A kit for a one-handed support for a plate and a beverage container comprises a plurality of interfitting flat components each having an equal thickness so that the aggregate of the components forming the kit is substantially flat and stackable. The kit includes a base which includes elongated upper and lower supports with aligned in a horizontally-oriented parallel arrangement with a hand-grippable connecting member perpendicularly oriented therebetween. A portion of the lower support forms a first component of a beverage support. A second beverage support component is insertable into the first component to form the beverage support. A plate support member having an platform portion is configured for placement on the upper support, and has an annular beverage grip extends therefrom. In use, a beverage can be inserted through the annular beverage grip and seated in the beverage support, and a user can hold the device by grasping the connecting member.
KIT FOR ASSEMBLING A ONE-HANDED SUPPORT FOR A PLATE AND A BEVERAGE CONTAINER

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a combined plate and beverage container holder, and more particularly to a kit for assembling a one-handed support for a plate and a beverage from flat, easily stored component pieces.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] It often happens that refreshments are served at gatherings where table seating is not available for all guests, and the guests are required to awkwardly juggle a plate, a beverage, eating utensils and a napkin while standing. At a cocktail party, for example, the guest has to hold a beverage container in one hand and a plate with hors d’oeuvres in the other hand and rest the utensils on the edge of the plate. In order to eat from the plate, the guest must first find a place to temporarily set down the beverage.

[0003] Various trays and plates have been devised in the prior art which provide a means for holding a plate and a beverage, especially in situations such as cocktail parties where the guest often stands and moves about while eating and drinking. Task, U.S. Pat. No. 4,867,331, discloses a combination hors d’oeuvres, drink and utensil holder in the form of a oval-shaped plastic platform having various recessed compartments, with the beverage holder compartment depending downwardly from the platform and forming a handle for the user to grasp.

[0004] Torkelson, U.S. Pat. No. 5,607,077, discloses a hand-held support plate for serving foods and beverages comprising a rigid plate with various shallow recesses to hold food and drink. The plate includes a thumb aperture so that a thumb of a user can be inserted up through the aperture from the bottom of the plate to provide additional stability.

[0005] Xu, U.S. Pat. No. 5,947,011, discloses a plate formed from a rigid material having a shallow recess for food, a central thumb aperture, and a larger aperture sized to allow the passage of a cup partially therethrough. The user is able to place their thumb through the thumb aperture and use their fingers to grasp the cup in order to hold the plate in one hand.

[0006] Cinque, U.S. Pat. No. 5,950,856, discloses a combination plate and cup holder formed from a rigid plastic web having a recessed portion sized to receive and hold a plate and a circular beverage holding aperture having a sufficient diameter to hold a glass. The device also includes utensil and napkin holder aperture.


[0008] While many of these prior art devices may adequately serve their intended purpose, many drawbacks are evident in most of the prior art devices. Many of the devices do not provide adequate upper support for the beverage container sitting in the tray, making it likely the container may topple over when the tray is held in one hand. For many of the devices, structural stability requires that the devices be constructed from plastic or other similarly rigid materials which are non-biodegradable and more expensive to produce than paper products.

[0009] Many of the prior art devices are bulky and irregular in shape, making storage of large quantities of the devices problematic. What is most significantly lacking in the prior art is a device for one-handed support of a plate and a beverage container which can be stored as a kit having a flat, stackable configuration.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] Accordingly, it is an objective of the present invention to provide a kit for assembling a one-handed support for a plate and a beverage container which is suitable for use at parties and gatherings where limited table seating is available.

[0011] It is a further objective of the present invention to provide a kit for assembling a one-handed support for a plate and a beverage container which consists of a plurality of flat, interfitting components which collectively form a substantially flat, easy to store kit.

[0012] It is yet another objective of the present invention to provide a kit for assembling a one-handed support for a plate and a beverage container which can be quickly and easily assembled at the time of use.

