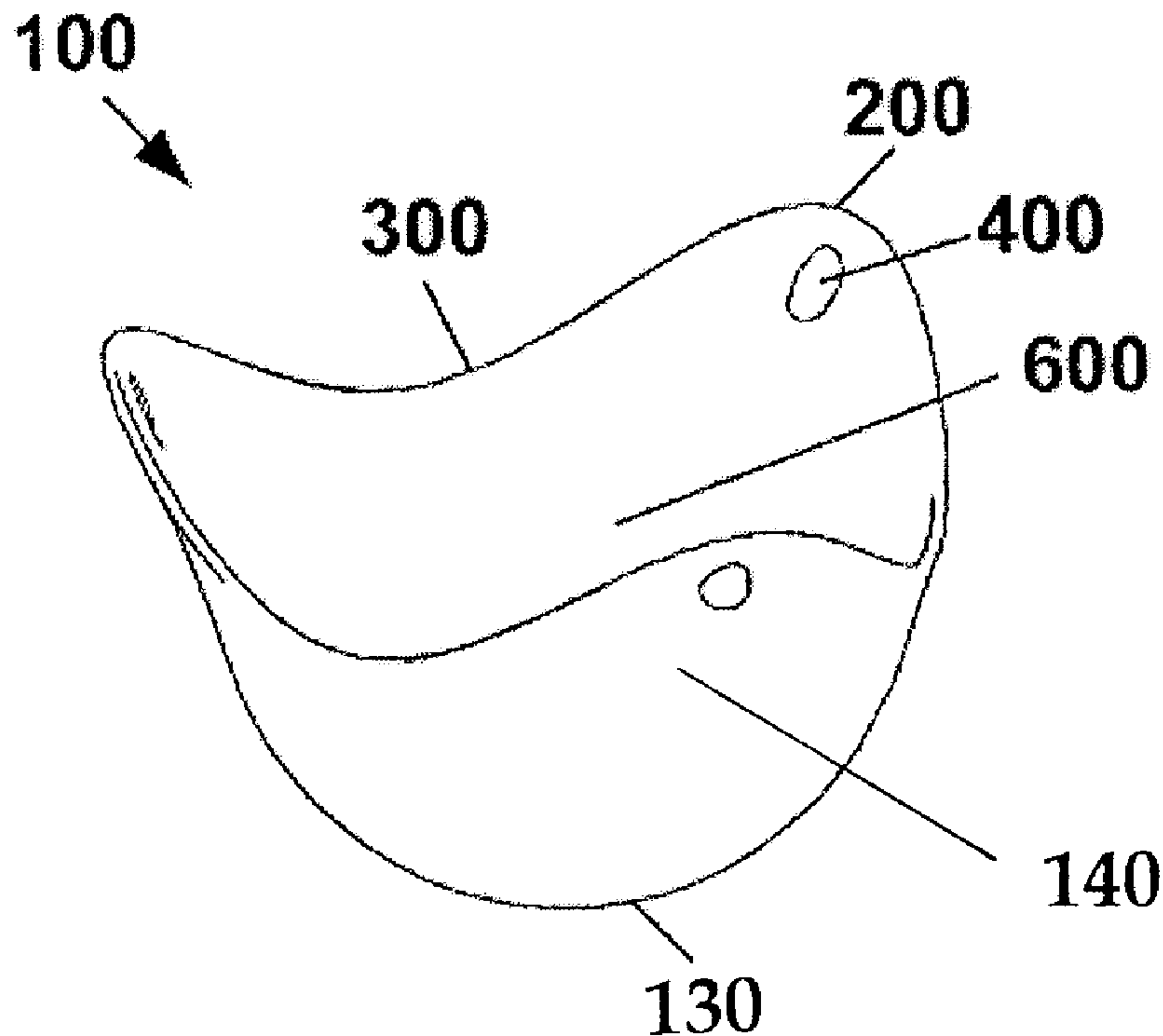




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(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

A multi-purpose device (100) for holding food items for cooking, storage and other purposes is disclosed. One use of the device (100) is for the poaching of one or more eggs. The device (100) is formed and dimensioned to float in boiling water without tipping over and spilling an egg contained within.



