



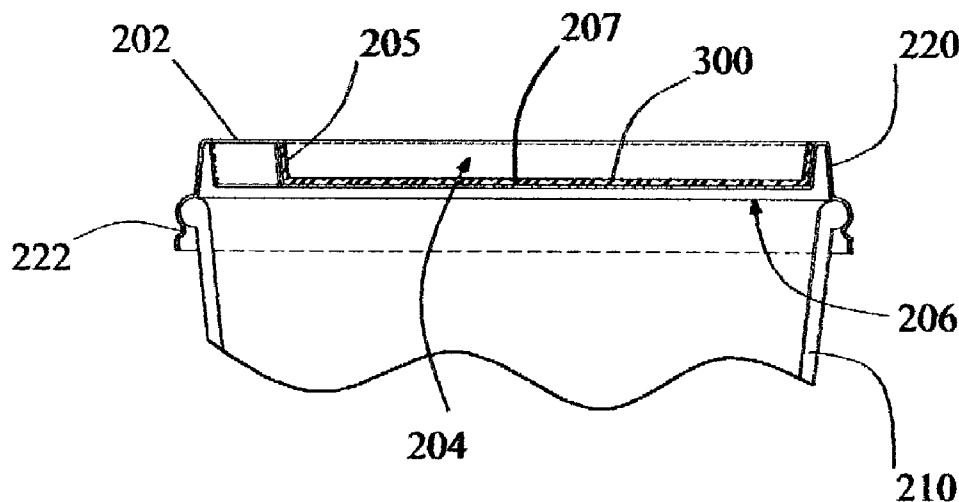
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(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication****Scott**(10) **Pub. No.: US 2004/0182862 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Sep. 23, 2004**(54) **DISPOSABLE DRINK CUP LID WITH A
CONDIMENT RESEVOIR**(57) **ABSTRACT**(76) Inventor: **Tom Scott, Dallas, TX (US)**

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The invention provides for a disposable container lid (200) adapted to fit over of the opening (208) of a disposable beverage cup (210) or other container. The container lid (200) generally comprises a reservoir (204), a thermal insulating layer (300) disposed on a floor (207) of said reservoir (204), and an orifice (202) that accommodates a straw. In one embodiment, the circular container lid (200) advantageously prevents the contents of a condiment package from quickly assuming the temperature of the liquid inside the disposable beverage cup (210). In another embodiment, the container lid (200) includes an adhesive means, such as a pair of sticky patches (302) and (304) that firmly holds the condiment package in place in the reservoir (204).



