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SPOON-SHAPED PACKAGE ELEMENT

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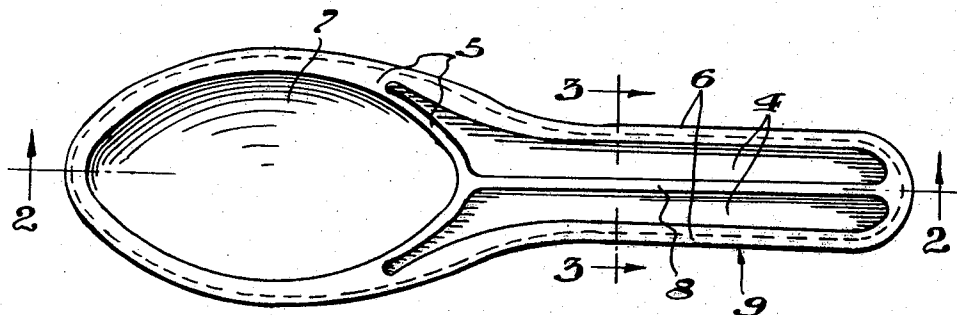


Fig. 1.

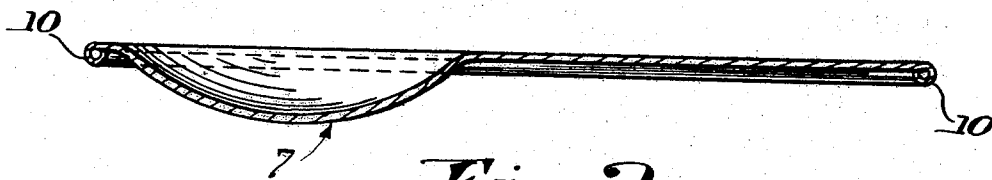


Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.

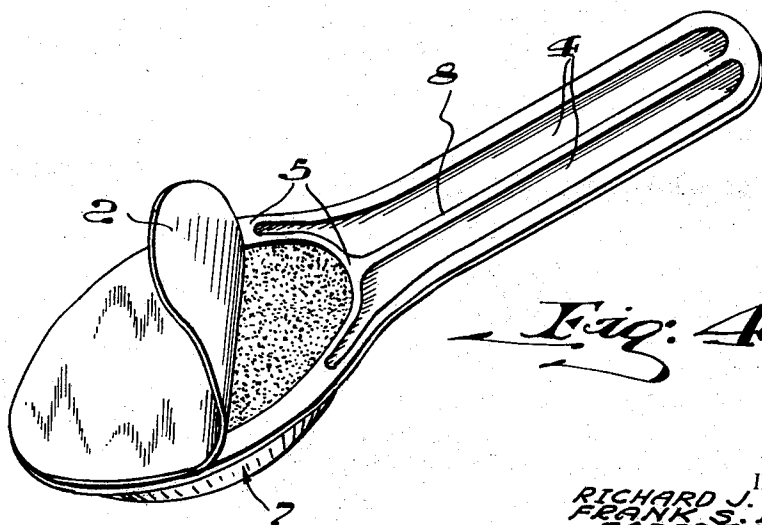


Fig. 4.

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SPOON-SHAPED PACKAGE ELEMENT

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Packages for individualized portions of food can be made by securing a cover member over the hollow bowl of a spoon-shaped element made of sheet-like material such as metal foil. As described in this disclosure, the spoon-shaped element is comprised of a handle and a bowl and has a substantially coplanar flange completely around the top periphery of the bowl and around the handle, and has two depressed portions extending substantially throughout the length of the handle and overlapping the length of the bowl for a substantial distance. The cover member is adapted to be sealed to the flange around the periphery of the bowl.

This invention relates to a spoon-shaped package element and a sealed package made therefrom, and more particularly to a spoon-shaped package element formed from sheet-like material and adapted to form a package having a removable cover.