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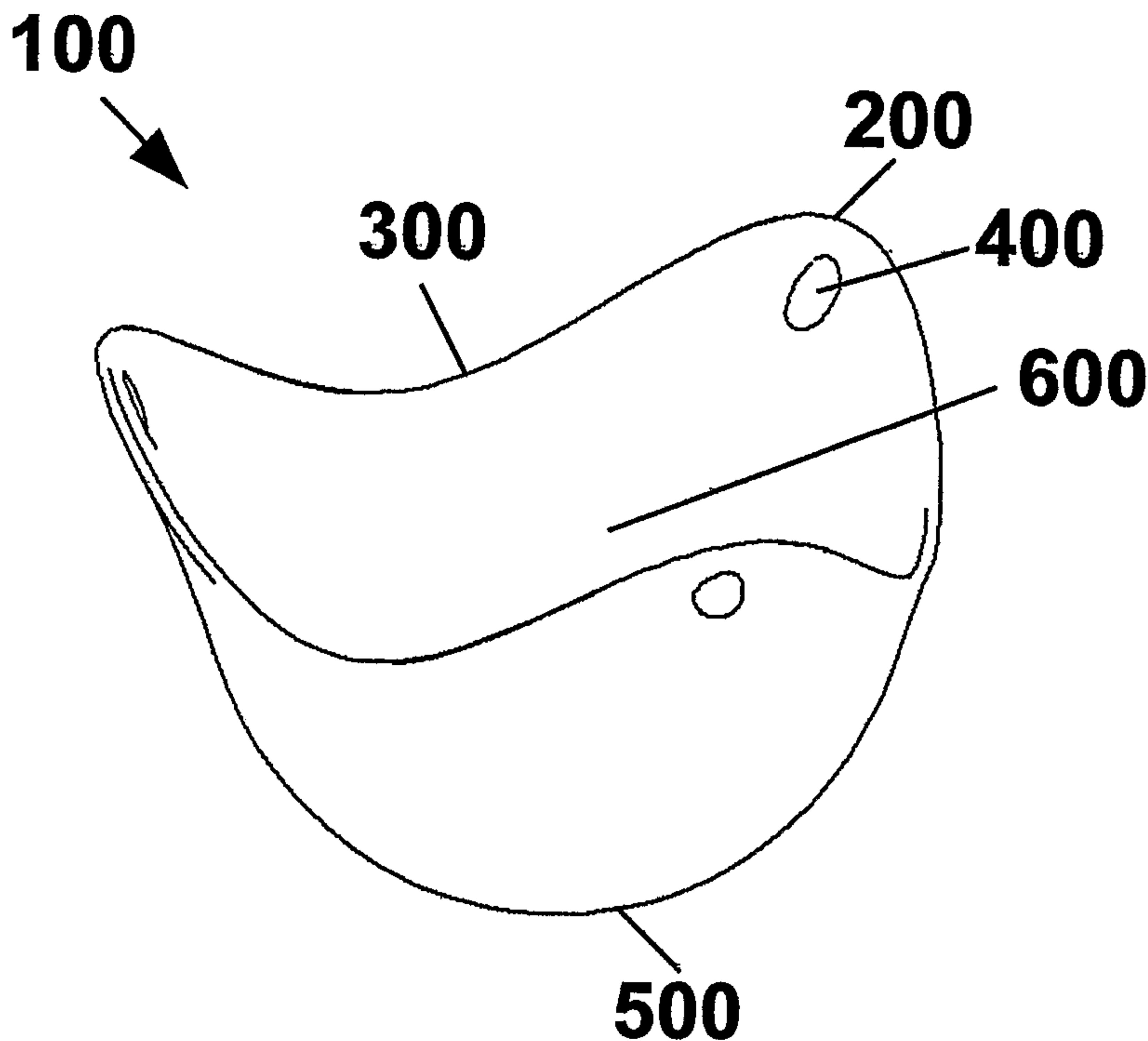
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POACH POD

TECHNICAL FIELD

The disclosed embodiments relate to food containment devices for use during cooking, and more particularly to a device for poaching eggs.

BACKGROUND

Making an acceptable poached egg is a challenge for most people. One contributing factor is that poaching eggs is generally not a daily occurrence with most people. This may result in a user under-cooking or over-cooking an egg. Additionally, there is a tendency with conventional egg poachers for the egg to stick to the cooking surface, yielding unacceptable results.

There are several generally accepted features for an acceptable poached egg. One feature is an egg whose whites have been cooked to set but the yolk is still partially runny. Another feature is that the egg remains intact without losing significant volume into the water. Another feature is an egg that does not stick to the cooking device, since once the egg sticks there is egg loss that occurs and the likelihood for bursting the yolk during removal is higher.

Conventional cooking devices dedicated to poaching eggs are generally bulky and require precious cabinet space for storage. Also, with conventional poaching devices the eggs generally stick to the cooking surface of the device. Some conventional poaching devices have stainless egg shaped holders that submerge in water and have a handle for removal from water. The drawback of these devices is that they have small holes in the bottom area, some of the egg is lost through these holes, plus the egg tends to stick in these holes. Recently devices for the poaching of eggs have been

made of silicone. However even in the known silicone versions the holes in the bottom cause egg loss and cause some sticking as egg hardens within these holes. This may increase the cleaning time.

