A rack with a rack body and a releasable locking portion holds two or more drinking vessels. The rack body includes a first and second locating devices, and a capture device to releasably capture the releasable locking portion. The releasable locking portion includes a first engagement device to engage with the capture device, and a second engagement device to engage with a second sector of each vessel base such that each vessel is prevented from moving in two perpendicular directions as a consequence of interaction between the vessel base, the second engagement device, and the first locating device, and is prevented from moving in a third perpendicular direction as a consequence of interaction between the second locating device and the upstanding portion.
RACK FOR DRINKING VESSELS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates to a rack adapted to facilitate storing and/or transporting and/or cleaning of drinking vessels such as glassware and other containers.

BACKGROUND

[0002] This invention is specifically directed to dealing with drinking vessels that have a wasted area adjacent to the vessel base, or more particularly, have a broader base portion, then a narrowed section moving up the vessel from the base, and then, optionally, broaden out again.

[0003] The invention has particular, although not exclusive, application to wine glasses, especially when several of such glasses are used at substantially the same time, as is common at wine tasting situations and events, like in winery tasting rooms and like environments where tasting and comparing of wines occurs.

[0004] Visitors to a winery often taste several different wines in succession. Each wine is tasted in a separate glass, meaning that typically four, five or even more, glasses may be used in a tasting session by each person. Carrying around that number of glasses can be difficult. Particularly if the taster wishes to take the glasses any distance away from the location where the tasting sample has been poured so as to sample the wines at their leisure.

[0005] Presently it is relatively common for wineries to provide a tray to carry a flight of tasting glasses to be carried from where the wine has been poured to, for example, a table for convenient, leisurely and contemplative imbibing.

[0006] While numerous tray designs exist, typically the tray may contain a locating well for the base of each glass so as to provide a degree of stability during transport, however, wine glasses tend to be tall, and the trays tend to be narrow. Safely carrying the trays any distance can be something of a challenge.

[0007] Further, where wineries do provide wines for tasting in a flight of glasses collecting the glasses up can involve significant time and therefore labour expense.

[0008] Once collected, subsequent loading of dirty glasses into a mechanised washing facility, such as a commercial dishwasher, can also be very time consuming, with each glass needing to be individually placed so as minimize contact between adjacent glasses and so avoid breakage from glasses knocking together.

[0009] Similar problems to those identified above occur, for example, in spirit (for example whiskey) or beer tastings where multiple glasses are used at one time to enable comparison of the beverages.

[0010] It is an object of the invention to provide a rack for holding drinking vessels which overcomes at least some of the abovementioned problems, or which at least provides the public with a useful choice.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0011] According to a broad aspect of the invention there is provided a rack to, in use, hold two or more drinking vessels, the rack comprising a rack body and a releasable locking portion, the rack body including a first locating means to, in use, locate against a first sector of the base of each said drinking vessel, a second locating means to, in use, locate against a portion of each said drinking vessel upstanding from the said vessel base, and capture means to releasably capture the releasable locking portion, the releasable locking portion including first engagement means to engage with the capture means of the rack body, and further including second engagement means to, in use, engage with a second sector of each said vessel base such that once in position each said vessel is prevented from moving in two perpendicular directions as a consequence of interaction between the vessel base, the second engagement means of the releasable locking portion, and the first locating means of the rack body, and is prevented from moving in a third perpendicular direction as a consequence of interaction between the second locating means of the rack body and the upstanding portion of the said vessel.

[0012] It is acknowledged that the terms "comprising", "comprises" and "comprising" may, under varying jurisdictions, be attributed with either an exclusive or an inclusive meaning. For the purpose of this specification, and unless otherwise noted, these terms are intended to have an inclusive meaning - i.e., they will be taken to mean an inclusion of not only the listed components which the use directly references, but also to other non-specified components or elements.

[0013] Preferably the releasable locking portion is slideably engageable with the capture means of the rack body.

[0014] Conveniently the rack body and releasable locking portion can be formed from a folded sheet of plastics material such as perspex, or metal or the like. Most preferably heat stabilized plastics material or food grade stainless steel.

[0015] Advantageously the releasable locking portion and the rack body contains numerous apertures and void areas to facilitate draining of washing water and subsequent drying.

[0016] Desirably the surface of the rack body and/or the releasable locking portion are adapted to be suitable to carry labels so as to provide a reference as to the contents of each glass which may be held in the rack. Optionally the reference can be a reference number, or a specific brief written description. Alternatively the surface can carry a logo, advertising, or other branding.

[0017] Preferably the releasable locking portion has a forward end which is chamfered to assist with initial location of the locking portion as it engages the rack body.

[0018] The releasable locking portion further includes a rearward end and, optionally, an aperture is provided in the said rearward end to assist in the insertion or removal process. Alternatively, the rearward end can terminate in a handle which can be used to assist in carrying the rack.

