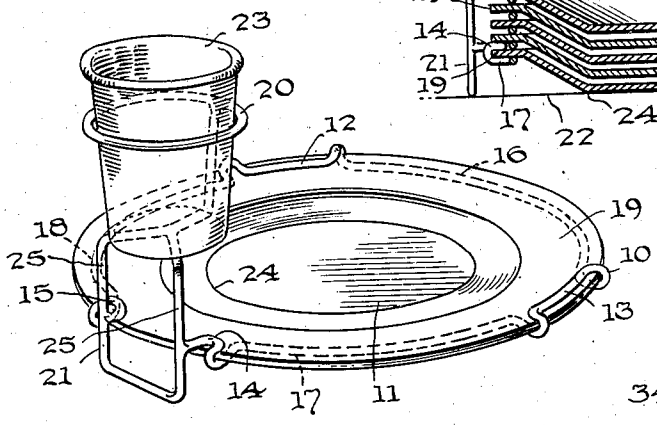
Dec. 3, 1946. D. BIRKIN 2,411,864

BUFFET SERVER

Filed Oct. 12, 1942

Fig. 1.



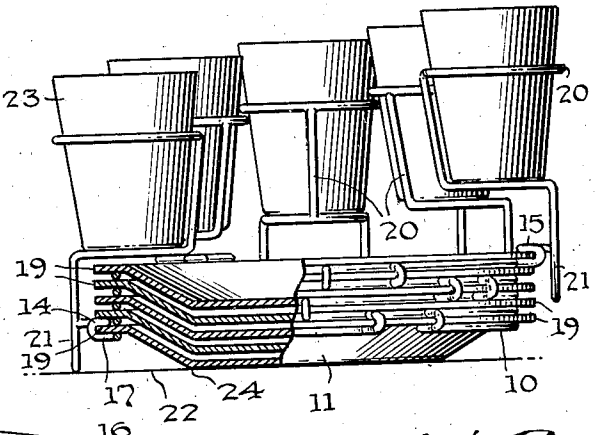


Fig. 2.

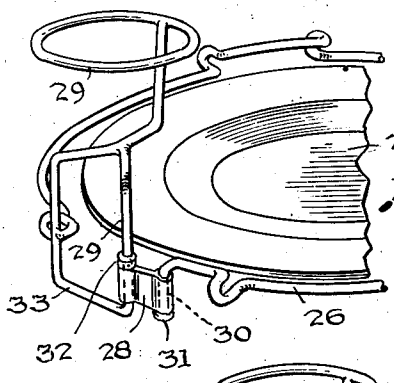


Fig. 3.

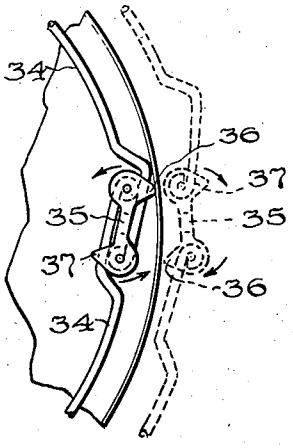


Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.

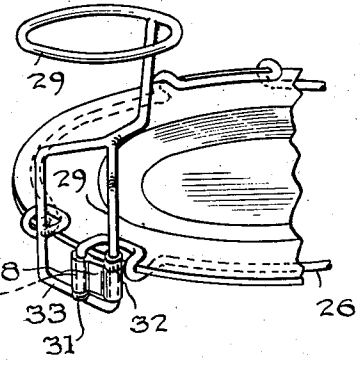


Fig. 4.

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BUFFET SERVER

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Application October 12, 1942, Serial No. 461,755

3 Claims. (Cl. 65—65)

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The present invention relates to buffet service devices of the general type in which a plate and some other food-service accessory such as a cup may be assembled as a portable unit assemblage to be held in one hand of a user.

An important object of the invention is to provide a buffet service device of the above general type in which the elements are associated in a manner to enable several of such assembled units to be stacked or nested one upon the other without disturbing the assembled relation of the elements of the units.

Another object is the provision of a buffet service device affording a combined cup-support and plate-reinforcing element or stiffener and cup support, whereby a cup and a plate of relatively flexible material, such as paper or thin plastic material may be carried as a unit in one hand with the facility of a similar use of a rigid plate and cup holder.

Another object is the provision of a buffet service device in which the accessory element and support therefor are related to the plate in a manner to avoid obstruction of the main surface of the plate, and at the same time maintain balanced stability of the assemblage when laid upon a flat surface in either empty or filled condition.

Another object is to provide a cup support adapted to be associated in fixed relation with a plate in a manner to permit the user to take hold of the plate at a place on the rim directly beneath a cup held in the cup holder and thus at a point in substantially vertical alignment with the center of gravity of the assemblage.