Many of the conventional egg poachers have only one function - to poach eggs- and have no further utility. Also many of the convention egg poachers are designed to poach multiple eggs simultaneously. Single people, couples with different schedules, dieters, etc may only want to poach one egg or prepare a single service portion of a food item placed into a cooking device such as a poacher.

SUMMARY

The general purpose of the present invention, which will be described subsequently in greater detail, is to provide a device that can contain food, for cooking, storage and other purposes. Generally speaking, the present invention facilitates the poaching of one or more eggs.

DISCLOSURE OF INVENTION

In an exemplary embodiment the food containment cooking device is comprised of a one piece flexible bowl like structure with an inside, an outside, a bottom and a wall proceeding from the bottom that is angled outward from the bottom. This structure forms a hollowed out space, or cavity, within the structure into which food items may be placed. The bottom and the wall are dimensioned to facilitate floating in boiling water when a food item, such as an egg yolk and accompanying egg white, are contained within, e.g., the bottom is curved so the device rocks back and forth in boiling water and

the walls are splayed outward to increase volume and stability. The wall thickness is about .027 inches at the bottom and graduates to .057 inches towards the top. In a preferred embodiment the present invention is dimensioned to provide a single serving, e.g. the poaching of one egg.

In a preferred embodiment the material used to form the food containment cooking device is made from highly heat resistant silicone. Depending on the functional characteristics desired the wall thickness may vary between .015 inches and .090 inches. In other embodiments the present invention may be made from flexible plastic.

In some embodiments the present invention may be further comprised of one or more tabs that protrude upward from the top of the wall so that a user's fingers may grasp the tabs for removing the food containment cooking device from hot water.

In other embodiments the present invention may be further comprised of a foot or flat portion on the bottom most portion of the bottom surface of the food containment cooking device so that the device may rest in an upright position on a counter or in the microwave.

In other embodiments the present invention may be further comprised of one or more holes at the top of the wall. In embodiments having tabs, the holes may be disposed therein. The holes may be used for the placement of retail tags, for hanging on a hook, to assist in the removal of the device from hot water.

In another embodiment three or more of the present invention may be connected or formed together in an arrangement that maintains the floating feature while allowing the cooking of more than one serving of a food item.

When the present invention is in a substantially upright position it facilitates the holding of food items such as eggs, rice, cake batter, flan, frozen desserts, and the like. This holding may be during cooking, e.g. the present invention is placed in a pot or pan,

in the oven, on the stove-top, microwave. This holding may be during storage in a refrigerator or freezer.

In one embodiment the food containment cooking device made of a flexible material, e.g. high temperature resistant silicone, which is floatable and is formed in one piece to have a curved bottom and a wall that seamlessly encompasses the bottom and protrudes from the bottom upward at an obtuse angle to form a cavity and a wall top edge having a plurality of undulations. In an exemplary embodiment these undulations form three peaks and three valleys. The peaks form tabs that may or may not have a hole formed therein, depending on the embodiment. The thickness of the flexible material is preferably 0.090 inches, but may be less than that thickness, depending on the cooking characteristics desired.

In some embodiments the bottom-most portion of the bottom may be flat to give the device stability when placed on a flat surface.

The present invention departs from the prior art in several features. The ability to float is one. The ability to float without tipping over and spilling held food items during boiling is another. Another feature is the ability of the device to float and have the held food items surrounded by hot water for even, rapid cooking is another. Another feature is the prevention of egg matter being lost into the water. Another feature is that the smoothness of the surface of the device deters an egg sticking to the silicone. Another feature of the present invention is that the wall thickness of the device may be dimensioned to achieve a 4-minute soft poach or a 6-minute firm poach.

One aspect of the present invention is that it is designed for the boiling of a food item placed therein. This is accomplished by placing the device in enough water to permit floating, resulting in heat being distributed evenly around the contained food and resulting in rapid cooking. The poaching of an egg is one use of the device in boiling water. The device can also be used to mimic a double boiler for the melting of chocolate or sugar. The preparation of flan is another food that this device would be particularly helpful in making due to the inherent non-stick features of the material and that the device floats in a water bath.

Another feature of the present invention is that it is also designed for the baking of food items placed therein, as well as the microwaving of food items placed therein. The device may be used to give a unique dome shape to baked or micro-waved foods.

