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DISTINCTIVELY MARKED COMMODITY AND METHOD OF PRODUCING THE SAME

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Fig. 1

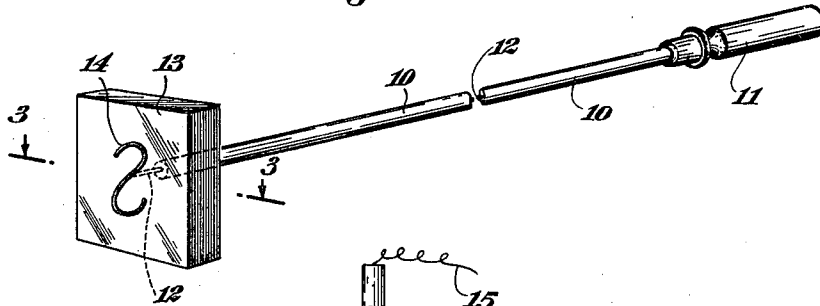


Fig. 2

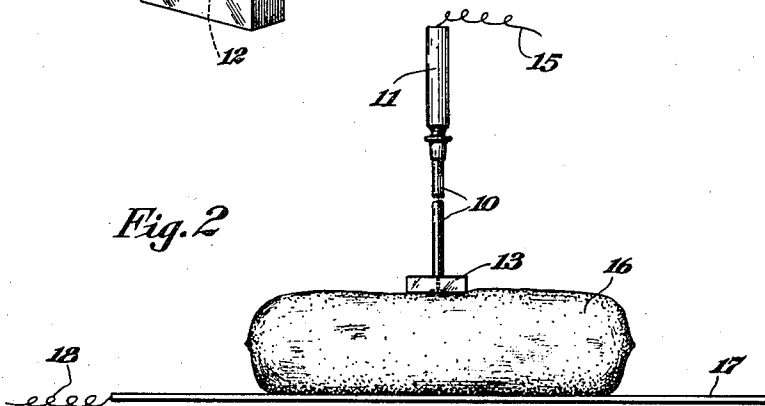


Fig. 3

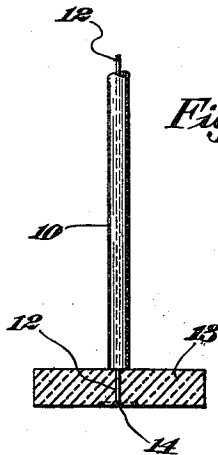
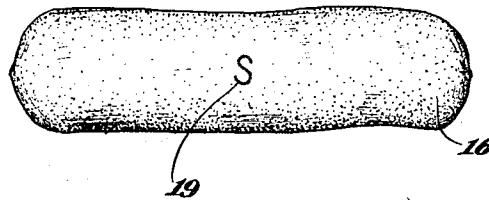


Fig. 4



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DISTINCTIVELY MARKED COMMODITY AND
METHOD OF PRODUCING THE SAME

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5 Claims. (Cl. 40—2.2)

My present invention relates generally to commodities, and has particular reference to edible, encased commodities such as sausages.

The principal object of my invention is to provide a novel and improved means for distinctively marking an encased commodity of the character which is typified by the ordinary well-known sausage; and, coordinately, my invention results in producing a new type of encased commodity unalterably distinguishable from similar competitive commodities.

Although I have herein illustrated, and shall hereinafter describe, my invention as it relates to a conventional type of sausage, nevertheless it will be understood that my invention is not restricted to this specific type of article.

The characteristics of an encased commodity, such as a sausage, render it peculiarly difficult to earmark as the product of a specific manufacturer or producer. Merely wrapping the commodity in a distinctive enclosure is not a sufficiently adequate safeguard against unauthorized removal of the wrapping. Similarly, the application to the casing of a pigment or the like is not entirely satisfactory, because any pigment which can be applied by extraneous means can usually be removed without much trouble.

To embody a foreign or extraneous material in the body of the sausage itself is unfeasible and undesirable, because it not only requires puncturing of the casing (if applied to the finished product), but it creates an unfavorable impression upon the purchaser who is anxious to acquire an unadulterated article.

In accordance with my present invention, I am able to provide a distinctive mark upon an encased commodity without impairing the continuity or unbroken character of the casing, and by a method which renders the commodity unalterably distinguishable from other commodities not treated in the same manner. The present method of treatment is not only unique and novel in its characteristics and effects, but is utterly harmless to the product or the quality thereof, and is produced without recourse to any application or impregnation of extraneous marking material, pigment, label, or the like.