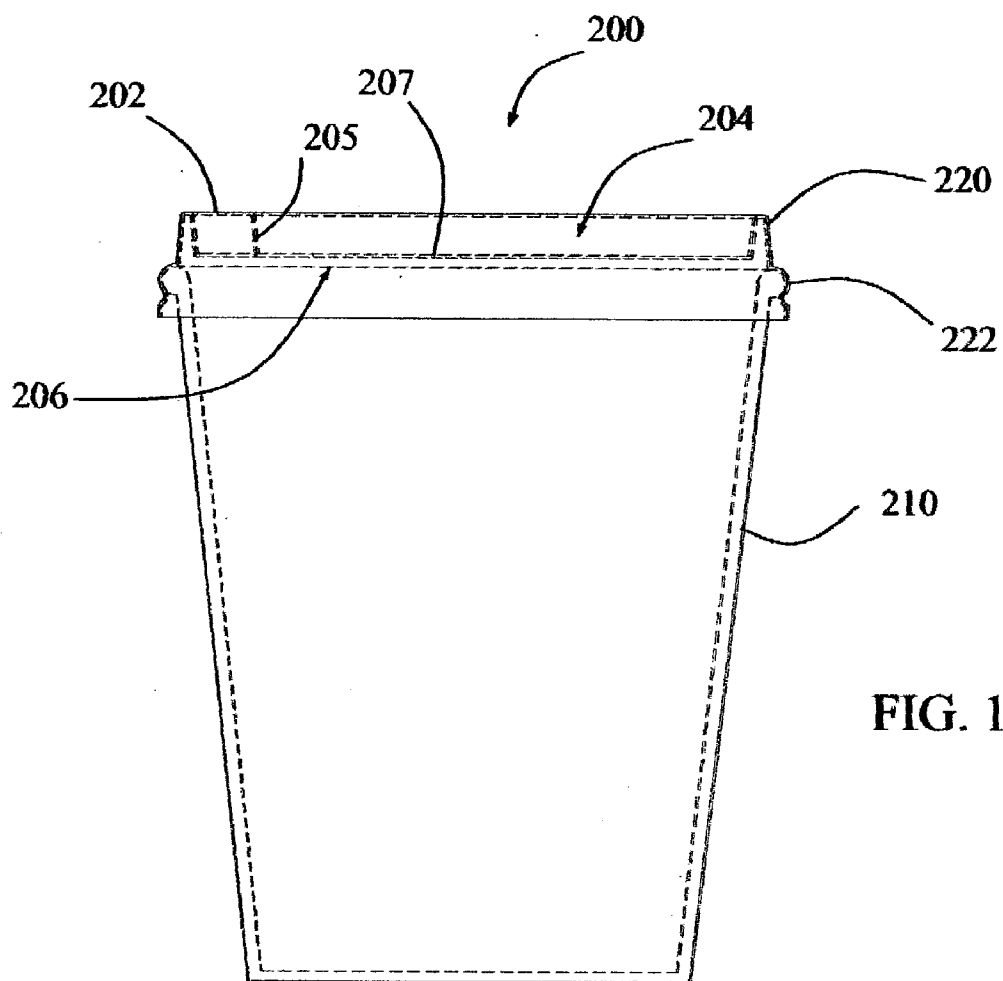


FIG. 1

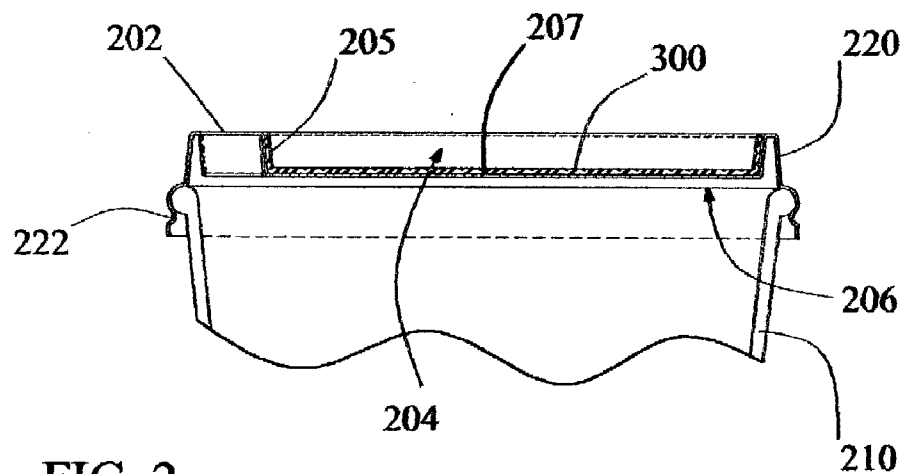


FIG. 2

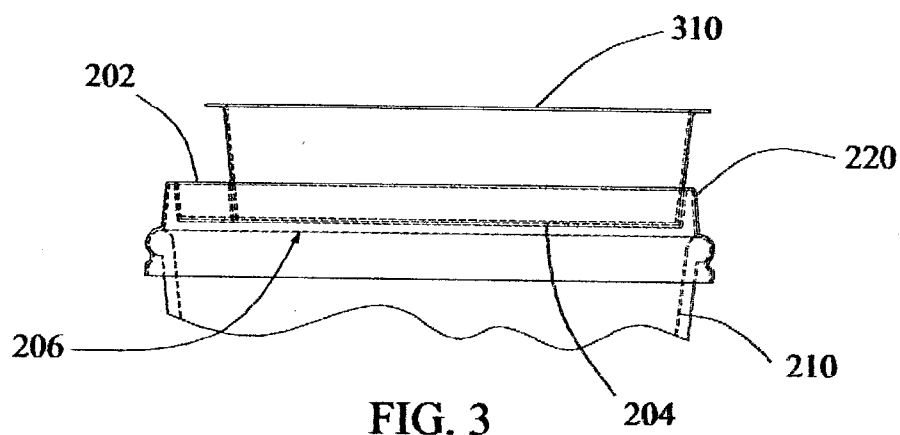


FIG. 3

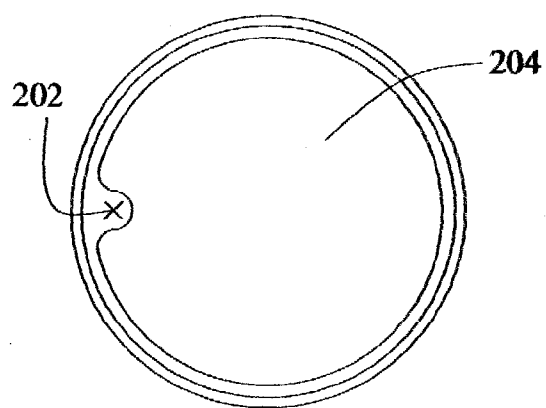


FIG. 4

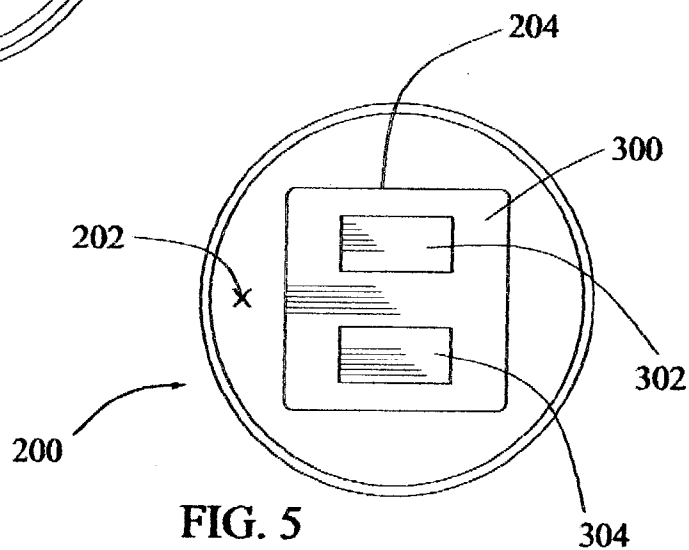


FIG. 5

DISPOSABLE DRINK CUP LID WITH A CONDIMENT RESEVOIR

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The invention relates to a covering for a disposable drink cup that prevents its contents from spilling while providing a user access to condiments.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

[0002] Interpretation Considerations

[0003] This section describes the technical field in more detail, and discusses problems encountered in the technical field. This section does not describe prior art as defined for purposes of anticipation or obviousness under 35 U.S.C. section 102 or 35 U.S.C. section 103. Thus, nothing stated in the Problem Statement is to be construed as prior art.

[0004] Discussion

[0005] Most plastic container lids and cup lids for disposable drink cups prevent the liquid from spilling out of the cups. Typically, these lids have an opening (or orifice) on a lid surface that accommodates a straw. As the number of fast food restaurants has continued to increase, some of these drink cup lids have been adapted to accommodate condiments, such as ketchup or relish, or condiment packages, such as ketchup cups or chicken dipping cups (these condiment cups are typically provided with fast foods). Recently, cup lid makers have tried to address the various problems associated with lids that hold condiments packets by designing lids with specially formed “reservoirs” in which the condiment may be poured. These reservoirs allow the consumer/user to conveniently dip finger foods (such as French fries and chicken strips) into condiments or condiment packs that are stored or placed into the reservoirs.

[0006] However, although these prior-art cup lids are able to hold condiments or condiment packages, they are not without problems. For example, the condiments frequently take the temperature of any liquid inside the cup. In addition, condiments may spill from the lid, or a condiment package may fall from the lid—thereby spilling on the user and soiling clothing, car interior, work papers or other items being stored inside an automobile. Thus, it is desirable to provide a lid that overcomes these and other problems with the prior art. The present invention effectively provides such an invention.

SELECTED OVERVIEW OF SELECTED EMBODIMENTS

[0007] The invention provides technical advantages as a lid for a disposable cup, whereby in one embodiment, the lid holds condiments in a shallow reservoir. In an alternative embodiment the cup lid is adapted to receive and firmly hold a wide variety of condiment packages of various shapes and sizes. Each embodiment incorporates a reservoir having a reservoir base that is maintained substantially above a fluid level of the cup. Alternative embodiments provide temperature barriers at the reservoir base, and means for securing a condiment pack into the lid or reservoir. Thus, the invention provides advantages over the prior art as a lid that effectively keeps the contents of the condiment from assuming the temperature of the liquid inside the cup, and as a means for firmly holding a condiment package in place on the lid.