Another aspect of the present invention is that it is also designed to be used as a molding vessel. The present invention may be positioned upside down and a melted substance, e.g. melted chocolate or sugar, drizzled over the device. The device with the drizzle may then be placed in the freezer, the device may later be removed from the freezer and the drizzled substance removed from the device by peeling the device away from the drizzled substance. The arched substance that remains can then be used as a stylish accent over deserts, e.g., ice cream, pies, miniature pastries, and the like. In the upright position the device may be used as a frozen dessert cup.

Another aspect of the present invention is that it may be manufactured economically.

Another aspect of the present invention is that it may be made from readily available materials.

These and other features and advantages of the present invention will be presented in

more detail in the following specification of the invention and the accompanying figures, which illustrate by way of example the principles of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Figure 1 illustrates a perspective view of a food containment cooking device, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 2 illustrates a front plan view of a food containment cooking device, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 3 illustrates a left side plan view of a food containment cooking device, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 4 illustrates a top plan view of a food containment cooking device, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 5 illustrates a bottom plan view of a food containment cooking device, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present invention will now be described in detail with reference to a few preferred embodiments thereof as illustrated in the accompanying drawings. In the following description, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. It will be apparent, however, to one skilled in the art, that the present invention may be practiced without some or all of these specific details. In other instances, well known operations have not been described in detail so not to unnecessarily obscure the present invention.

Referring now to Figure 1 through Figure 5 a food containment cooking device 100 is comprised of a bottom 130 from which a wall 140 protrudes upward at an obtuse angle and encompasses the bottom 130 forming an outside surface 120, an inside surface 110 and a cavity 600. The thickness of the wall 140 is preferably 0.090 inches or slightly thinner in order that the boiling water cooking time for an egg yolk may be between 4 minutes and 6 minutes, based on the desired consistency of the egg yolk. In some embodiments the top of the wall 140 may be of uniform height or may have an undulating height. In one embodiment having an undulating height, the alternating peaks and valleys of the undulation form a plurality of tab 200 and valley 300. In a preferred embodiment there are three substantially equally spaced tabs 200 separated by three substantially equally spaced valleys 300. In some embodiments, at least one of tab 200 has a tab hole 400 formed within tab 200. In other embodiments a tab hole 400 is formed with each tab 200.

In one embodiment the food containment cooking device is made as follows:

- Create a metal mold by cutting a semi circular shaped cavity that will create a thin wall thickness of .090 inches or thinner.
- Dimension the cavity deep enough to hold the volume of egg
- Fill the mold with silicone or other suitable material.
- Cure the material.
- Remove the material from the mold.

Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method of poaching an egg, the method comprising the steps of:
placing an egg yolk and accompanying egg white into a structure which comprises: a flanged flexible cup formed from silicon that includes a bottom wherein at least the upper portion of the bottom is curved, a substantially flat wall being adjoined to and seamlessly encompassing the bottom and protruding from the curved portion of the bottom upward at an angle to form a cavity defined by the interior side of the wall and the interior side of the bottom, the angle of the walls being sufficient enough so that the flanged cup can float in a stable manner in boiling water with the bottom remaining under the water and without tipping over; a wall top edge having a plurality of undulations, and the cup being sufficiently flexible to allow the cup to fold and bend;
placing the structure with the egg yolk and accompanying egg white into boiling water, the shape and dimensions of the structure being such that at least the entire contents of the flanged cup are below the boiling water;
removing the structure after a desired period of time; and
peeling the cup away from the poached egg.

