wherein the dispensing button unit comprises:
a pressing portion disposed at an inner side of a concaved region of the door;
a dispensing start switch configured to generate a dispensing start signal when contacted;
a dispensing speed switch configured to generate a dispensing speed signal when contacted; and
a switch operating portion that is configured to move in response to force applied to the pressing portion, that is configured to, when the door is oriented in the closed position and force is applied to the pressing portion, move toward the cooling chamber to the first position at which the switch operating portion contacts the dispensing start switch, and that is configured to, when the door is oriented in the closed position, the switch operating portion is positioned at the first position, and force is applied to the pressing portion, move toward the cooling chamber to the second position at which the switch operating portion contacts the dispensing speed switch.
- [14] The refrigerator having a dispenser of claim 13, wherein, when the door is oriented in the closed position, the dispenser defines an ice flow passage between one side of the concaved region and an outlet of an ice bank that is disposed in the cooling chamber and that is configured to store ice pieces.
- [15] The refrigerator having a dispenser of claim 13, wherein the pressing portion is provided on a wall surface inside the concaved region and is elastically

supported in a thickness direction of the door.

[16] The refrigerator having a dispenser of claim 13, wherein the pressing portion is coupled to the door by hinges, is configured to rotate in a thickness direction of the door, is provided on a wall surface inside the concaved region, and is elastically supported in a manner that applies a force to rotate the pressing portion toward a front surface of the door.

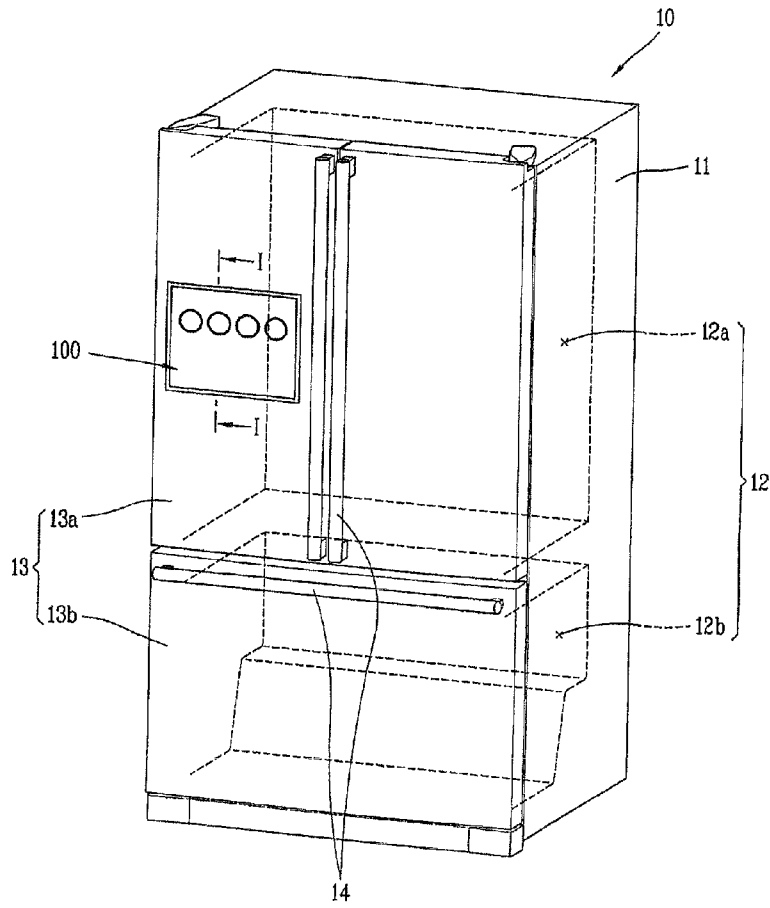
[17] A method of controlling a dispenser comprising:
receiving force that moves a portion of a dispensing button to a first position;
controlling a dispenser to start dispensing ice pieces or water at a first speed in response to the portion of the dispensing button unit being moved to the first position;
receiving force that moves the portion of the dispensing button from the first position to a second position that is different than the first position; and
controlling the dispenser to change a dispensing speed of the ice pieces or water to a second speed that is different than the first speed in response to the portion of the dispensing button unit being moved to the second position.