[0008] Of course, other features and embodiments of the invention will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art. After reading the specification, and the detailed description of the exemplary embodiment, these persons will recognize that similar results can be achieved in not dissimilar ways. Accordingly, the detailed description is provided as an example of the best mode of the invention and it should be understood that the invention is not limited by the detailed description. Accordingly, the invention should be read as being limited only by the claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] Various aspects of the invention, as well as an embodiment, are better understood by reference to the following EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENT OF A BEST MODE. To better understand the invention, the EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENT OF A BEST MODE should be read in conjunction with the drawings in which:

[0010] FIG. 1 illustrates a side view of a cup lid having a reservoir and a straw opening;

[0011] FIG. 2 shows a side view of another embodiment of the invention as a cup lid that includes a thin insulation layer disposed about the surface of the reservoir;

[0012] FIG. 3 shows the cup lid of FIG. 2 with a cup-shaped condiment pack disposed secured in the reservoir;

[0013] FIG. 4 is a top view of an alternative embodiment of the invention; and

[0014] FIG. 5 shows a top view of an alternative embodiment of the invention.

AN EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENT OF A BEST MODE

[0015] The invention is, in one embodiment, a disposable drink cup lid that has a reservoir that can hold condiments or condiment packs, while preventing the condiments from quickly assuming the temperature of a liquid inside the disposable drink cup. In one embodiment, the invention is also adapted to firmly hold in place a condiment container.

[0016] When reading this section (An Exemplary Embodiment of a Best Mode, which describes an exemplary embodiment of the best mode of the invention, hereinafter “exemplary embodiment”), one should keep in mind several points. First, the following exemplary embodiment is what the inventor believes to be the best mode for practicing the invention at the time this patent was filed. Thus, since one of ordinary skill in the art may recognize from the following exemplary embodiment that substantially equivalent structures or substantially equivalent acts may be used to achieve the same results in exactly the same way, or to achieve the same results in a not dissimilar way, the following exemplary embodiment should not be interpreted as limiting the invention to one embodiment. Likewise, individual aspects (sometimes called species) of the invention are provided as examples, and, accordingly, one of ordinary skill in the art may recognize from a following exemplary structure (or a following exemplary act) that a substantially equivalent structure or substantially equivalent act may be used to either achieve the same results in substantially the same way, or to achieve the same results in a not dissimilar way.

[0017] Accordingly, the discussion of a species (or a specific item) invokes the genus (the class of items) to which that species belongs as well as related species in that genus. Likewise, the recitation of a genus invokes the species known in the art. Furthermore, it is recognized that as technology develops, a number of additional alternatives to achieve an aspect of the invention may arise. Such advances are hereby incorporated within their respective genus, and should be recognized as being functionally equivalent or structurally equivalent to the aspect shown or described.

[0018] Second, the only essential aspects of the invention are identified by the claims. Thus, aspects of the invention, including elements, acts, functions, and relationships (shown or described) should not be interpreted as being essential unless they are explicitly described and identified as being essential. Third, a function or an act should be interpreted as incorporating all modes of doing that function or act, unless otherwise explicitly stated (for example, one recognizes that “tacking” may be done by nailing, stapling, gluing, hot gunning, riveting, etc., and so a use of the word tacking invokes stapling, gluing, etc., and all other modes of that word and similar words, such as “attaching”).

[0019] Fourth, unless explicitly stated otherwise, conjunctive words (such as “or”, “and”, “including”, or “comprising” for example) should be interpreted in the inclusive, not the exclusive, sense. Fifth, the words “means” and “step” are provided to facilitate the reader’s understanding of the invention and do not mean “means” or “step” as defined in 112, paragraph 6 of 35 U.S.C., unless used as “means for functioning-” or “step” for—functioning—“in the claims section.

[0020] Exemplary Device

[0021] Better understanding of the invention can be gained by reference to figures. Accordingly, FIG. 1 illustrates a side view of a disposable drink cup 210 and a cup lid (generally 200) having a reservoir 204 and a straw opening 202. The cup lid 200 is preferably made from a semi-transparent plastic as are most fast food restaurant cup lids, and is press-formed to include the reservoir 204. However, it will be appreciated that the cup lid 200 may be made from other materials, such as plastisol-based compounds (commonly used for colored lids). Thus, the cup lid 200 is a disposable, single-use cup lid commonly distributed at most fast food restaurants.