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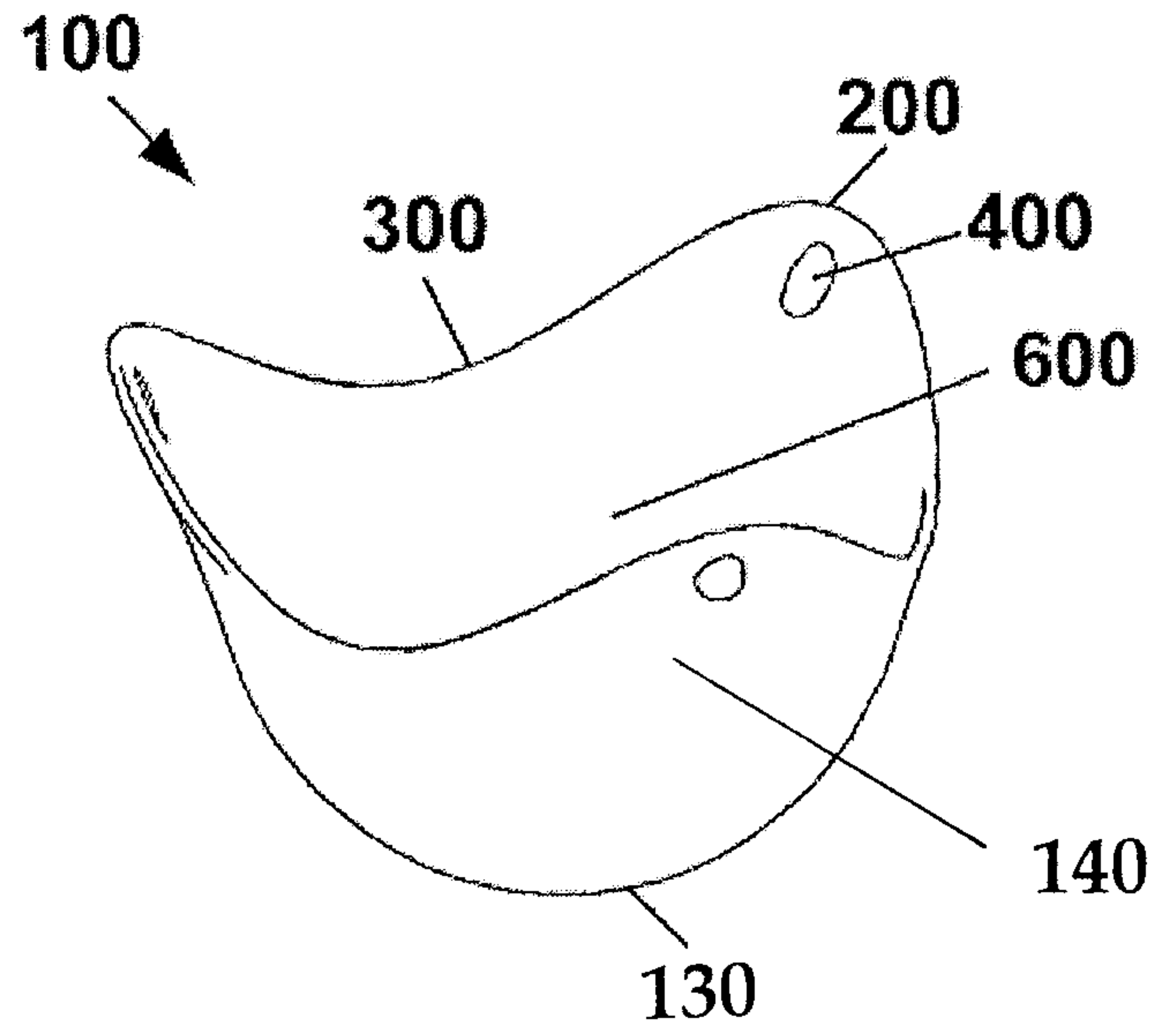


