United States Patent [19]

Leto

[11] **3,908,887**

[45] **Sept. 30, 1975**

[54] **UTENSIL**

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[73] Assignee: **Western Technical Products Co.**, North Hollywood, Calif.

[22] Filed: **Feb. 12, 1973**

[21] Appl. No.: **331,700**

Related U.S. Application Data

[63] Continuation of Ser. No. 131,164, April 5, 1971, abandoned.

[52] **U.S. Cl.** ..... **229/1.5 C**; 220/85 D; 30/169

[51] **Int. Cl.** **B65d 3/00**

[58] **Field of Search** ..... 30/169, 322, 324, 325; 220/54, 85 D, 85 H; 229/1.5 C, 7 S; 206/4, 47 R; 426/115; 267/156

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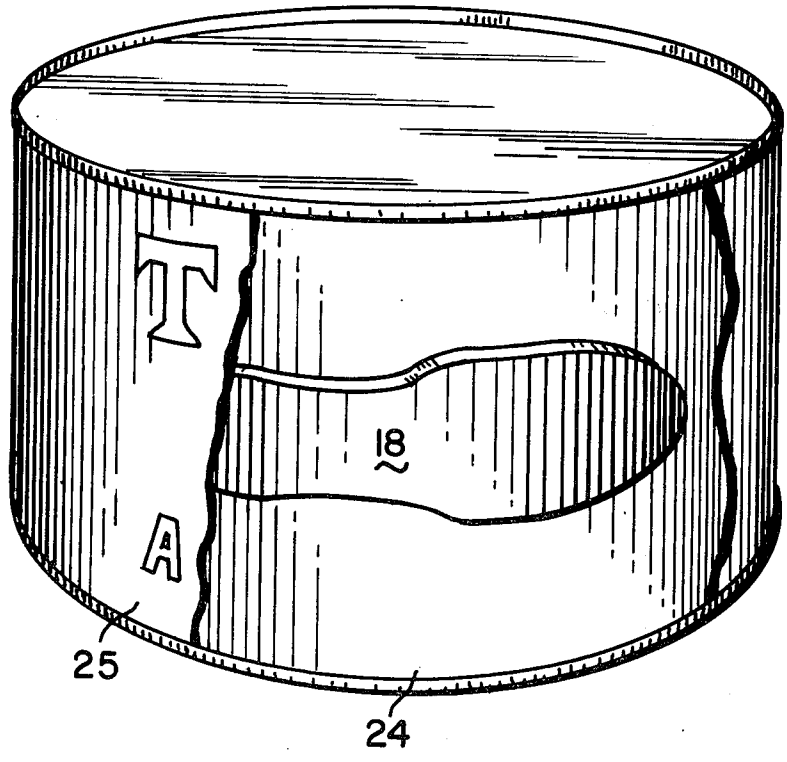
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A utensil formed from a strip of resilient material that is longitudinally rigid when bowed in a lateral axis but which is either longitudinally flexible or springs into a spiral coil when the lateral bow is flattened. To be readily available, the utensil may be affixed to the arcuate surface of a cylindrical container either by its own resilient coiling action, by a removable adhesive, or between the container and the label affixed thereto.