[0013] It is a further objective of the present invention to provide a one-handed support for a plate and a beverage container which includes a beverage holder having a stabilizing member to prevent accidental spills.

[0014] It is still another objective of the present invention to provide a one-handed support for a plate and a beverage container which can be constructed from biodegradable materials.

[0015] It is yet another objective of the present invention to provide a kit for assembling a one-handed support for a plate and a beverage container which is economical to manufacture.

[0016] In accordance with the above objectives, a kit for assembling a one-handed support for a plate and a beverage container comprises a plurality of interfitting unitary flat components each having an equal thickness so that the aggregate of the components forming the kit is substantially flat and stackable. The components can be punch-cut from press board paper product, or can be formed from rigid plastic.

[0017] The kit includes a base member including upper and lower supports with a portion of the lower support forming a first component of a beverage support, a second beverage support component insertable into the first to form the beverage support, a plate support member having an approximately circular platform portion configured for placement on the upper support with an annular beverage grip extending therefrom, and at least two stabilizing members attachable to the base.

[0018] The upper and lower supports of the base are aligned in a horizontally-oriented parallel arrangement with
a hand-grippable connecting member contiguous to the upper and lower supports and perpendicularly oriented thereto.

The lower support has front and rear sections extending diametrically from the connecting member which are adapted for placement on a support surface. A portion of the front section is configured as the first beverage support component defined by a recess in the upper edge of the front support which is contoured to diametrically conform to the base of a beverage container and includes a vertical slotted opening in the center sized for perpendicular insertion of the second beverage support component. The second beverage support component having a configuration approximately identical to the first beverage holder component and has a complementary slotted opening therein. The upper support has a distal end in approximate vertical alignment with the distal end of the lower support and a proximal end terminating at the connecting member, with a plate securement member extending upwardly from the proximal end which includes a horizontal slotted opening therein sized for perpendicular insertion of the plate support member.

The platform portion of the plate support member is configured for engagement with a slotted opening in the plate securement member, with the annular beverage grips providing an approximately circular beverage receiving aperture positioned to be coaxially aligned with the beverage support. The plate securement member includes an upwardly angled slotted opening therein oriented toward the platform portion which is configured to form a clip to securely hold a plate rim.

When the kit is assembled, the connecting member is available as a hand grip so that a plate can be placed on the plate support member and a beverage container can be placed in the beverage holder and held upright therein with the annular beverage grip.

Other objects and advantages of this invention will become apparent from the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings wherein are set forth, by way of illustration and example, certain embodiments of this invention. The drawings constitute a part of this specification and include exemplary embodiments of the present invention and illustrate various objects and features thereof.

DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

FIG. 1 is an exploded perspective view of the components of a kit for assembling a one-handed plate and beverage support according to a preferred embodiment of the invention, with the components shown positioned for assembly depicted in FIG. 1;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a one-handed plate and beverage support assembled from the kit of the invention shown depicted in FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a top plan view of the base member of the kit of the invention;

FIG. 4 is a top plan view of the base stabilizing member of the kit of the invention;

FIG. 5 is a top plan view of the second beverage support component of the kit of the invention;

FIG. 6 is a top plan view of the plate support stabilizing member component of the kit of the invention;

FIG. 7 is a top plan view of the plate support member of the kit of the invention; and

FIG. 8 is a perspective illustration of the support assembled from the kit of the invention in use.

Although the invention will be described in terms of a specific embodiment, it will be readily apparent to those skilled in this art that various modifications, rearrangements, and substitutions can be made without departing from the spirit of the invention. The scope of the invention is defined by the claims appended hereto.

