United States Patent

Stehl

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[54] CAN-OPENING DISPENSING FUNNEL

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[73] Assignee: Mobil Oil Corporation

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[21] Appl. No.: 852,302

[52] U.S. Cl. 222/86

[51] Int. Cl. B67b 7/26

[58] Field of Search 222/83, 85, 90, 570, 86

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[57] ABSTRACT

A container-opening, dispenser-type funnel has a hollow body open at the bottom to telescope over a sealed container and has a flattened closed-over top with an opening in it communicating into a tapered hollow dispensing spout, and cutter means are resiliently insertable into the body to form, aligned with the spout, spaced dispensing openings in the container by blades which pierce it and cut apertures through the container top and turn the tabs resulting therefrom downward and outward when the funnel is forced axially down over the container so that radially oppositely arranged gripping means provided in association with the cutter means can hold and seal the container to the funnel during use by tight radial engagement with the cutout tabs.

10 Claims, 9 Drawing Figures

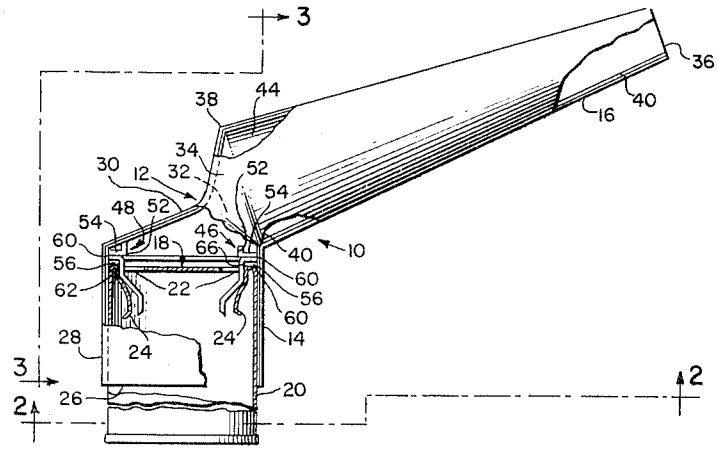


FIG. 1.

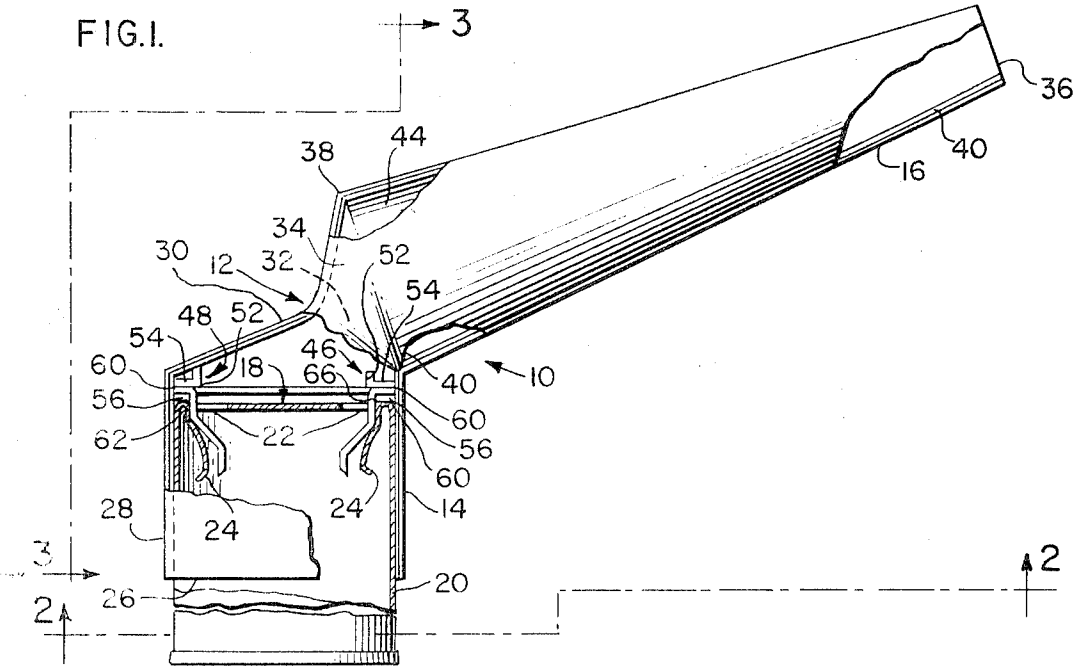


FIG. 2.