My invention is predicated upon the discovery that a high-frequency electric current, when passed through a body such as sausage, in the manner hereinafter to be described in greater detail, produces a unique and unexpected effect which enables me to carry out the general objectives hereinbefore specified.

Briefly, my invention resides in the step or

steps of treating a distinctively configured surface area of the commodity casing with a high-frequency coagulating current. This treatment visibly modifies the character of the commodity and of the casing at and directly beneath the distinctive area of treatment; and, although the exact nature of the effect is not fully understood, it is my opinion that a coagulating or cooking effect is produced. The result is that a predetermined distinctively configured area of the casing and the filler immediately beneath said area is rendered visibly different in inherent character from the remainder of the casing and filler, thereby unalterably distinguishing the commodity from other commodities not similarly treated. The distinguishing mark is, of course, irremovable by any extraneous means or chemicals, since it is inherent in the casing and filler itself; it is utterly harmless in nature; and it is capable of accomplishment in an extremely simple and practical manner.

I achieve the foregoing objects, and such other objects as may hereinafter appear or be pointed out, in the manner illustratively exemplified in the accompanying drawing, wherein—

Figure 1 is a perspective view of an electrode or marking tool adapted to treat an encased commodity in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 2 is an elevational view of the electrode of Figure 1, showing the same in operative relationship to a sausage;

Figure 3 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken substantially along the line 3—3 of Figure 1; and

Figure 4 is a perspective view of a completed commodity of the present character, showing the manner in which the same may be marked.

In Figure 1, I have shown an electrode tool which, for illustrative purposes, is adapted to brand or mark a sausage or the like with a distinctive designation in the form of a letter S. A relatively long and thin rod-like member 10 serves as a handle and may advantageously be provided at its rear end with an enlarged hand grip portion 11. The member 10 may be of any desired length, for example, a foot or so, and may have a relatively small cross-sectional diameter of approximately one-eighth inch. The entire handle is preferably made of insulating material, such as hard rubber or its equivalents, and through the center thereof a conductive element 12 is passed which may be of any suitable material adapted to conduct an alternating high-frequency current of the present character. A

wire may, for example, be suitable, with a cross-sectional diameter of the order of .015 inch.

At its forward end, the member 10 is preferably provided with an enlarged, non-conductive body or block 13 having a substantially smooth forward surface, preferably, though not necessarily, arranged in a plane. At the forward end of the wire-like, conductive element 12 is an electrode element 14 in electrical connection with the wire 12 and preferably of substantially the same diameter. The wire-like element 14 is shaped to define a distinctive figure, such as the letter S shown in the drawing, and it is preferably connected to the wire 12 at its midportion, as shown.

It is to be noted that the attenuated, operative edge 14 of the marking tool is substantially flush with the forward surface of the body 13 and preferably embedded therein, as shown most clearly in Figures 2 and 3, the element 14 being, however, exposed along the forward surface of the body 13 so that when the latter is applied to a sausage, as shown in Figure 2, an electric current may be caused to pass through the member 12 and the electrode 14 and thence through the surface with which the electrode 14 is in contact.

At its rear end, the conductive element 12 is adapted to be connected, as at 15, with a lead or wire which extends to one terminal of a source of high-frequency alternating current, and for this purpose the grip 11 may be provided with an attachment terminal or the like in any desired manner.

In carrying out my invention, a sausage such as that shown at 16, by way of illustration, is applied or rested upon a supporting plate or indifferent electrode 17 of conductive material such as metal, and a suitable electrical connection is made, as at 18, with the other terminal of the alternating current source. The plate 17 is preferably, though not necessarily, insulated from the ground, and may be of any suitable configuration or shape to effect an electrical contact with a relatively large and expansive area of the commodity 16. The active electrode is then applied flatwise to the commodity by laying the forward face of the body 13 upon a surface portion of the commodity casing, preferably at the side of the sausage opposite the plate 17, but, in any event, along a surface portion removed or remote from the plate 17, so that current will flow through the commodity itself.

The effect of the passage of an alternating current of the character mentioned from the distinctively configured area of contact defined by the electrode 14 through the body 16 to the relatively remote and expansive area in contact with the plate 17 is not fully understood, but the fact is that a very slight passage of current, applied momentarily, or, in any event, for a very short duration, will result in virtually transferring the distinctive configuration of the operative edge 14 of the tool to the surface of the sausage or similar article beneath the tool.