4 Claims, 5 Drawing Figures



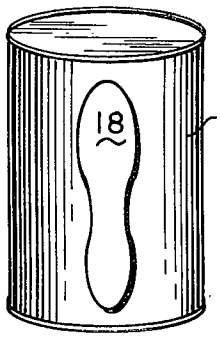


FIG. 4

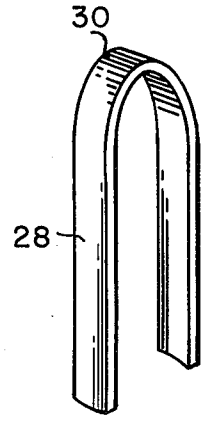


FIG. 5

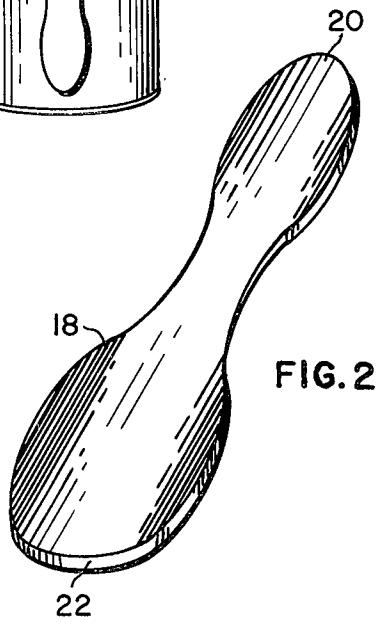


FIG. 2

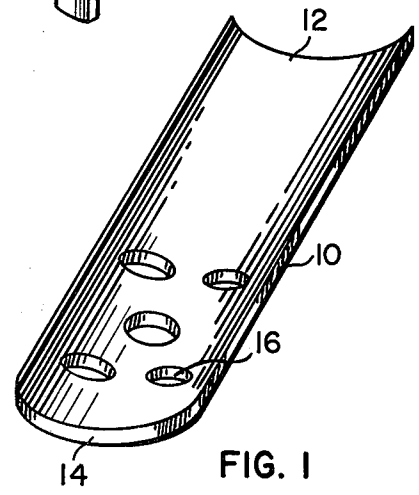


FIG. 1

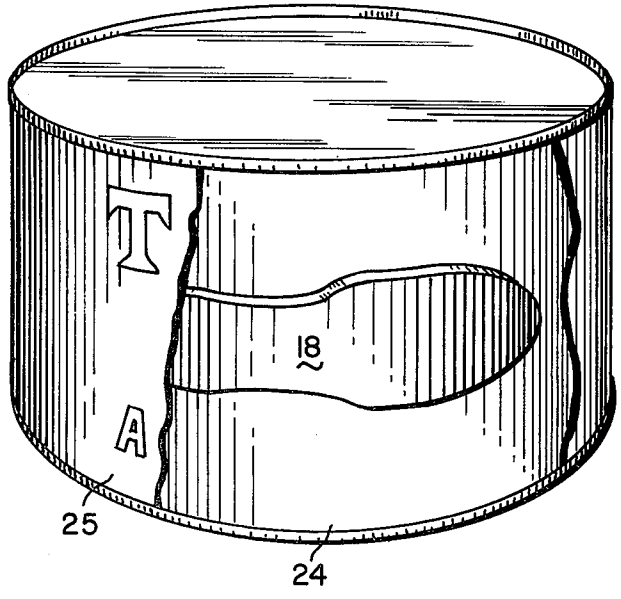


FIG. 3

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UTENSIL

This is a continuation of application Ser. No. 131,164, filed Apr. 5, 1971 now abandoned.

Modern packing techniques include the packaging of single serving sized containers of ready-to-use comestibles, such as salads, preserved fruits, puddings, and the like. These single serving sized containers are generally intended for lunch box or picnic use and often include the so-called "zip top" opener, or some other means of opening the container without use of separate keys or can opening equipment. The big disadvantage of such single serving sized containers is, however, that they fail to provide the consumer with the utensil necessary to use the contents of the container. There have in the past been some attempts to include flat spoon-shaped paddles with single serving containers of ice cream of other such semi-solid foods. The use of these flat paddles is limited to foods of an appropriate consistency and are inadequate for use with the great majority of foods furnished in the single serving containers. Until now, there has been no practical method of including a curved utensil, such as a spoon, with the container.

Briefly described, the invention comprises a utensil, such as a fork or spoon or the like, formed of a thin, resilient strip material which has a normally bowed lateral axis that causes a stiffening along the longitudinal axis to provide both the bowl shape of the utensil and the necessary rigidity so that it may be used as a utensil. When the lateral bow is removed from the utensil, the resilient material may become flexible along the longitudinal axis so that the utensil may be wrapped around a cylindrical container by its own resilient action which urges the material to coil along its longitudinal axis. If desired, the coiled utensil may be protected from contamination by covering it with a label or by enclosing it in a protective envelope prior to its being applied to the cylindrical surface.

It is contemplated that the preferred material to be used for producing the utensil would be similar to that used in the so-called "snap rule" self-retracting tape ruler. The utensils may be eating utensils and may be in the form of spoons, forks, olive picks, knives; they may readily be affixed to containers of non-edible products for use as tongs. paint stirrers, etc.; and may be packaged with the jars or cans of material that may become contaminated by contact with non-sterile utensils or stirrers. Preferably the wrapped or enclosed utensils will be coiled around the arcuate surface of the can or jar and may be placed between the container surface and a label, lightly cemented to the arcuate surface with a removable glue or cement, or may be imprinted and become a part of the label itself. It should be noted that the application of the snap-rule type of utensil is readily adapted to high-speed machine packaging and will not interfere with empty container stacking and storage.