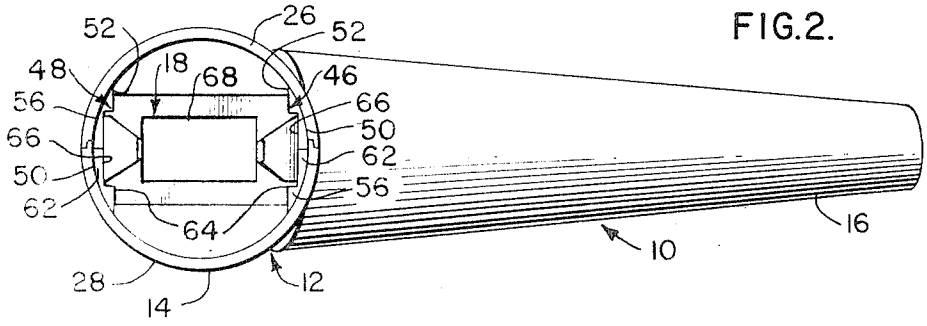
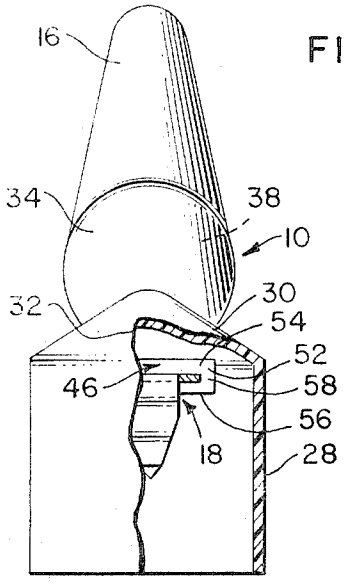


FIG. 3.



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FIG. 4.

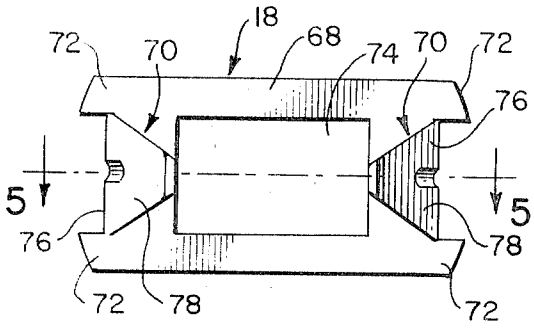


FIG. 5.

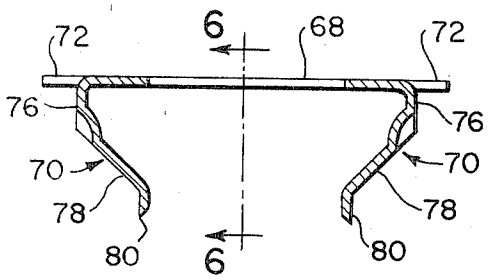


FIG. 6.

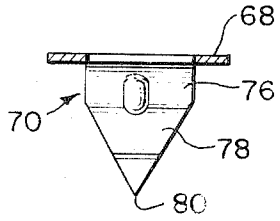


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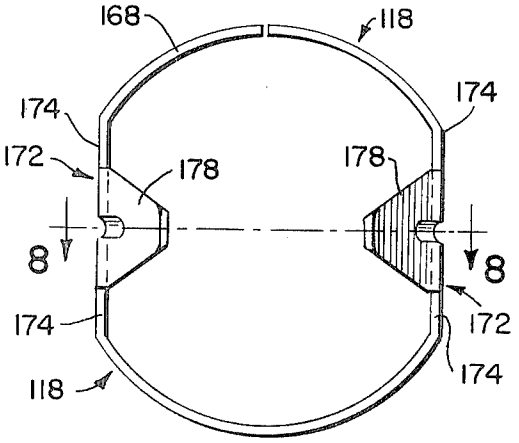


FIG. 8.