Although I have herein referred to the procedure as being a "brand", I do not mean to imply that an actual burning or searing is effected, as in branding cattle, because such an action would be ineffectual to satisfactorily mark an encased commodity. By means of the present treatment, no portion of the commodity casing is burned or seared, and it is my theory, although I cannot state it as a fact, that the effect of the passage of current is to alter or modify the inherent character of the casing and of the filler immediately

beneath the area of treatment, in substantially the same manner as the character is altered by the ordinary cooking procedure.

One reason why I believe the effect to be in the nature of cooking is that the ultimate boiling or cooking of the commodity tends to make the distinctive marking more faint, probably by altering or transforming the remainder of the article in a similar manner. Whatever the phenomenon may be, the fact remains that the casing is visibly modified in inherent character, and, more particularly, it is modified in its opaqueness; and the edible filler within the casing, and immediately beneath the area of contact of the distinctively marked electrode, is visibly modified in its inherent pigmentation.

The finished product is entirely unimpaired both in quality and in characteristics; the casing remains intact and unbroken; no extraneous pigmentation or foreign matter has been applied to the article or impregnated or associated therewith; and yet the product bears a distinctive mark which is clearly visible and readily recognizable and which is entirely irremovable by any washing, scraping, or chemical application. The commodity is thus rendered unalterably distinguishable from similar commodities that are uniform in character throughout.

In Figure 4, I have shown a mark 19 of a character which would be produced on the body 16 by carrying out my invention with the tool illustrated.

Obviously, my invention is not restricted to a configuration in the form of letter S, and other suitable marking may be devised or employed, such as any of the other letters of the alphabet, numerals, or, if desired, names of persons or concerns, trade marks, designs, or the like. Also it is not necessary that the mark be applied to a side of the body as illustrated; nor need it be applied by the particular tool herein illustrated by way of example.

Furthermore, although I have found my invention of particular utility and value in connection with sausages, which are inherently meat commodities, it will be understood that it might apply with equal facility to the branding or marking of analogous products of a conductive character, whether the same be of meat or not.

I have not illustrated nor described the specific source of electric current which is to be employed, but it will be understood that any suitable source of electric current, having the necessary characteristics of high frequency, small amperage, and relatively low voltage may be used. While any desired apparatus for generating such a current, or for generating sustained high-frequency alternations of the desired character, may be employed, I have found it satisfactory to use the type of current generator which has been recently developed for use in carrying out certain surgical operations, the type of current being that which is known in the surgical art as high-frequency coagulating current.

In general, it will be obvious that changes in the details, herein described and illustrated for the purpose of explaining the nature of my invention, may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as expressed in the appended claims. It is, therefore, intended that these details be interpreted as illustrative, and not in a limiting sense.

Having thus described my invention, and illus-

trated its use, what I claim as new and desire to secure by Letters Patent is—

1. The herein-described method of distinctively marking an encased commodity such as a sausage, which consists in treating a predetermined surface area of the commodity casing with a high-frequency coagulating current, so as to produce a mark of predetermined configuration at said treated area.

2. The herein-described method of distinctively marking an encased commodity such as a sausage, which consists in passing a high-frequency coagulating current through the commodity from a predetermined, relatively small area on a surface of the commodity casing to a relatively remote and expansive area of the commodity, thereby visibly modifying the character of the commodity and the casing at and directly beneath said predetermined small area.

3. The herein-described method of distinctively marking an encased commodity such as a sausage, which consists in passing a high-frequency coagulating current through the commodity from a predetermined linear area on a surface of the commodity casing to a relatively remote and expansive area of the commodity, thereby visibly modifying the character of the commodity and the casing along and directly beneath said linear area.

4. The herein-described method of distinctively marking an encased commodity such as a sausage, which consists in establishing an electrical connection between a relatively expansive area of said commodity and one terminal of a source of high-frequency coagulating current, establishing an electrical connection between the other terminal of said current source and an active electrode having a distinctively configured operative edge disposed substantially in a plane, and applying said edge flatwise to the surface of the commodity casing, whereby the commodity and casing at and directly beneath the area of contact of said active electrode will be visibly modified in character by the current passing through the commodity from the active electrode to the other electrode.

5. A distinctively marked commodity comprising a continuous unbroken casing, and a filler of edible material in said casing, a predetermined distinctively configured area of the casing and the filler immediately beneath said area being visibly different in inherent character from the remainder of the filler and casing as the result of passage, through said area, of a high-frequency coagulating current.

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