FIG. 1 is an exploded perspective view of the components of a kit 50 for assembling a one-handed plate and beverage support according to a preferred embodiment of the invention. In the exploded illustration depicted in FIG. 1, the individual components of the are shown as if positioned for assembly. FIG. 2 illustrates the assembled kit, which forms the one-handed support 10. The kit 50 consists of a plurality of interfitting unitary components, which each have a flat configuration and are all of equal thickness. As will be described in detail hereinafter, each of the components include slotted opening therein which is sized for perpendicular insertion of another component having the same-thickness. In the preferred embodiment, the thickness of each piece is approximately ⅛ inch, however the thickness may vary depending on the desired size of the final product. The aggregate of the components forms a packaged kit 50 which is approximately flat and stackable, and which can be conveniently and efficiently stored in large quantities.

The components of the kit 50 are formed from any suitably rigid material. A preferred material is press board paper product, which allows the kit 50 to be manufactured by punch-cutting the components from a single sheet. In the preferred embodiment, the kit 50 is disposable and biodegradable. The components of the kit 50 can also be formed from plastic to provide a reusable product. It is also contemplated that the kit 50 can contain components of dissimilar materials within a single kit.

The components of the kit 50 are each discrete items which would lay flat prior to assembly. However, for ease of description herein, the horizontal/vertical reference directions for each component are indicated for the individual component as they would be oriented in the final assembled device.

As shown in FIG. 3, the kit 50 includes a flat base member 11 which includes elongated upper and lower supports 12, 14 which are aligned in a horizontally-oriented parallel arrangement with a hand-grippable connecting member 13 perpendicularly oriented thereto and contiguous to the upper and lower supports 12, 14. A portion of the lower support 12 forms a first component of a beverage support 21. As can be seen in FIG. 2, a second beverage support component 24 is insertable into the first component 21 to form the beverage support 22. A plate support member 16 having an approximately circular platform portion 161 is configured for placement on the upper support 12. The plate support member 16 has an annular beverage grip 20 extending therefrom. In use, a beverage container can be inserted through the annular beverage grip 20 and seated in the beverage grip 22.

As can be best seen in FIG. 3, the vertical distance between the upper support 14 and the lower support 12 is
sufficient to allow a user to grasp the connecting member 13 with their entire hand. The lower support 12 has a front section 15 and rear section 17 which extend diametrically from the connecting member 13. The rear section 17 has a distal end 17a and a proximal end 17b which is contiguous to the connecting member 13, and upper and lower edges 27a,b. The front section 15 has an upper edge and lower edges 37a,b, with the lower edge 37b being in linear alignment with the lower edge 27b of the front section 15 so that the base member 11 can be placed on a support surface.

[0036] The upper edge 27a of said rear section 17 includes a vertical slotted opening 43 therein proximate the distal end 17a which receives the elongated base stabilizing member 72 shown in FIG. 4. The base stabilizing member 72 has a horizontal linear lower edge 74 and an upper edge 75, and includes a vertical slotted opening 47 centered in the linear lower edge 75. The slotted opening 47 is sized for engagement with the slotted opening 43 in the rear section 17. To assemble the kit, the slotted opening 47 of the base stabilizing member 72 is inserted into the slotted opening 32 in the rear section 17 in a perpendicular arrangement. The base stabilizing member 72 is configured such that said lower edge 74 is coplanar with the lower edge 27b of the rear section 15 when the base stabilizing member 72 is inserted therein.

[0037] Referring again to FIG. 3, it is seen that the front section 15 of has a proximal end 15a contiguous to the connecting member 13 and a distal end 15b which is configured as a first beverage support component 21 having first and second vertical side edges 36a,b. The first beverage support component 21 is integral with the front section 15, with the horizontal length thereof being defined as the distance between first and second vertical side edges 36a,b. The vertical side edges 36a,b defining the maximum height of the first beverage support component 21. The overall height of the beverage support component 21 is preferably greater than that of the rear section 15 in order to position a beverage container within the annular grip 20. The portion of the front section 15 proximate the connecting member 13 is approximately the same height as the height of the rear section 17, and can be dimensioned to provide an arcuate finger-gripping region 52 which allows the fingers of a user to comfortably wrap around the connecting member 13. The first vertical side edge 36a is contiguous to the finger gripping region 52 and the second vertical side edge 36b can form the distal edge of the front section 15.