[18] The method of claim 17 further comprising providing a physical alert to a user indicating that the portion of the dispensing button unit is approaching the second position at which the dispensing speed of the ice pieces or water changes.

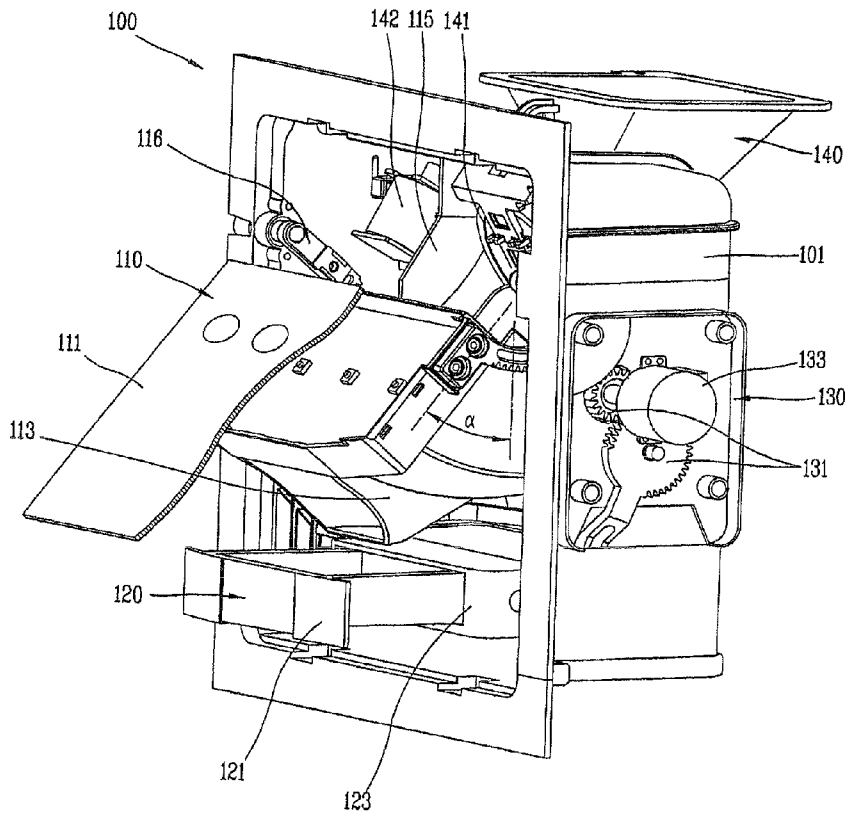
[19] The method of claim 18 wherein providing the physical alert comprises causing an increase in force needed to complete movement of the portion of the dispensing button from the first position to the second position.

[20] A refrigerator having a dispenser, comprising:
a cooling chamber;
a door that is configured to open and close at least a portion of the cooling chamber;
a dispenser positioned on the door and configured to dispense ice pieces or water through the door when the door is oriented in a closed position;
a dispensing button unit configured to receive force that results in movement of at least a portion of the dispensing button unit; and
means for controlling the dispenser to start dispensing the ice pieces or water at a first speed in response to the portion of the dispensing button unit being moved to a first position;
means for controlling the dispenser to change a dispensing speed of the ice pieces or water to a second speed that is different than the first speed in response to the portion of the dispensing button unit being moved to a second position that is different than the first position.

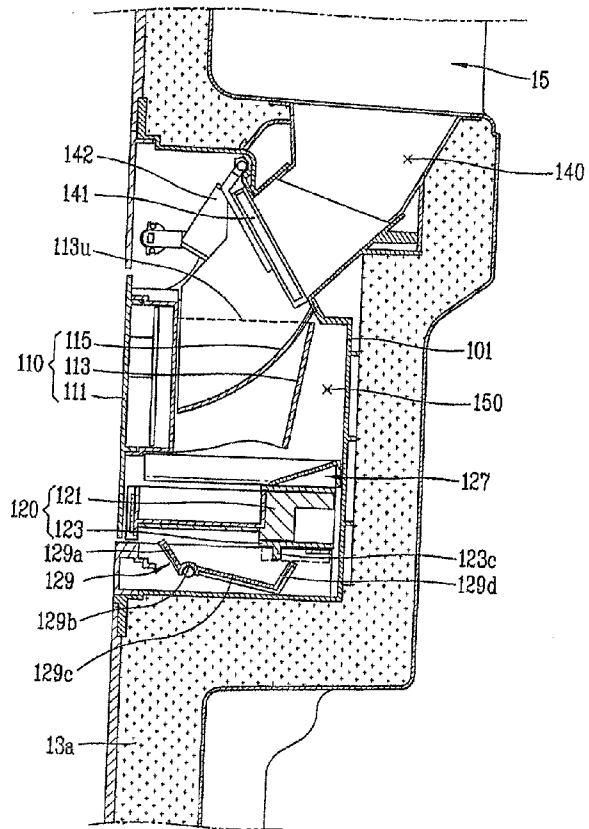
[Fig. 1]