[0022] The reservoir 204 is preferably adapted to receive a condiment from a condiment package—such as ketchup, mustard, relish, or mayonnaise, for example—via “squeezing a condiment into the reservoir 204, via placing a condiment pack into the reservoir 204, or via a pre-installed/ubiquitous condiment-containing cup lid. The reservoir 204 generally comprises a reservoir floor 207 and a reservoir wall 205 substantially formed via a raised edge 220, and may include a location for a straw hole 202. The reservoir floor 207 is, in one embodiment, higher than the rim of said disposable cup when the cup lid is securely coupled to the disposable cup. Of course, the reservoir floor may extend below the rim of the disposable cup in one embodiment, however, it will be appreciated that the reservoir floor does not extend into an area of the disposable cup that exposes the reservoir to the disposable cup’s liquid contents when the disposable cup is at rest on a level surface. Stated another way, the floor of the reservoir is always above the level of

a liquid in the cup, when the cup is on a level, horizontal surface. In one embodiment, the reservoir 204 may be circular or rectangular in shape, and in one embodiment is preferably shaped like a condiment container, or at least substantially shaped like a condiment container such that a condiment pack can rest in the reservoir 204.

[0023] The cup lid 200 also includes the straw opening 202 to accommodate a straw, and the straw opening 202 is typically embodied as an orifice or a pair of crisscrossed slits, as is known in the art. In addition, the cup lid has an edge typically associated with the circumference of the cup lid, which is preferably embodied as a lip 222. The lip 222 is integrally coupled to the reservoir via a raised edge 220. The raised edge is preferably only slightly raised, just enough to form a reservoir that can hold a condiment pack, about one ounce of condiment. In a preferred embodiment, the raised edge is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch, and in another it is less than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Other preferred embodiments provide raised edges of approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, $\frac{1}{3}$ inch, or $\frac{1}{8}$ inch, for example. In any event, the raised edge provides a rise from the cup lip so that an easily manufacturable reservoir can be provided in the cup lid. Likewise, the lip 222 is adapted to attach along the outer rim of the cup 210, the rim being associated with a cup opening 208. Preferably, the cup lid 200 sits snug (so that a liquid will not pass where the lip 222 and the rim meet) just above a “cup line” 206 about the cup opening.

[0024] Furthermore, the cup lid 200 is shown placed on the drink cup 210. Preferably, the reservoir floor 207 is maintained above the cup line 206 so that the reservoir floor 207 does not touch a liquid inside the drink cup 210 when the cup is stationary on a flat, horizontal surface. The reader will appreciate that this prevents a condiment in the reservoir 204 from quickly assuming the temperature of the liquid.

[0025] FIG. 2 shows a side view of another embodiment of the invention as a cup lid 200 that includes an insulation layer 300 disposed about the surface of the reservoir 204. In a preferred embodiment, the insulation layer 300 is adapted to form an insulating barrier between the reservoir floor 207 and the condiment package. This keeps the condiment from quickly assuming the temperature of a liquid in the container. Of course, although the insulation layer 300 is shown here as disposed inside the reservoir 204, the insulation layer 300 could easily be located on the outside of the reservoir 204 (meaning on the side of the reservoir that is placed inside a drink cup). In one embodiment, the insulation layer 300 is comprised of waterproof material, such as Styrofoam, for example, but may also be another insulative material having a waterproof/liquidproof wrapping (not shown). Thus, the insulation layer 300 may be disposed on either the bottom side or top side of the reservoir floor 207. Of course, the insulation layer 300 also prevents a condiment package from quickly assuming the temperature of a liquid inside the disposable cup 210.

[0026] FIG. 3 shows the cup lid 200 of FIG. 2 with a cup-shaped condiment pack 310 disposed in the reservoir 204, the reservoir 204 being generally the same shape as the condiment pack 310. Of course, it should be understood that the reservoir 204 may be advantageously designed to accommodate numerous shapes of condiment packs by choosing a reservoir that is octagonal or star-shaped, for example. In addition, the reservoir 204 may be shaped like a company logo, or other recognizable form.

[0027] FIG. 4 is a top view of an alternative embodiment of the invention, where the straw-hole 202, embodied as a pair of crisscross slits, is more readily visible. In FIG. 4, the reservoir 204 and the lid 200 are illustrated as being circular. However, it will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art that the cup lid 200 may take any of many different shapes, such as a rectangular or triangular shape, for example, and similarly, the reservoir may have a shape that is different from the shape of the lid. For example, in another embodiment, the shape of the reservoir 204 accommodates a rectangular condiment pack, and may even accommodate a plurality of condiment packs of different shapes and sizes.