[0038] The first beverage support component 21 has an upper edge 137, which forms part of upper edge 37a of the front section 15. The upper edge 137 includes a shallow recess 35 therein which is contoured to conform to the diameter of the lower surface of a beverage container. The recess 35 can have at least two tiers symmetrical about a vertical center line of the component 21 which are dimensioned to accommodate drinking vessels of corresponding diameters. The first beverage support component 21 includes a vertical slotted opening which is aligned with the horizontal center of the recess 35. In the preferred embodiment, the component 21 includes the slot 42 in the lower edge 37b of the front section 17 sized for perpendicular insertion of the second beverage support component 24.

[0039] As shown in FIG. 5, the second beverage support component 24 has a configuration approximately identical to the first beverage holder component 21 (as defined by the horizontal distance between vertical edges 36a,b of component 21). The second beverage support component 25 has an upper edge 237, opposing side edges 136a,b, and a lower edge 238. The opposing side edges 136a,b have a height equal to vertical side edge 36b. The top edge 237 is identical to the top edge 137 of the first beverage support component 21, and includes a vertical slotted opening 46 in the horizontal center which is complementary to the slotted opening 42. The slotted openings 42 and 46 are mated so that the second beverage support component 24 is perpendicularly insertable into said first beverage support component 21 to form the beverage support 22. It will be appreciated that arrangement of the slotted openings in the first and second beverage support components can be reversed from what is described herein.

[0040] As seen in FIG. 3, the upper support 14 has a linear upper edge 19, a distal end 14a and a proximal end 14b. The distal end 14a approximately vertically aligned with said distal end 17a of the rear section 17. A plate securing member 18 is contiguous to the upper support 14 and the connecting member 13, and extends upwardly from the proximal end 14b of the upper support 14. The plate securing member 18 can include an upwardly angled slotted opening 51 therein oriented toward the upper edge 19. The slotted opening is preferably configured as a clip to which can receive the rim of a plate. The plate securing member 18 includes a horizontal slotted opening 45 sized for perpendicular insertion of the plate support member 16. The lower edge of the slotted opening 45 is in linear alignment with the upper edge 19.

[0041] The upper edge 19 includes a vertical slotted opening 44 which receives the plate support stabilizing member 82 shown in FIG. 6. The plate support stabilizing member 82 has a horizontally oriented linear top edge 84 and a lower edge 85. The lower edge 85 has a vertical slotted opening 49 located at the horizontal center which is sized and positioned for engagement with the slotted opening 44 in the upper edge 19. This allows the plate support stabilizing member 82 to be inserted into the upper support 14 in a perpendicular arrangement, with the plate stabilizing member 82 being dimensioned such that the linear top edge 84 of the plate support stabilizing member 82 is coplanar with the with the linear top edge 19 of the upper support 14 when inserted.

[0042] The plate support member 16 shown in detail in FIG. 7. The platform portion 161 is illustrated as having an approximately circular configuration, however the platform can have any desired symmetrical configuration which is sized for placement of a plate thereon. The plate support member 16 is preferably symmetrical about a longitudinal center line a-a' which bisects the annular beverage grip 20. The annular beverage grip 20 defines an approximately circular beverage receiving aperture 120 which is positioned to be coaxially aligned with the beverage support 22 when the kit 50 is assembled. The annular beverage grip 20 can have an opening or gap 29 coincident with the longitudinal axis of said plate support member 16 to facilitate insertion and removal of a beverage from the beverage support 22.

[0043] The plate support member 16 has a slotted opening 41 opening extending from the beverage receiving aperture 120 along the longitudinal center line a-a' configured for
engagement with slotted opening 45 in plate securement member 18. In use, the plate support member 16 is inserted into the plate securement member 18 by aligning the slots, and the plate support member 16 is supported by the upper support 14 and plate support stabilizing member 72.