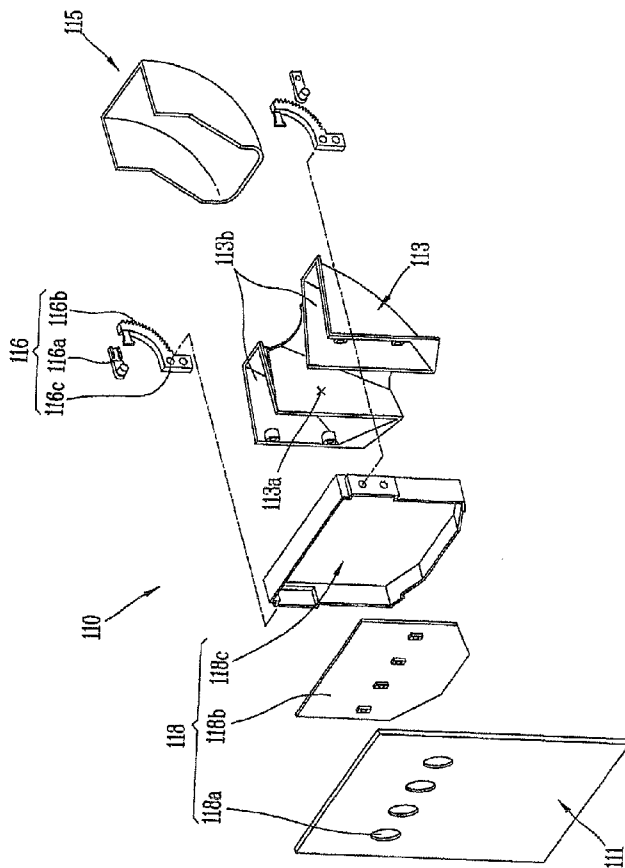
[Fig. 2]



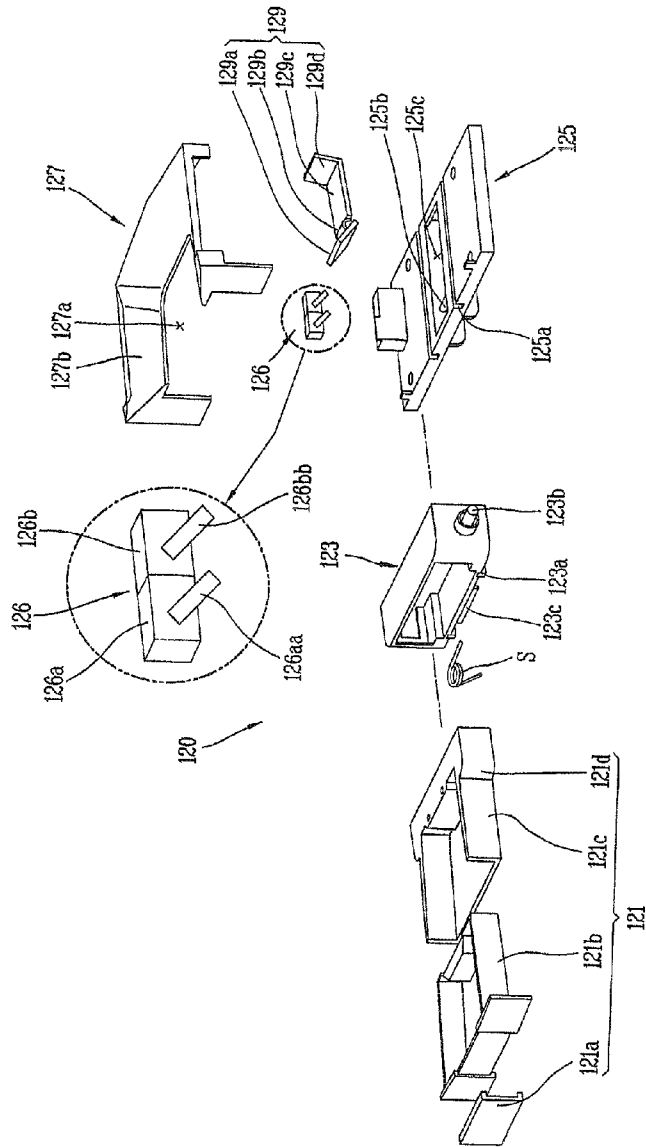
[Fig. 3]