[0028] Additional features and advantages of the invention can be realized by using an adhesive in conjunction with the reservoir. FIG. 5 shows a top view of the cup lid 200 that includes an adhesive 302, which may be embodied as a sticky "patch" of adhesive, or embodied as a sticky pad 304. Preferably, these removable sticky patches 302 and 304 are coupled to the top surface of the reservoir floor 207. Preferably, these sticky patch 302 and the sticky pad 304 are adapted to hold a condiment pack firmly in place in the reservoir 204 so as to prevent a condiment pack from accidentally spilling. Though only two sticky means are shown, a single or multiple sticky means may be used, or a single sticky patch strip may also be used. In yet another embodiment, the condiment pack 310 has a self-adhesive strip thereon. The sticky pad 304, in one embodiment, utilizes a non-adhesive strip that must be removed to cause a condiment pack to secure into the lid (much like a common band-aid).

[0029] Though the invention has been described with respect to a specific preferred embodiment, many variations and modifications will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon reading the present application. The appended claims are to be interpreted as broadly as possible in view of the prior art to include all such variations and modifications.

I claim:

1. A disposable container lid adapted to fit about an opening of a disposable container, said container lid comprising:

a reservoir having a reservoir floor and a reservoir wall; and

whereby said container lid is adapted to thermally isolate said reservoir, the reservoir for preventing a condiment in said reservoir from assuming the temperature of a liquid inside said disposable container.

2. The disposable container lid of claim 1 wherein said reservoir comprises a reservoir top and a reservoir bottom, and also further comprising a thermal insulating means disposed on said reservoir floor.

3. The disposable container lid of claim 1 wherein said container lid is adapted to fit about the container opening via a lip.

4. The disposable container lid of claim 1 wherein said container lid is comprised of a semi-transparent plastic.

5. The disposable container lid of claim 1 wherein said container lid is substantially circular.

6. The disposable container lid of claim 1 further comprising an orifice, the orifice being adapted to accommodate a straw.

7. The disposable container lid of claim 1 wherein said reservoir floor further comprises a reservoir top and a reservoir bottom, and further comprises an adhesive means disposed on the reservoir top, the adhesive for firmly holding a condiment pack to said reservoir floor.

8. The disposable container lid of claim 7 wherein said adhesive means comprises a removable, non-adhesive strip.

9. The disposable container lid of claim 8 wherein said adhesive means comprises a sticky patch.

10. A disposable, single-use cup lid adapted to cover the opening of disposable cup, said cup lid comprising:

a reservoir having a reservoir floor and a reservoir wall, the reservoir adapted to receive a condiment from a condiment package; and

a thermal insulating layer disposed on said reservoir floor; whereby said thermally insulating layer prevents said condiment package from assuming the temperature of a liquid inside said container when said disposable container lid is coupled to said disposable cup.

11. The disposable container lid of claim 10 wherein said reservoir floor is higher than the rim of said disposable cup when the cup lid is securely coupled to the disposable cup.

12. The disposable container lid of claim 10, further comprising a raised edge that couples said reservoir wall to a lip of said disposable container lid.

13. The disposable container lid of claim 10 wherein said reservoir is substantially the same shape as said condiment package.

14. The disposable container lid of claim 10 wherein said reservoir floor further comprises a reservoir top and a reservoir bottom, and further comprises an adhesive means disposed on said reservoir top, the adhesive for firmly holding said condiment package to said reservoir floor.

15. The disposable container lid of claim 14 wherein said adhesive means comprises at least one sticky patch.

16. The disposable container lid of claim 15 wherein said sticky patch is coupled to said condiment pack.

17. A disposable container lid adapted to cover the opening of a disposable drink cup, said container lid comprising:

a reservoir having a floor and a wall, said reservoir adapted to receive a condiment container;

whereby said container lid is adapted to thermally insulate the reservoir to prevent the condiment container in the reservoir from assuming the temperature of a liquid inside said disposable drink cup.

18. The disposable container lid of claim 17 wherein said reservoir floor further comprises a top and bottom, and further comprising an adhesive means disposed on the top of said reservoir floor for firmly holding said condiment container to said reservoir floor.

19. The disposable container lid of claim 17 wherein said reservoir floor is higher than the rim of said disposable cup when the cup lid is securely coupled to the disposable cup.

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