[0044] FIG. 8 illustrates the one-handed support 10 assembled from the kit 50 in use. To use the support 10, the connecting member 13 can be manually grasped (by hand 4). A cup 5 can be inserted through the annular beverage grip 20 so that it is seated in the beverage support 22. A plate 6 can be placed on plate support member 16 and the rim inserted into the angled slotted opening 51 to prevent the plate from sliding. The design of the support 10 advantageously allows the support 10 to stand upright on a level surface when not being carried by hand.

[0045] The kit 50 of the invention is economical to produce, and easy to store in large quantities because of the flat configuration when unassembled. The support 10 is also useful as a promotional item with logos and other advertisements printed thereon.

[0046] It is to be understood that while a certain form of the invention is illustrated, it is not to be limited to the specific form or arrangement of parts herein described and shown. It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes may be made without departing from the scope of the invention and the invention is not to be considered limited to what is shown and described in the specification and drawings.

I claim:

1. A kit providing interfitting components wherefrom a one-handed support for a disposable plate and a drinking vessel can be constructed, said kit comprising:

   a plurality of interfitting unitary components, each of said components being flat and having equal thickness whereby the aggregate of said components forming said kit is substantially flat and stackable, said plurality of interfitting components comprising:

   a base member, said base member comprising elongated upper and lower supports aligned in a horizontally-oriented parallel arrangement with a hand-grippable connecting member contiguous to said upper and lower supports and perpendicularly oriented therewith, said lower support having front and rear sections extending diametrically from said connecting member wherein said rear section has a distal end and a proximal end wherein said proximal end is adjacent to said connecting member, said front and rear sections each including upper and lower edges wherein said lower edges are in linear alignment with one another, said front section of said lower support having a proximal end adjacent to said connecting member and a distal end extending therefrom configured as a first beverage support component, said first beverage support component having a vertical slotted opening in the horizontal center thereof sized for perpendicular insertion of a component having said thickness, said upper support having a horizontal linear top edge and a distal end in approximate vertical alignment with said distal end of said lower support and a proximal end terminating at said connecting member; said upper support having a plate securement member extending upwardly from said proximal end including a horizontal slotted opening therein sized for perpendicular insertion of a component having said thickness, said horizontal slotted slot having a lower edge in linear alignment with said upper edge of said upper support; a second beverage support component having a configuration approximately identical to said first beverage holder component having a complementary slotted opening wherein said second beverage support component is perpendicularly insertable into said first beverage support component to form a beverage support; and

   a plate support member having a platform portion configured for placement on said upper support and configured for engagement with said slotted opening in said plate securement member, said platform portion dimensioned for placement of a plate thereon and having an annular beverage grip extending therefrom defining an approximately circular beverage receiving aperture positioned to be coaxially aligned with said beverage support; whereby said kit can be assembled and said connecting member is available as a hand grip, and a plate can be placed on said plate support member and a drinking vessel can be placed in said beverage holder and held upright therein with said annular beverage grip.

2. The kit of claim 1, wherein said front and rear sections of said lower support are of approximately equal length.

3. The kit of claim 1, wherein said lower edges of said front and rear section are adapted for placement on a support surface, and said rear section includes a vertical slotted opening in said upper edge proximate said distal end sized for perpendicular insertion of a component having said thickness; and said plurality of interfitting components further comprises

   an elongated base stabilizing member having a horizontal linear lower edge and including a slotted opening centered in said linear lower edge, said slotted opening sized for engagement with said slot on said rear section said base stabilizing member can be inserted into said slot in said rear section in a perpendicular arrangement, said base stabilizing member being configured such that said lower edge of said base stabilizing member is coplanar with said lower edge of said rear section when said base stabilizing member is inserted therein.