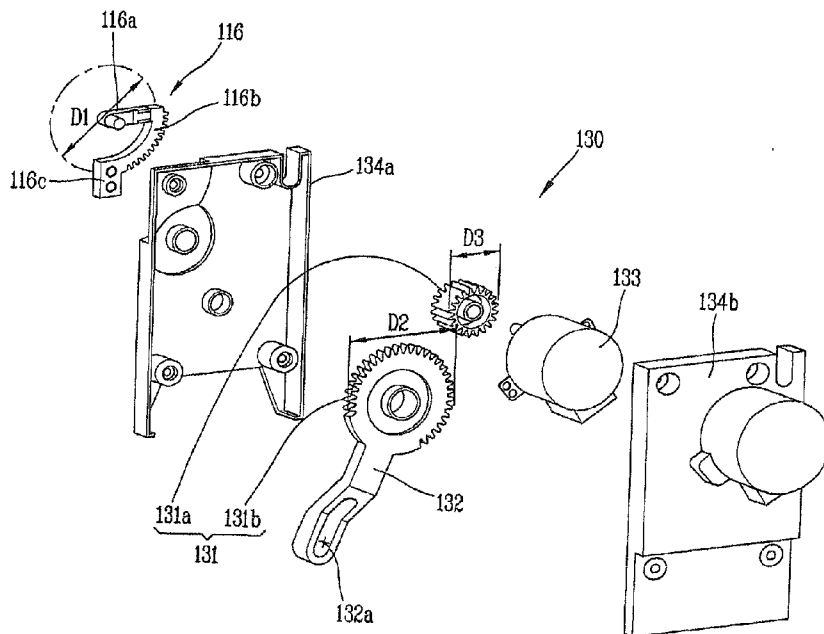
[Fig. 4]



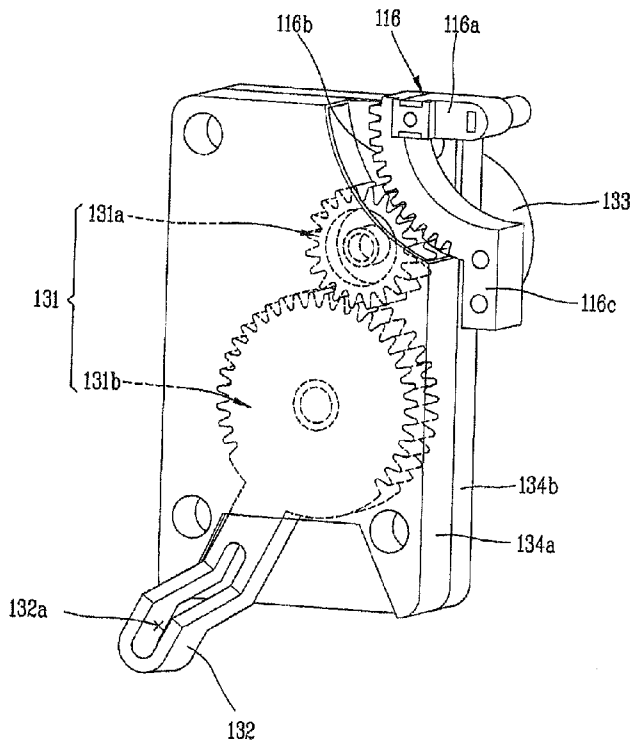
[Fig. 5]