Premeasured, individualized packages of food have become extremely popular in the past few years. Restaurants now serve individual portions of catsup, sugar, salt and jelly to mention just a few. Individualized packages are also used to dispense medicines; the military uses them in its individual field rations; and campers, hunters, and fishermen use them to eliminate the inconvenience of carrying a bulk package and measuring out individual portions.

Instant beverage and soup concentrates such as tea, coffee, bouillon, etc. have also become extremely popular from the convenience standpoint, particularly when available in individual packages that afford a means of mixing or stirring the contents during preparation and, in some cases, also of serving as a utensil for consuming the product. Most of these individual packages are immediately discarded after dispensing the contents. One major problem in providing individual packages for food-type substances commercially is the high cost as opposed to the cost of bulk packages.

It is an object of this invention to provide a spoon-shaped package element formed from sheet-like material and adapted to form an individual package.

Another object of the invention is to provide a reinforced spoon-shaped package element that is inexpensive to produce and yet sufficiently rigid that it may be used for preparing and/or consuming the contents of a package made therefrom.

A further object of our invention is to provide a spoon-shaped package having a cover that can be easily removed prior to dispensing the contents.

The above and other objects and advantages of this invention will be apparent from the following description, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

FIGURE 1 is a top plan view of a spoon-shaped package element;

FIGURE 2 is a sectional view taken along line 2—2 of FIGURE 1;

FIGURE 3 is an enlarged sectional view taken along line 3—3 of FIGURE 1; and

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FIGURE 4 is a perspective view showing a package formed from the spoon-shaped element of the preceding views, the removable cover being partially peeled away to expose the contents of the package.

Referring to FIGURE 1, the spoon-shaped package element includes a bowl 7 and a handle 9. The hollow bowl 7 has a flat flange 5 completely around its periphery. This flange lies substantially on the same plane as the rim of the bowl and is adapted to have a cover 2 over the bowl 7 sealed thereto to enclose the contents therein when the spoon-shaped element is used in a package.

The handle 9 is integrally connected with the bowl 7 through the flat bowl flange 5 into which it merges. The sheet-like material in the handle 9 has two elongated depressed portions 4, one on each side of the handle's longitudinal centerline. These depressed portions 4 extend substantially throughout the length of the handle 9 and overlap the length of the bowl in the direction of the spoon's longitudinal axis for a substantial distance. In the preferred embodiment of our invention this overlap is at least ten percent of the over-all length of the bowl. The depressed portions serve to reinforce the package element over the length of the handle 9 and into the throat area, i.e., juncture of the handle 9 with flange 5 and bowl 7.

It is seen that the formation of the two depressed portions 4 in the handle 9 leaves a flange 6 around the outer periphery of the handle 9. This handle flange 6 is disposed laterally and outwardly along the depressed portions 4 and merges into the bowl flange 5. Also remaining after the formation of the depressed portions 4 in the handle 9 is elongated undepressed portion 8 which is disposed centrally of the handle 9. This undepressed portion 8 lies between the two depressed portions and is substantially narrower than these depressed portions 4. It is also substantially coplanar with the handle flange 6 and bowl flange 5 and extends from the bowl flange 5 to the handle flange 6 at the end of the handle opposite the bowl. By means of this configuration the spoon-shaped element can be made of sheet-like material, such as aluminum foil, to minimize the cost of the package consistent with its having desired rigidity imparted thereto at the crucial throat area and longitudinally along the handle 9 so that the spoon-shaped element may function as a useful utensil.

In the preferred embodiment of this invention, as seen in FIGURES 2 and 3, there is provided a reinforcing bead 10 curled downwardly around substantially the entire outer periphery of the spoon-shaped element to eliminate the sharp or ragged edges of the material from which it is made, and also to enhance the rigidity of the over-all structure.

