A disposable picnic plate having an outer lip which extends downward until it is substantially coplanar with the flat, food-carrying center of the plate. When the plate is placed on a flat surface such as a picnic table, the lip is substantially in contact with the flat surface, reducing the wind's ability to get under the plate and lift or throw it.
NO-FLYAWAY PICNIC PLATE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Technical Field of the Invention

This invention relates generally to food plates, and more specifically to lightweight or disposable plates intended for outdoor use.

[0002] 2. Background Art

FIG. 1 illustrates a plate 10 resting on a table 12. The plate is a conventional paper or plastic plate intended for picnic or other outdoor use.

[0003] FIG. 2 and its detail view 2A illustrate the plate 10 and table 12 in cross-section, pointing out an unfortunate but all too familiar event. When the wind gets under the upper, outer lip 14 of the paper plate, the wind lifts the paper plate from that side and may tip the plate over or even throw it some distance through the air. If the wind is strong enough, this occurs even if there is a substantial amount of food on the plate, resulting in a big mess and wasted food. The shape of the lip 14 is typical of the extremely thin, pleated paper plates which are typically used two at a time, to increase stiffness, or used in reusable paper plate holders.

[0004] FIG. 3 illustrates a plate 20 resting on a table 12. The shape of this plate is typical of the stiffer, thicker paper plates such as those sold under the Chinet brand, and of some plastic picnic plates and some styrofoam picnic plates.

[0005] FIG. 4 and its detail view 4A illustrate that the lip 22 of the plate is slightly turned over, meaning that it extends somewhat downward toward the table 12. However, wind is still able to get under the lip and flip or throw the plate.

[0006] What is needed, then, is an improved plate which has a reduced tendency to flip over or fly away in the wind.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] The invention will be understood more fully from the detailed description given below and from the accompanying drawings of embodiments of the invention which, however, should not be taken to limit the invention to the specific embodiments described, but are for explanation and understanding only.

[0008] FIGS. 1 and 2, and detail view 2A, show a conventional picnic plate.

[0009] FIGS. 3 and 4, and detail view 4A, show another conventional picnic plate.

[0010] FIGS. 5 and 6, and detail view 6A, show one embodiment of a picnic plate according to this invention.

[0011] FIG. 7 shows another embodiment of a picnic plate according to this invention, having cutouts making it easier for the user to lift the plate off from a flat surface.

[0012] FIG. 8 shows another embodiment of a picnic plate according to this invention, having formed grips making it easier for the user to lift the plate off from a flat surface.

[0013] The various embodiments of the plate of this invention may be manufactured from paper, plastic, foamed plastic such as styrofoam, or any other suitable material. By incorporating this invention, even very thin and light plates can be made to resist being lifted and thrown by the wind. This may enable the use of thinner material versus what is used in the prior art, reducing manufacturing costs.
What is claimed is:
1. A plate comprising:
a central surface for holding food;
a perimeter rim which extends upward from the central surface; and
a lip which extends downward from the perimeter rim until the lip is substantially coplanar with the central surface.
2. The plate of claim 1 wherein:
the lip extends downward below the central surface.
3. The plate of claim 1 further comprising:
at least one notch in the lip, wherein the notch extends upward to enable a user to more easily pick up the plate.
4. The plate of claim 1 further comprising:
at least one grip formed in the lip to enable a user to more easily pick up the plate.
5. The plate of claim 1 wherein:
the plate is manufactured of paper.
6. The plate of claim 1 wherein:
the plate is manufactured of plastic.
7. The plate of claim 6 wherein:
the plate is manufactured of foamed plastic.
8. A disposable plate comprising:
a central, substantially planar surface;
a rounded rim which extends upward from the central, substantially planar surface; and
a lip which extends downward from the rounded rim until the lip is substantially coplanar with the central, substantially planar surface;
whereby, when the disposable plate is placed on a flat surface, the lip is substantially in contact with the flat surface, reducing an ability of wind to lift the disposable plate off the flat surface.
9. The disposable plate of claim 8 wherein the disposable plate comprises paper.
10. The disposable plate of claim 8 wherein the disposable plate comprises plastic.
11. The disposable plate of claim 10 wherein the disposable plate comprises foamed plastic.
12. The disposable plate of claim 8 wherein:
the lip extends beyond the central, substantially planar surface, whereby the lip will be held against the flat surface under tension of the rounded rim when food is placed on the central, substantially planar surface.
13. The disposable plate of claim 8 further comprising:
at least one notch in the lip, whereby a user may lift the disposable plate away from the flat surface.
14. The disposable plate of claim 8 further comprising:
at least one grip formed in the rounded rim, whereby a user may lift the disposable plate away from the flat surface.

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