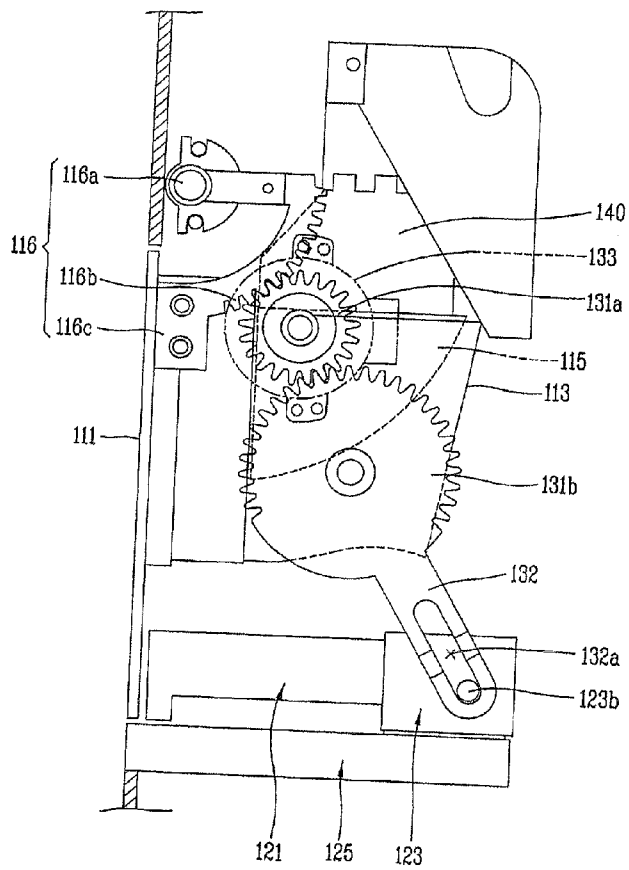
[Fig. 6]



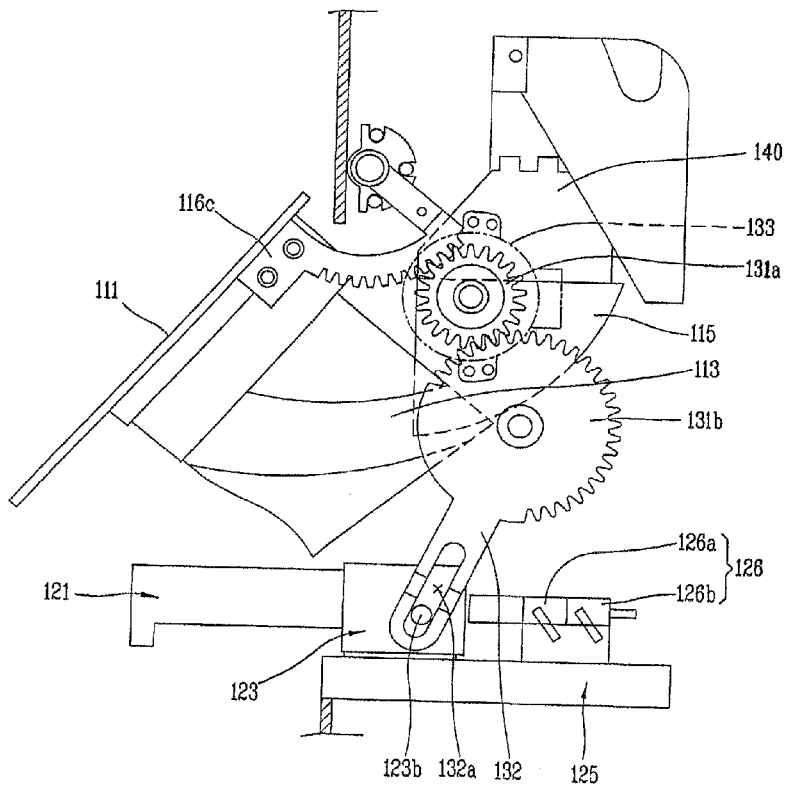
[Fig. 7]