It is seen in FIGURE 1 that the elongated depressed portions 4 are spaced from the peripheral edge of the bowl 7 so that the bowl flange 5 is disposed completely around the bowl. This bowl flange 5 is important as it provides a continuous surface adapted to have the cover 2 sealed thereto over the contents in the bowl 7, to form a package as shown in FIGURE 4. Furthermore, it is desirable that there be no projections in an upward direction or disruptions in the flange 5 encircling the bowl 7 that would interfere with sealing the cover 2 to the flange 5. Therefore, the depressed portions 4 are embossed downwardly in the same direction as that the bowl 7 projects, and the bead 10 is similarly curled downwardly. By employing this configuration the area adjacent the flat flange surface 5 around the periphery of the bowl 7 does not interfere with the application of the cover 2, while the depressed portions 4 and bead 10 impart desired rigidity to the spoon-shaped element.

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In FIGURE 4, part of the peelable cover 2 is shown secured to the bowl flange 5, with part of it peeled away as is done by the consumer to gain access to the contents. Said cover 2 is a flat sheet of material such as aluminum foil or foil-paper laminate which can be given a colorful design and label to present a pleasing appearance. The cover 2 may be sealed to the flange 5 in such a manner that it may be peeled off by the consumer. One convenient way to accomplish this is by providing a heat seal coating on either the cover or the spoon-shaped element or both. If desired, a projecting tab may be provided in the cover 2 to facilitate gripping the cover 2 so that it may be peeled away from the flange 5 to gain access to the package contents.

The package herein described eliminates the necessity of opening bulk storage packages and exposing the contents to air and moisture, and also prevents accidental contact of the fingers with the contents or with the usual measuring utensil. From a convenience standpoint, the correct amount of food-type substance may be provided and a separate stirring implement or utensil is not needed by the consumer.

The spoon-shaped package element of the package can be made of any sheet-like material, the preferred material being aluminum foil 0.003 to 0.006 inch in thickness. Because of aluminum foil's formability and ease of manufacture, the package may be formed by mechanical die forming or air forming.

Having described our invention, it will be understood that numerous variations and modifications may be made by those skilled in the art within the scope of the annexed claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A spoon-shaped package element formed from sheet-like material and comprising a bowl having a flange completely around its periphery and a handle integrally connected with said bowl through said bowl flange, said bowl flange being adapted to have a cover over said bowl sealed thereto, and having an elongated depressed portion on each side of the longitudinal centerline of said handle and said bowl flange extending substantially throughout the length of said handle and overlapping the length of said bowl for a substantial distance, an elongated undepressed portion centrally of and extending substantially throughout the length of said handle which is substantially narrower than said depressed portions and lies therebetween, and a flange around the outer pe-

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riphery of said handle disposed laterally and outwardly along said depressed portions and merging into said bowl flange, said undepressed portions being substantially coplanar with said handle flange and said bowl flange and extending from said bowl flange to said handle flange at the end of said handle opposite said bowl.

2. The spoon-shaped package element of claim 1 wherein the sheet-like material is aluminum foil 0.003 to 0.006 inch in thickness.

3. The spoon-shaped package element of claim 1 having a reinforcing bead curled downwardly around substantially its entire outer periphery.

4. A sealed spoon-shaped package of sheet-like material comprising a bowl having a flange completely around its periphery, a handle integrally connected with said bowl through said bowl flange, and a cover over said bowl sealed to said bowl flange, and having an elongated depressed portion on each side of the longitudinal centerline of said handle and said bowl flange extending throughout the length of said handle and overlapping the length of said bowl for a substantial distance, and an elongated undepressed portion centrally of and extending substantially throughout the length of said handle which is substantially narrower than said depressed portions and lies therebetween, and a flange around the outer periphery of the said handle disposed laterally and outwardly along said depressed portions and merging into said bowl flange, said undepressed portion being substantially coplanar with said handle flange and said bowl flange and extending from said bowl flange to said handle flange at the end of said handle opposite said bowl.

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