A further object is the provision of a buffet service device in which the accessory support engages the plate through means acting to prevent accidental disengagement of the support from the place by radially outward pressure against the support.

A still further object is to provide an accessory support adapted to engage the plate by means of a closed contractible loop capable of being locked in contracted position about the rim of a plate.

Various other objects and advantages of the invention whereby reliability and convenience in use of a device of the present type are attained, will be apparent from a perusal of the following detailed description of certain specific embodiments shown in the accompanying drawing.

In the drawing:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of one form of the invention applied to a plate of thin sheet material and supplied with a cup to form a complete unit assembly.

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Fig. 2 is side elevation, partly in section, showing several of the unit assemblages of Fig. 1 in a stacked group.

Fig. 3 is a fragmentary perspective view of a modification in a position about to be applied to a relatively rigid plate.

Fig. 4 is a fragmentary perspective view of the modification of Fig. 3 applied to the plate.

Fig. 5 is a fragmentary bottom plan view showing a modified form of contracting and locking toggle.

Fig. 6 is a fragmentary view of a modified form of frame element.

A form of my invention particularly adapted to use with a plate of flexible sheet material such as paper, sheet plastic material or the like, is illustrated in Figs. 1 and 2. Here the device is constructed of stiff metallic wire or rod material, of circular cross section, and comprises in general a relatively rigid frame element 10 in the form of a closed loop shaped to extend around the rim of a plate 11 and having upper rim-lapping portions 12, 13, 14, and 15, and lower rim-lapping portions 16, 17, and 18, adapted to receive between them the rim 19 of the plate 11, together with an accessory supporting element here shown as a cup support 20 carried by the frame element in substantially rigid connection therewith, and a stabilizing bracket element 21 extending downwardly from the assemblage of frame and cup support substantially to the plane of support 22 (Fig. 2) of the plate.

The rim-lapping portions 12 to 18 are preferably arranged in spaced relation around the frame so as to permit the rim of the flexible plate 11 to be inserted from the top, under the top portions at one side of a diameter of the frame, and the plate slightly flexed to enable the opposite side of the rim to be sprung under the remaining top, lapping portion or portions on the other side. The cup support 20 is arranged to support a cup 23 above the plate and well out over the rim so as to clear the usable surface of the plate and permit the stacking of several of the complete unit assemblages of plate and cup as will be later described. To insure balanced stability of the assemblage when placed upon a flat supporting surface with liquid in the cup, even though the center of gravity of the cup may be situated beyond the outer edge 24 of the bottom of the plate, the stabilizing bracket is arranged to extend downwardly to bear upon the supporting surface 22 at a point outside the vertical projection of the center of the cup, and to permit a stacking of several of the unit assemblies as indi-

cated in Fig. 2, both the bracket and the upright elements 25 connecting the cup support 20 with the frame 10 are arranged to lie beyond the vertical projection of the outer edge of the plate.

It will be clear from Fig. 2 that the maximum number of unit assemblages that can be stacked is limited to one more than the number of cups and cup supports that may be placed in contact in an arc of radius determined by the radial offset of the cup holder, with a space between the supports at the ends of the arc sufficient to permit entrance of a plate and its frame, the additional unit assemblage being inserted through said space with its associated cup support partially closing said space. This is practically the only limit inasmuch as with cups of adequate size this limit thus determined will be well within that determined by the vertical clearance between the bottom plate and its cup support with respect to the thickness of plate and frame.

A factor in achievement of a low stacking height is the cooperative arrangement of the upper and lower rim-lapping portions whereby the outer edges of the lower portions 16, 17, and 18 lie radially within the inner edges of the upper portions 12 to 15, thus permitting the lower rim-lapping portions of one plate to nest within the circle of the upper rim-lapping portions of the plate next below, as shown in Fig. 2.

In order that the unit assemblage of frame, cup, and plate may be readily and safely carried in one hand and in balance, the upright elements 25 securing the cup support to the frame are spaced as indicated to afford a thumb space directly under the cup through which the user may insert his thumb to permit the plate to be held at a point directly beneath the cup. Thus the usual tendency of a plate and cup to twist in the hand, as when held at a point to one side of the cup, is substantially eliminated.

While the device is here shown and described above as constructed of a stiff metallic wire of round cross-section, it will be understood that the construction may be of various other materials of various shaped cross-sections. In any case, with material of adequate stiffness, the frame 10 of the device forms a stiffener or reinforcement for the plate, permitting the use of a plate of non-rigid material such as the well known paper plate, or a plate of light plastic material, while the stabilizing bracket at the cup-supporting end overcomes the otherwise disadvantage of lightness of such a plate relative to the weight of the cup and its contents. It will be obvious that the lower lapping portions 16, 17, and 18 may be extended a considerable degree toward the center of the plate for further reinforcement where found desirable, without detracting from the various advantages of the device as set out above, thus making it possible to use plates otherwise too flimsy for convenient handling in one hand when containing considerable food.