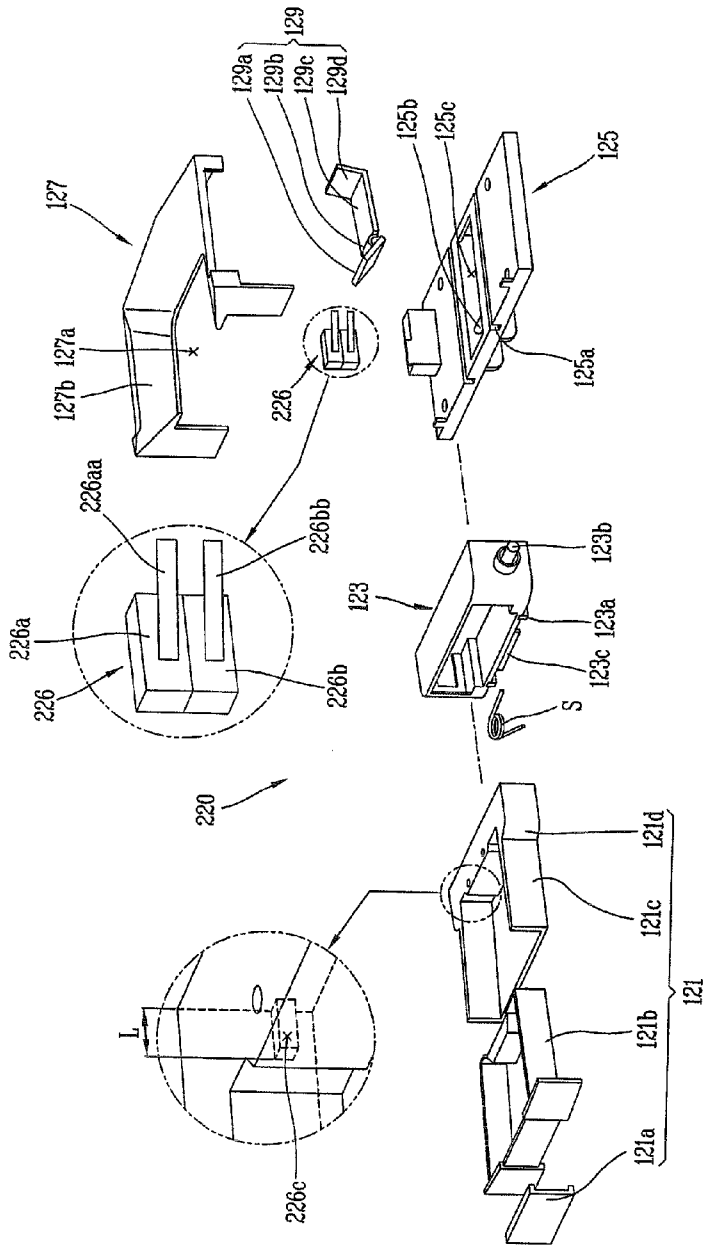
[Fig. 8]



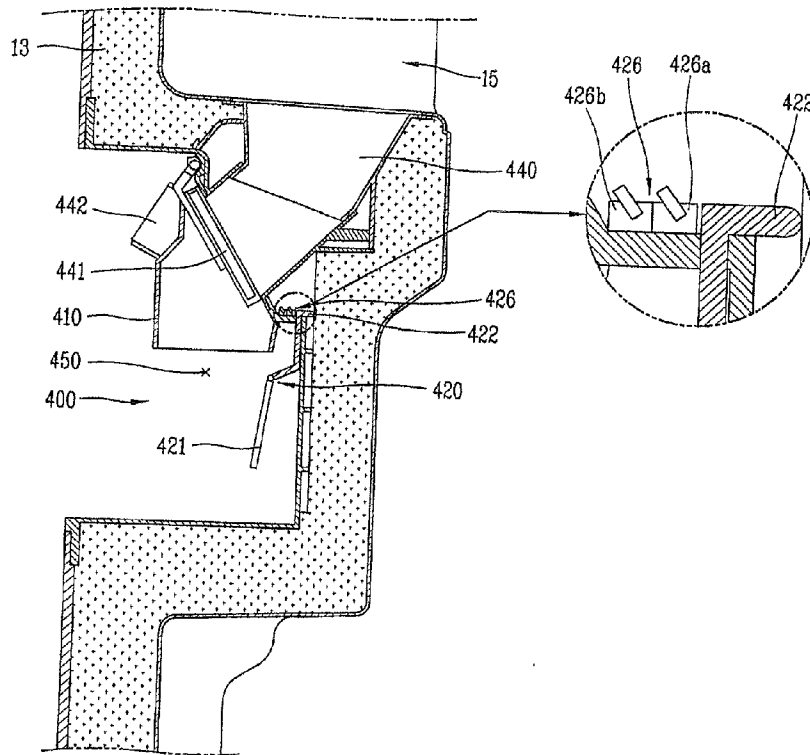
[Fig. 9]