In the drawings which illustrate preferred embodiments of the invention:

FIG. 1 is an illustration in perspective of one form of utensil containing a perforated working end;

FIG. 2 is an illustration of the utensil in the form of a spoon;

FIG. 3 illustrates the mounting of the spoon of FIG. 2 to the arcuate surface of a cylindrical container;

FIG. 4 illustrates another mounting position of the spoon of FIG. 2 to the arcuate surface of a cylindrical container; and

FIG. 5 is an illustration of the utensil in the form of tongs.

Illustrated in FIG. 1 is a utensil **10** having a handle **12** at one end of its longitudinal axis and a working end **14** at the opposite end of the longitudinal axis. Utensil **10** is formed of a spring material having what may be termed as two stable states; in one state the material is bowed along its lateral axis and rigid along its longitudinal axis, as shown in FIG. 1; in the other state the material is flat along its lateral axis and tends to coil along its longitudinal axis, as shown in FIG. 3.

The utensil shown in FIG. 1 is provided with a plurality of holes **16** in its working end **14** and may be effectively used as a stirrer for paint of the like, or could be conveniently used as a "slotted" spoon for edibles, such as preserved fruit that is packed in syrups.

FIG. 2 illustrates the utensil in the form of a spoon **18** having a handle **20** at one end of the longitudinal axis and a working end **22** at the opposite end of the longitudinal axis. It is apparent that spoon **18** may be easily converted into a fork by merely forming tines in the working end **22.**

FIG. 3 illustrates a typical mounting of a spoon **18** in FIG. 2 to the arcuate surface of a cylindrical container **24.** As shown in this Figure, the bowed surface of spoon **18** has been removed so that its spring material now tends to coil along its longitudinal axis; thus, the coiling material of spoon **18** will conform to the arcuate surface of the container **24.** The coiled utensil **18** may be affixed to the container surface by an edible glue, tape, or by a label **25** that may provide a sterile cover for the utensil and adheres to the container surface. In some instances, the utensil may be long when compared to the circumference of the container, such as a long, thin olive pick for use with tall, small diameter olive jars. In this particular instance, the utensil may have a length as much as twice the circumference of the container and may be affixed to the surface of the jar only by its own coiling action and the use of glue or label coverings would not be necessary.

If desired, the utensil may be longitudinally affixed to the arcuate surface of a cylinder as shown in FIG. 4. Here the surface of utensil **18** remains bowed to substantially conform to the arcuate surface of the cylinder **26.** As in the embodiment shown in FIG. 3, the utensil **18** of FIG. 4 may be affixed to the cylinder **26** by a cement, a label, or, if desired, it may actually be a scored part of the cylinder that can be torn or otherwise removed to provide both the utensil and the opener for the container **26.**

FIG. 5 illustrates the utensil in the form of tongs **28.** In this form the resilient material is relatively long along its longitudinal axis so that, when used, it may be folded at its midpoint **30.** The resilient material may be affixed to the cylindrical surface of a container as shown in FIG. 3 and because of the greater length, the utensil may completely encircle the container one or more times.

What is claimed is:

1. The combination comprising a container having an outer surface with an arcuate section and an elongated strip being attached to the container, said strip comprising a flexible resilient material having two stable states each of which conforms the strip to the arcuate section of the outer surface of the container, wherein one of said states is characterized in that the strip is resiliently bowed along its lateral axis and rigid along its

longitudinal axis, wherein the other of said states is characterized in that the strip is resiliently coiled along its longitudinal axis and rigid along its lateral axis, said strip being capable of retaining said states independently of any external force, and wherein said strip defines a utensil when in said first state with a first longitudinal end of the strip serving as a handle and the second longitudinal end of the strip serving as a working end.

2. The utensil claimed in claim **1** wherein said utensil attaches to the arcuate section of said container and is affixed thereto by an edible cement.

3. The utensil claimed in claim **1** wherein said utensil is affixed to the arcuate section of said container and is affixed thereto by a label covering said utensil on said container.

4. The utensil claimed in claim **1** wherein said utensil is affixed to the arcuate section of said container and is affixed thereto by a tape covering said utensil on said container.

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