[0019] Desirably the rack can accommodate a flight of five glasses of the same shape and configuration. Preferably glasses are able to be accommodated at equi-spaced intervals along the length of the rack.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0020] The invention will now be described by way of example only with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

[0021] FIG. 1: Shows a front elevation a rack according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention with a number of wine glasses held in position;

[0022] FIG. 2: Shows the same view as FIG. 1, but with no glasses in position;

[0023] FIG. 3: Shows a plan view of the embodiment of the invention illustrated in FIG. 2;

[0024] FIG. 4: Shows an end view of the embodiment of the invention illustrated in FIG. 2;
FIG. 5: Shows the same view as FIG. 4, but with the releasable locking slide removed;

FIG. 6: Shows an end view of the releasable locking slide from the embodiment of FIG. 4;

FIG. 7: Shows a side elevation of one embodiment of the locking slide suitable for use with the embodiment of the invention illustrated in FIG. 4;

FIG. 8: Shows a side elevation of an alternative embodiment of the locking slide suitable for use with the embodiment of the invention illustrated in FIG. 4;

FIG. 9: Shows the same view as FIG. 4, but with glasses in position;

FIG. 10: Shows the same view as FIG. 5, but with glasses in position; and

FIG. 11: Shows the same view as FIG. 10, but with a glass tilted forward slightly as it is being removed from the rack.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring to the drawings, a rack according to a preferred embodiment of the invention is illustrated generally at 1.

In its preferred form the invention is adapted to hold wine glasses 10, such as wine tasting glasses, although the invention is not intended to be solely directed to wine glasses. In that regard it is specifically within the contemplation of the invention that a rack incorporating the inventive features could be adapted to hold vessels for toasting any variety of consumable liquid products, such as beer, spirits, olive oil and the like provided such vessels have a base portion which is broader in cross section that some other portion of the vessel further towards its top.

The rack 1 comprises an elongate rack body 2 and a strip-like releasable locking portion 3.

The rack body 2 has a base 4 on which, in use, the base 12 of each wine glass 10 can stand. Running along the length of one edge of the base 4 of the rack body 2 is a first locating means in the form of a lip 5. In use the lip 5 locates against a first sector 11 of the base 12 of each wine glass 10. A second locating means in the form of a cut-out sections, or notches, 6 in an upstanding section of the rack body 2, in use, locates against an area of the stem 13 of each wine glass 10.

The rack body 2 further incorporates an engagement means 7, in the form of a recess in the rack body 2, to slideably receive and capture the releasable locking portion 3.

The locking portion 3 includes a locking means in the form of a lip 8 running the length of one side of the locking portion 2 which, when in use with the releasable locking portion 3 slideably engaged with the engagement means 7 of the rack body 2, engages with a second sector 14 of the base 12 of each wine glass 10, said second sector 14 being opposition the first sector 11.

Once in position each glass 10 is prevented from tipping over through the interaction of the sector 11 of the glass base 12 with the lip 5 and sector 14 with the lip 8 of the releasable locking portion 2.

Back and forward sliding motion along the length of the rack 1 is prevented through the interaction between a notch 6 of the rack body 2 with the stem 13 of the corresponding glass 10.

In the configuration illustrated in the drawings the rack body 2 is formed from a single folded sheet of material. It will, however, be appreciated that this is not essential to the function of the rack 1.

Referring to the drawings, the lip 5 is folded back at an angle of preferably between 30 and 60 degrees from the rack body base 4.

At the opposite side 9 of the base 4 to the lip 5 the sheet stands up at approximately 90 degrees for a distance, and then bends back at an angle of preferably between 30 and 60 degrees, where it extends to a peak 21, then reverses direction downwards for a distance, creating the recess 7, before changing direction again, this time to the horizontal to form a ledge 22. As shown in FIG. 3, equi-spaced along the ledge 22 are the second locating means in the form of a series of notches 6 shaped to receive the glass stem 13.

It is preferred that the locking portion 3 is also formed from folded sheet material. Its major part 23 is sized to enable it to be snugly but slideably received by the rack body 2 between the edge 9 of the base 8 and the peak 21 (recess 7).

The lip 8, which runs along the length of the edge 24 of the locking portion 3, which in use is intended to engage the rack body 2 adjacent the edge 9, folds back on the major part 23 of the locking portion 3 at an angle of preferably between 30 and 60 degrees.

To facilitate insertion of the locking portion 3 its forward end 26 may be chamfered. This will assist with initial location. As shown in FIG. 7, the locking portion 3 may further include an aperture 27 or the like at the rearward end 28 to assist in the insertion or removal process. Alternatively, as illustrated in FIG. 8, the rearward end 28 may terminate in a handle 29. This handle 29 may also be used to assist in carrying the rack 1 once full.

In the embodiment of the rack 1 illustrated a flight of five glasses is shown. It will, however, be appreciated that racks according to the present invention may be designed to accommodate any number of glasses.