Figure 1

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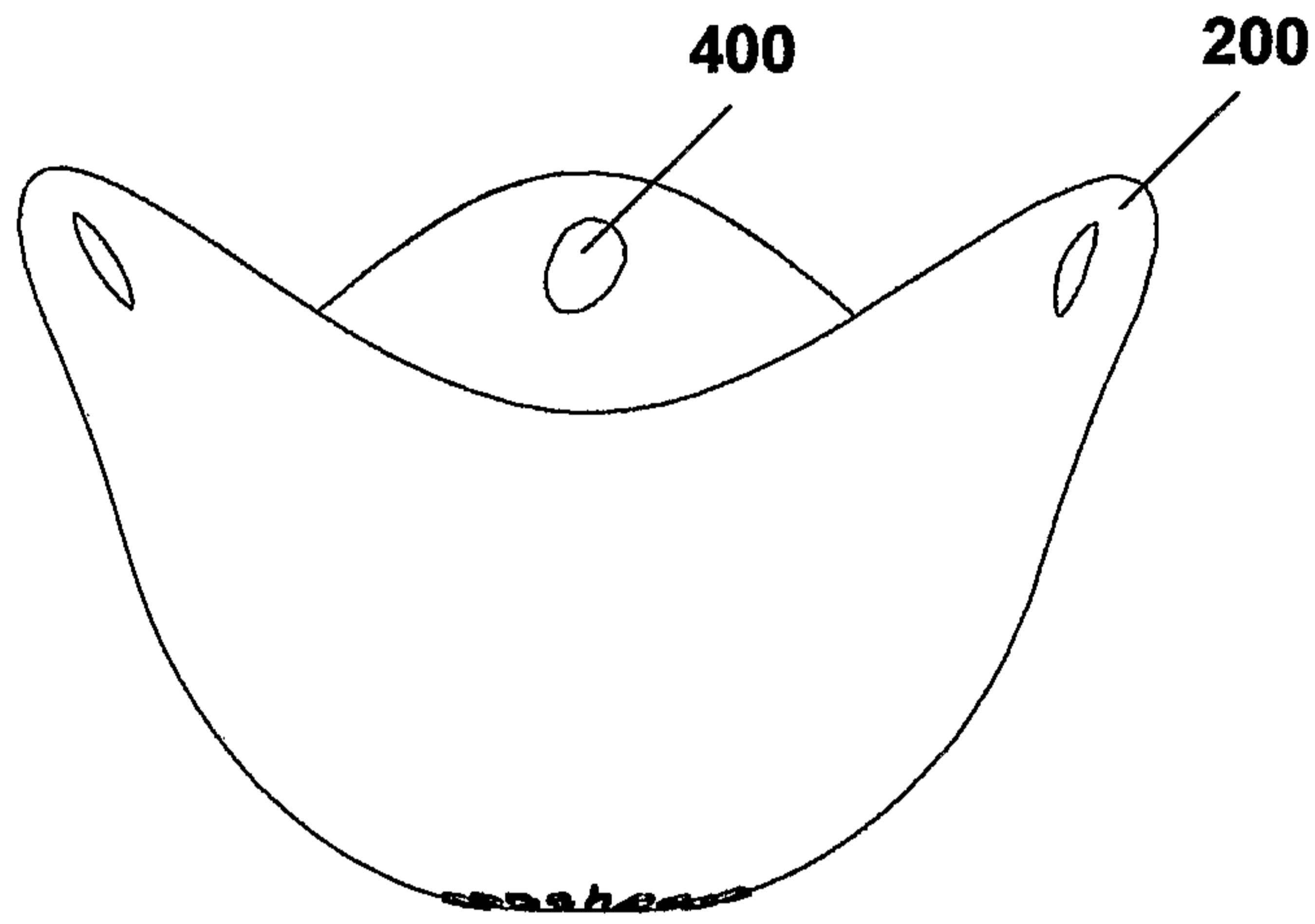


Figure 2

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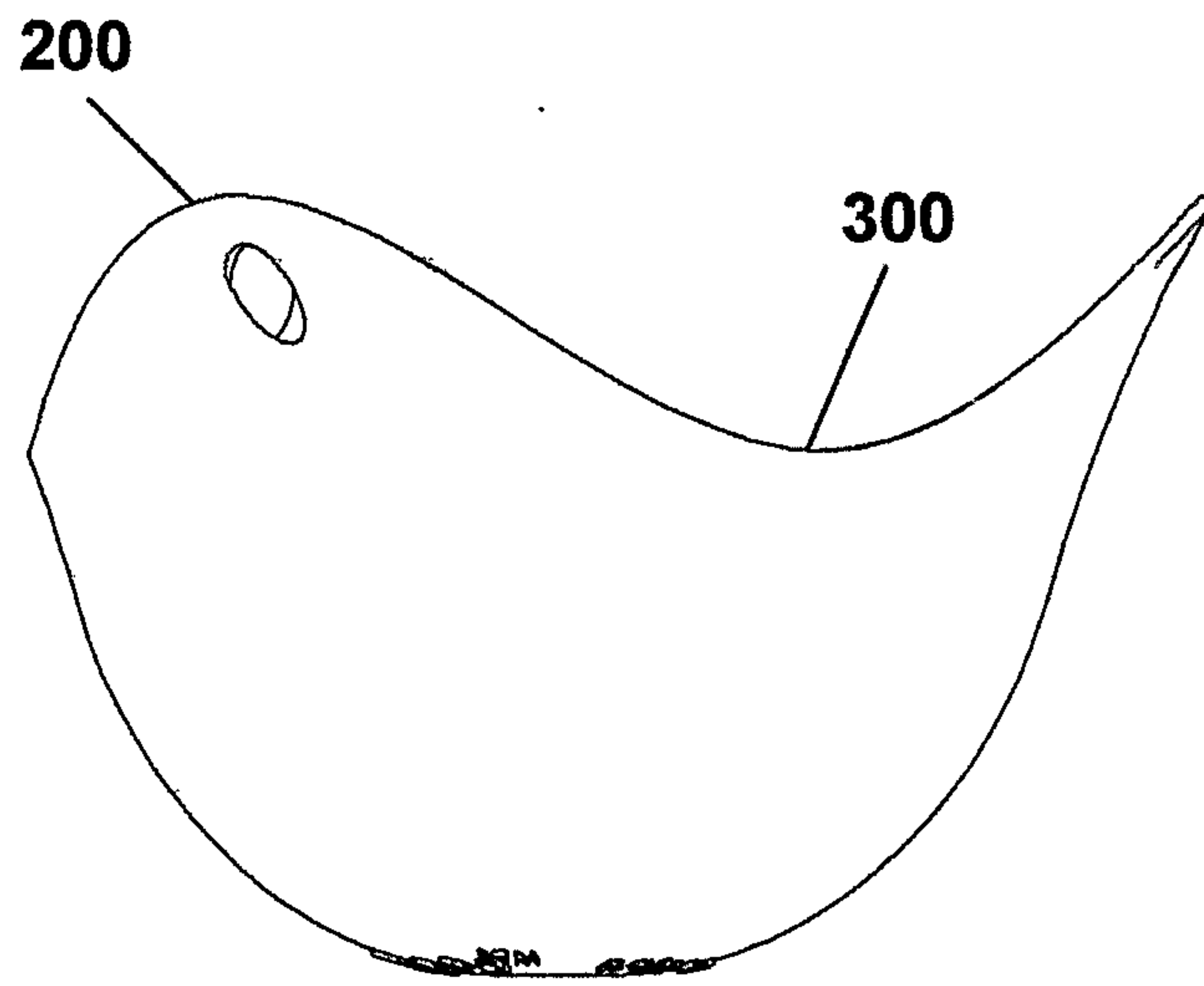