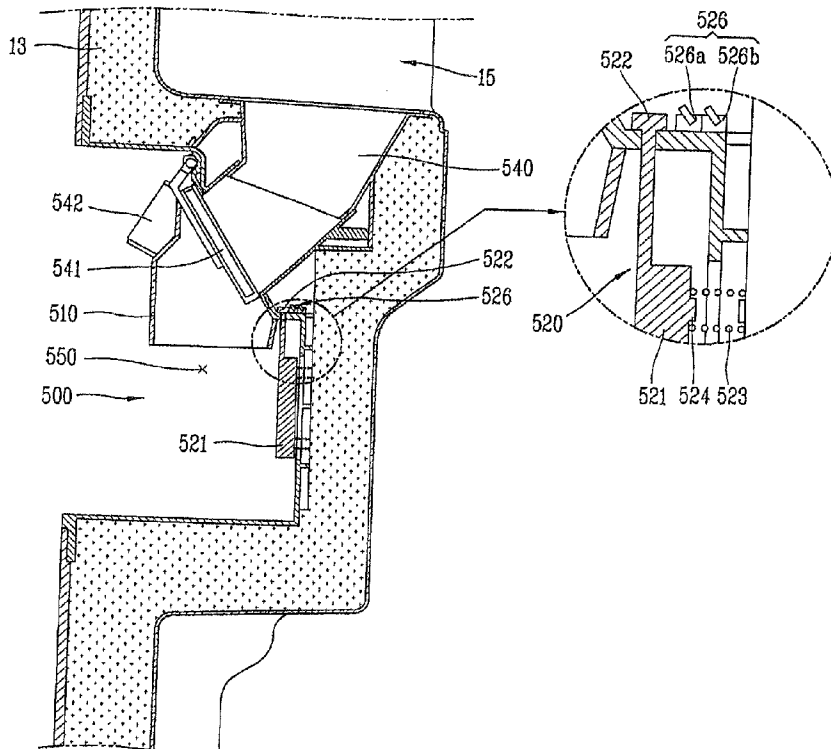
[Fig. 10]



[Fig. 12]





[Fig. 13]



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/KR2009/003086

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER		
<i>F25D 25/00(2006.01)i</i>		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED		
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) F25D 25/00; F25C 5/00; F25C 5/18; F25D 29/00		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Korean utility models and applications for utility models Japanese utility models and applications for utility models		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used) eKOMPASS(KIPO internal) & Keywords: refrigerator, dispenser, button, speed, control, lever		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	KR 10-0283780 B1 (SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS CO., LTD.) 15 February 2001 See page 3, line 10 - page 4, line 24 and figures 3,4.	1-20
A	KR 10-0766119 B1 (LG ELECTRONICS INC.) 11 October 2007 See paragraph [0032] - paragraph [0042] and figure 4.	1-20
A	KR 10-0162443 B1 (LG ELECTRONICS INC.) 15 January 1999 See page 2, line 40 - page 3, line 4 and figure 2.	1-20
A	US 2003-0019236 A1 (DOUG A. HEIMS et al.) 30 January 2003 See paragraph [0018] - paragraph [0020] and figure 2.	1-20
<input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex.		
* Special categories of cited documents: "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance "E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of citation or other special reason (as specified) "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art "&" document member of the same patent family		
Date of the actual completion of the international search 11 FEBRUARY 2010 (11.02.2010)		Date of mailing of the international search report 17 FEBRUARY 2010 (17.02.2010)
Name and mailing address of the ISA/KR  Korean Intellectual Property Office Government Complex-Daejeon, 139 Seonsa-ro, Seo-gu, Daejeon 302-701, Republic of Korea Facsimile No. 82-42-472-7140		Authorized officer BAHN, Jae Won Telephone No. 82-42-481-5894 

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

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