In use clean empty glasses 10 are set onto the base 4 of the rack body 2. Once all glasses 10 are in position the locking portion 3 is inserted to hold the glasses 10 in place. The glasses 10 can then each be filled with an appropriate amount of wine. When the taster wishes to taste the wine in a glass 10 the locking portion 3 is withdrawn. The selected glass 10 is then tilted slightly forward, then lifted up and out passed the lip 5. It is then tilted back, and then withdrawn by drawing the glass 10 away horizontally from the rack body 2. Replacing the glasses 10 employs the reverse action.

Staff engaged in cleaning up after a tasting session simply restore the glasses 10 into the rack 1, including inserting the locking portion 3. The rack 1 full of glasses 10 can then be taken as a single unit and placed in a dishwasher or the like for cleaning.

Although not illustrated, it will be appreciated that areas of either or both the rack body 2 and the locking portion 3 can be cut away, or have apertures created therein. Such void spaces are intended to facilitate cleaning—allowing water in a dishwasher to flow in and around not only the rack 1, but also the glasses 10.

Manufacture of the rack 1 from plastics material such as Perspex, or from metal, for example, is all within the contemplation of the invention, as is the use of food grade stainless steel—particularly where racks loaded with glasses as a completed unit are intended to be cleaned in a dishwasher.
While manufacture from a sheet of material has been expressly indicated injection moulding and other fabrication techniques are also contemplated. Further in that regard, while the embodiment described has been discussed as formed from a sheet, fabrication in more complex construction to facilitate draining of washing water and drying etc. is also anticipated.

The rack of the present invention is also ideally suited to carry labels so as to provide a reference as to the contents of each vessel, whether or by a reference number, or a specific brief written description. Alternatively, corporate or winery logos can also be stencilled, embossed, or as onto the rack body and/or the locking portion.

It will be understood that the foregoing description and accompanying drawings have been given by way of illustration and example. It is also to be understood that changes in form of the several parts, substitution of equivalent elements, arrangement of parts, and substitution of equivalent materials, which will be readily apparent to one skilled in the art, are contemplated as being within the scope of the present invention, which is limited only to the claims which follow.

Wherein the foregoing description reference has been made to integers or components having known equivalents their such equivalents are herein incorporated as if individually set forth.

Although this invention has been described by a way of example of possible embodiments, it is to be appreciated that improvements and/or modifications may be made thereto without departing from the scope of the invention as claimed.

1. A rack comprises:
   a rack body; and
   a releasable locking portion;
   wherein the rack body includes:
   a first locating means to, in use, locate against a first sector of the base of each said drinking vessel, a second locating means to, in use, locate against a portion of each said drinking vessel upstanding from the vessel base, and
   capture means to releasably capture the releasable locking portion, and wherein the releasable locking portion includes:
   first engagement means to engage with the capture means of the rack body; and
   second engagement means to, in use, engage with a second sector of each said vessel base such that once in position each said vessel is prevented from moving in two perpendicular directions as a consequence of interaction between the vessel base, the second engagement means of the releasable locking portion, and the first locating means of the rack body, and is prevented from moving in a third perpendicular direction as a consequence of interaction between the second locating means of the rack body and the upstanding portion of the said vessel.

2. A rack according to claim 1 wherein the releasable locking portion is slidably engageable with the capture means of the rack body.

3. A rack according to claim 1, wherein the rack body is formed from a folded sheet of plastics material or metal.

4. A rack according to claim 3 wherein a material used to manufacture the rack body is either a heat stabilized plastics material or a food grade stainless steel.

5. A rack according to claim 1, wherein the releasable locking portion and the rack body contains numerous apertures and void areas to facilitate draining of washing water and subsequent drying.

6. A rack according to claim 1, wherein at least a part of the surface of the rack body or the releasable locking portion are adapted to be suitable to carry labels so as to provide a reference as to the contents of each drinking vessel which may be held in the rack.

7. A rack according to claim 6 wherein the reference is in the form of a reference number, or a specific brief written description.

8. A rack according to claim 6 wherein at least a part of a surface of the rack body or the releasable locking portion carries a logo, advertising, or other branding.

9. A rack according to claim 1, wherein the releasable locking portion has a forward end which is chamfered to assist with initial location of the locking portion as the forward end engages the rack body.

10. A rack according to claim 1, wherein the releasable locking portion further includes a rearward end and an aperture is provided in the rearward end to assist in the insertion or removal process.

11. A rack according to claim 1, wherein the releasable locking portion further includes a rearward end which terminates in a handle which is used to assist in carrying the rack.

12. A rack according to claim 1, wherein the rack accommodates a set of five drinking vessels of the same shape and configuration.

13. A rack according to claim 12 wherein the drinking vessels are accommodated at equi-spaced intervals along the length of the rack.

14. An assembly comprising:
   the rack according to claim 1, and
   the at least one drinking vessel.

15. (canceled)

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