Figure 3

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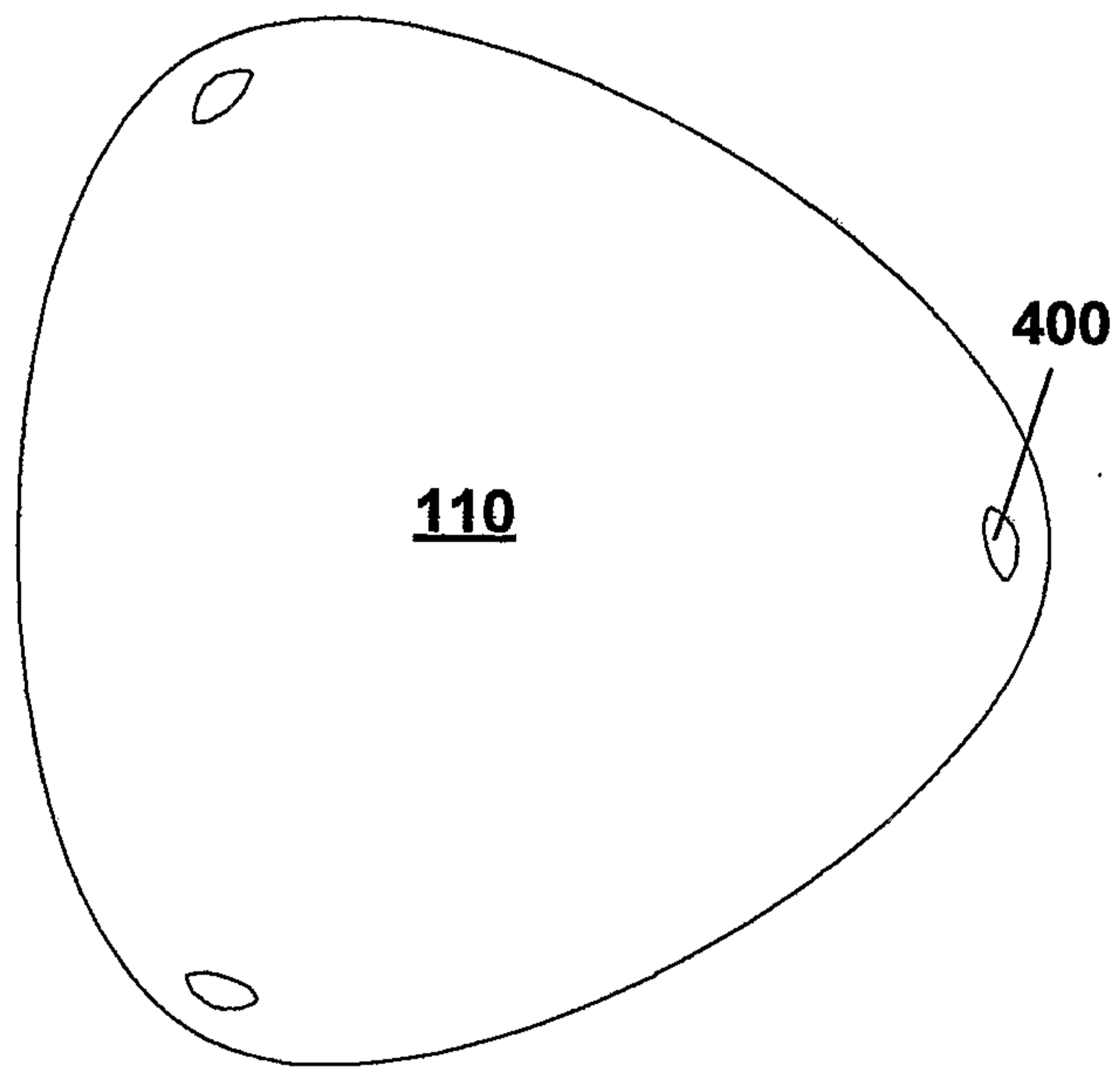