In Figs. 3 and 4 is shown a modified form of the invention for use with strong rigid plates such as plates of porcelain, metal, relatively thick, strong plastic material or the like. This form of the invention is similar in all respects to that previously described except that the frame element 26 is made contractible or adjustable in diameter to enable it to be clamped about the rim of a stiff plate 27 and is provided with clamping means for drawing it into, and holding it in clamped position. The clamping means may be any means for contracting the frame and holding or locking it in contracted position, and is here

shown as a toggle link 28 inserted in the looped or ring-like frame, where the loop joins the stabilizing bracket 29. The toggle link is journaled at one end about a downwardly projecting portion 30 of a loose end of the loop of the frame 26, and at another end about the adjacent vertical member of the stabilizing bracket 29, the first end being held against, or limited in axial movement by the headed end portion 31 of the frame while the latter end is held against or limited in axial movement on the adjacent vertical member of the stabilizing bracket 29 by a stop collar 32 on the bracket 29. It will be clear from Figs. 3 and 4 that a turning of the toggle from the position shown in Fig. 3 to that shown in Fig 4 will effect a contraction of the frame 26 about the rim of the plate to clamp the rim of the plate within the frame between the upper and lower rim-lapping portions of the frame. For locking the toggle 28 in the clamped position shown in Fig. 4, the enlarged or upset end 31 on the loose end of the frame is rounded or beveled to enable it to spring over the horizontal portion 33 of the stabilizing bracket as shown. The toggle link 28 together with the headed end 31, thus constitute a clamping or locking means for the contractible frame.

With the toggle link arranged as here shown, to lie in a vertical plane outside the rim of the plate as does the stabilizing bracket, there is no interference between the toggles and the plates when stacked, for the same reason as there is no interference between the plates and brackets as pointed out above in connection with Fig. 2.

Another form of expansible and contractible frame is shown in Fig. 5 where the frame element 34 is split or broken at a point more remote from the point of attachment with the cup support and is joined at the loose ends through a clamping, toggle link 35 lying flat in the plane of the frame and arranged to swing from the position shown in dotted lines into that shown in solid lines when the frame is contracted from the dotted to the solid line position. In the solid line position, the toggle link and its pivotal connections are held substantially in a common plane by the pairs of projecting lugs 36 and 37 which extend laterally from the ends of the link into overlapping engagement with adjacent portions of the frame. In both the toggle arrangements of Figs. 4 and 5, a locking in the closed position is effected by the pivotal connections of the toggle with the frame assuming an aligned or dead-center position, or a position slightly beyond dead-center with respect to the direction of the force exerted on the toggle by the frame.

With the use of a contractible frame element as distinguished from the relatively fixed or rigid frame, the frame may be formed as a loop having a channel section as illustrated in Fig. 6, where the channel-section frame is indicated at 38 and the plate at 39.

While I have herein shown and described certain specific embodiments of my invention for the sake of disclosure, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited to such specific embodiments but contemplates all such modifications and variants thereof as fall fairly within the scope of the appended claims.

What I claim is:

1. A buffet server comprising a substantially rigid, frame element formed as a continuous loop adapted to embrace the rim of a plate, portions of said frame element extending radially inwardly, above and below and in overlapping rela-

tion with the rim of a plate embraced by the frame element, a cup holder mounted on the frame element and spaced above and overlying the rim of the plate, and a stabilizing bracket extending downwardly from the cup holder, outside the rim of the frame substantially to the plane of the bottom supporting portion of a plate held in the frame.

2. A buffet server comprising a frame in the form of a continuous loop adapted to embrace the rim of a plate, a cup holder connected adjacent the outer edge of the frame, and upper and lower rim-lapping portions on said frame adapted to overlap top and bottom surfaces of a rim of a plate embraced by said frame, the radially innermost edge of said upper portions being spaced

farther from the center of the plate than the radially outer edges of said lower portion, whereby several frames each with a plate contained therein may be stacked with the said bottom portions of an upper frame nested within the upper portions of the frame next below.

3. A buffet server comprising a frame in the form of a continuous loop adapted to embrace the rim of a plate, means for holding a plate in the frame, and a cup holder connected adjacent an outer edge of the frame through vertical uprights spaced circumferentially along the edge of the frame, to permit entrance of a thumb of the user over the rim of the plate directly under the cup holder.

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