4. The kit of claim 1, wherein said lower edges of said front and rear sections are adapted for placement on a support surface, and said rear section includes a vertical slotted opening in said lower edge proximate said distal end sized for perpendicular insertion of a component having said thickness; and said plurality of interfitting components further comprises an elongated stabilizing member having a horizontal linear lower edge and an upper edge wherein said upper edge includes a slotted opening centered therein sized for engagement with said slot on said rear section, said first stabilizing member being insertable into said slot in said rear section in a perpendicular arrangement, said stabilizing member being configured such that said lower edge of said first stabilizing member is vertically aligned with said lower edge of said rear section when said stabilizing member is inserted therein.

5. The kit of claim 1, wherein said rear section has a height, and said portion of said front support proximate said
connecting member forms a finger-gripping region having a height approximately equal to said rear section, and said first beverage support component has first and second vertical walls forming said first beverage support component has a height greater than said height of said rear section, wherein said first vertical wall is contiguous to said finger-gripping region and said second vertical wall forms a distal edge of said front section.

6. The kit of claim 5, wherein said first beverage support component includes a recess in said upper edge of said front support contoured to conform to the diameter of the lower surface of a beverage container, and said vertical slotted opening is aligned with the horizontal center of said recess.

7. The kit of claim 6, wherein said recess has at least two tiers therein symmetrical about a horizontal center line which are dimensioned to accommodate beverage containers of corresponding diameters.

8. The kit of claim 1, wherein said linear top edge of said upper support has a vertical slotted opening therein formed as vertical slot sized for perpendicular insertion of a component having said thickness, and said plurality of interfitting components further comprises a plate support stabilizing member having a linear top edge and a lower edge, wherein said lower edge has a vertical slotted opening therein sized and positioned for engagement with said vertical slot in said linear top edge of said upper support to allow said plate support stabilizing member to be inserted into said upper support in a perpendicular arrangement, and said plate support stabilizing member being dimensioned such that said linear top edge of said plate support stabilizing member is coplanar with said linear top edge of said upper support when inserted therein.

9. The kit of claim 1, further wherein said plate support member further comprises a slotted opening extending from said beverage holding aperture along a longitudinal axis of said plate support member, wherein said slot is complementary to said slot in said plate securement member allowing said plate support member to be inserted therein.

10. The kit of claim 1, wherein said platform portion of said plate support member is approximately circular.

11. The kit of claim 1, wherein said plate securement member includes an upwardly angled slotted opening therein oriented toward said platform portion and configured to form a clip to secure hold plate rim therein.

12. The kit of claim 1, wherein said annular beverage grip has an opening therein coincident with a longitudinal axis of said plate support member.

13. The kit of claim 1, wherein said plurality of interfitting components are constructed from pressboard paper product.

14. The kit of claim 11, wherein said plurality of interfitting components are punch cut from pressboard paper product.

15. The kit of claim 1, wherein said plurality of interfitting components are constructed from plastic.

16. A one-handed support for a disposable plate and a beverage, comprising:

a horizontally oriented elongated base adapted for placement on a support surface, a vertically oriented central hand-grippable connecting member having an upper end and a lower end, said base having front and rear sections contiguous to and extending diametrically from said lower end of said vertical central hand-grippable connecting member, said rear section including a perpendicular stabilizing member affixed thereto adapted for placement on a support surface; said front section having a beverage support affixed thereto configured to receive the base of a drinking vessel and hold the vessel in an upright position normal to said base, a plate support member having a circular platform contiguous to and extending perpendicular from said connecting member in parallel alignment with said rear section of said base; a plate securement member extending upwardly from said connecting member substantially normal to said platform and having an angled slotted aperture therein adjacent said platform configured to hold the rim of a plate resting thereon, and an annular beverage grip extending therefrom defining an approximately circular beverage receiving aperture positioned to be coaxially aligned with said beverage support, whereby said connecting member is available as a hand grip, and a plate can be placed on said plate support member and a beverage can be placed in said beverage holder and held upright therein with said annular beverage grip.

17. The support of claim 16, wherein said support is constructed from pressboard paper product.

18. The support of claim 16, wherein said support is constructed from injection molded plastic.

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