Figure 4

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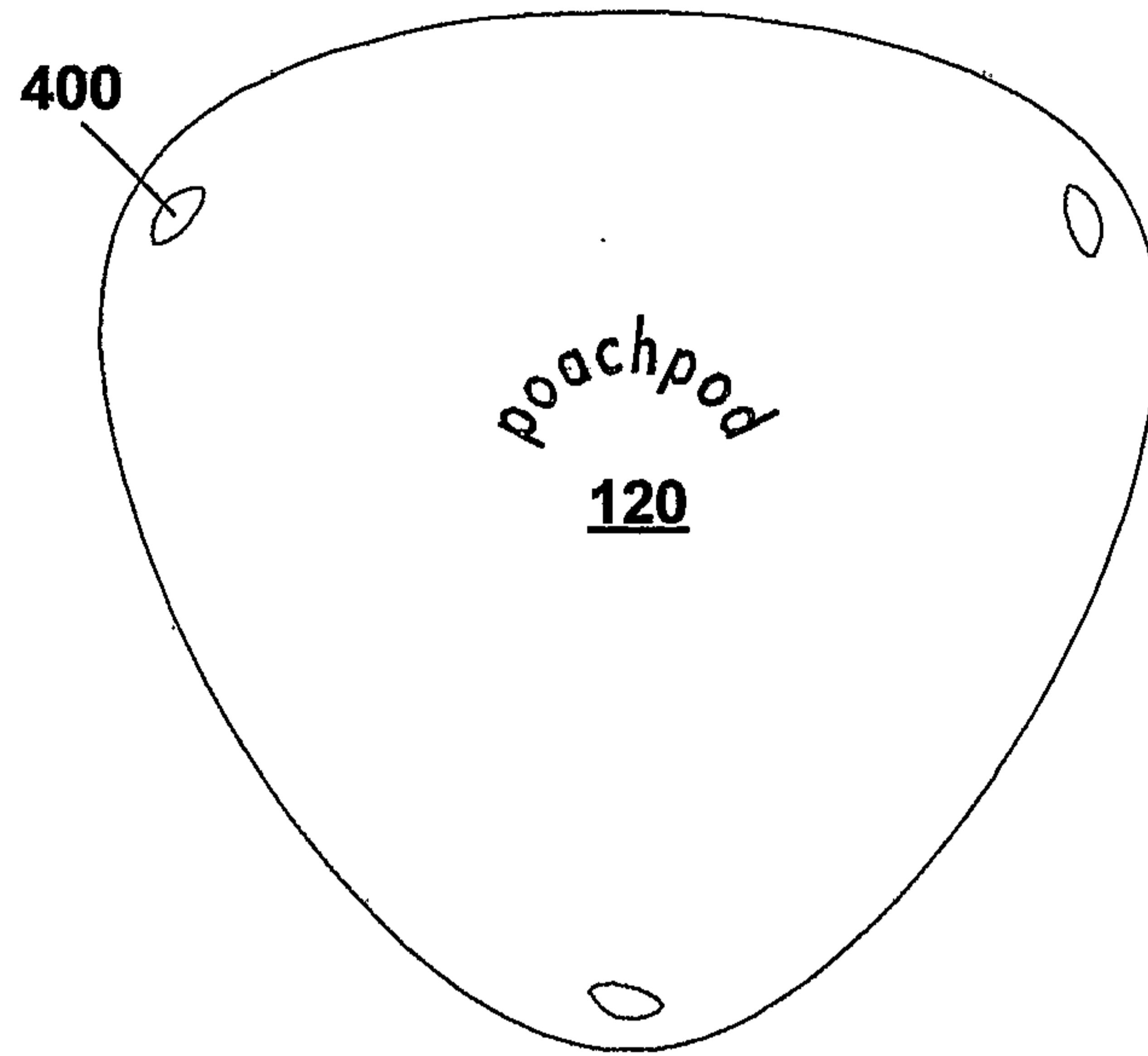


Figure 5