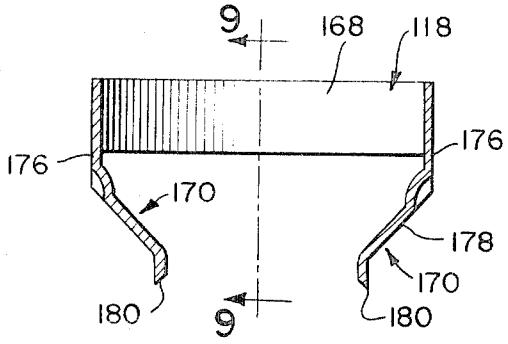
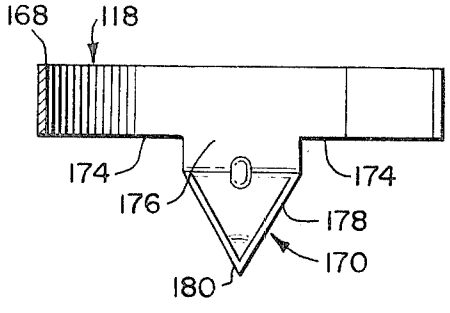


FIG. 9.



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CAN-OPENING DISPENSING FUNNEL

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates to fluids dispensing funnels of the type which can be provided with means to form dispensing openings in the top of a sealed can or container when the body of the funnel is forced down over the container.

2. Description of the Prior Art

Numerous dispensing funnels are known which employ cutters to open a container and provide for dispensing of its contents. Many of these are time consuming in use due to an uneven cutting action as between opposite sides of the container and/or an uneven or unbalanced movement of the funnel over the container. In some, there is an inadequate holding of the container or can to the funnel and often the user has to employ both hands and considerable precision when fitting the funnel to the container and for cutting and dispensing its contents. These defects decrease their utility, for example, in such uses as fast-moving service station work. Such prior devices have also required expensive assembly of one or more separate cutters to the funnel using plural separate attaching means or by molding into the funnel. Also, it often was necessary to fashion cutters into shapes expensive or difficult to produce in order to hold these in the funnels, or to effect friction with the container body, or all of these.

By the present invention, such drawbacks in prior art devices are overcome through providing a simplified dispenser-type funnel for fluids, which can be fitted over a container to open it and dispense its contents by a quick and easy action and after opening, the container is securely held to the funnel until forcibly removed. Accordingly, this invention contemplates a container-opening funnel device that has a pour spout connected to a funnellike body into which cutter means can be inserted, so that when the device is forced down on a container, the cutter means will cut dispensing apertures and tabs therein which hold the container securely in the body by a balanced, radially inward and oppositely directed clamping action of the cut tabs against opposed holding surface means provided in the device at opposite sides of the funnel body.

The device has a hollow body portion open at one end which provides a cylindrical skirt adapted to be hand fit down over a container wall, usually over an end of it, and has a tapered dispensing or pouring spout that is connected into the body at a low angle thereto and largely at one side of it by a connecting cover means which provides a closed covering both for the top of the body and the inlet end of the spout, and a funnel opening for fluid to flow from the body into the spout.

Cutter means are positioned in the funnel so as to form dispensing apertures and tabs in the container which are aligned in the front to rear direction of the funnel pour spout for optimum dispensing when the cutter means is forced into the container wall.

The cutter or cutter means can be provided advantageously as an integrally placed or separate insert assemblable into the funnel body after molding and having a plurality of cutting blade means thereon. A pair of flat holding or gripping surface means are arranged in radially oppositely spaced positions within the skirt adjacent the cutting blades and are clamped between the formed tabs when the container is seated in the funnel which secures the funnel on the container for efficient dispensing.

Advantageously, the cutter means is provided for piercing and cutting into the container with a pair of spaced cutting blade means which are in front to rear alignment with the pour spout and the gripping surfaces and disposed near opposite inner surfaces of the skirt and the container sidewalls when the cutter means is in place in the device. The gripping surfaces can also be provided advantageously as a part of the cutter means insert which can be as a part of the cutting blades.

The funnel also can be advantageously provided, for easy hand assembly of the cutter means into place, with a pair of oppositely confronting cutter means aligning bosses, each subtending an arc of the wall or skirt of the funnel in a chordlike manner and projecting a flat face inwardly of the funnel body for receiving or seating a portion of the cutter means to be held in proper alignment with the dispensing spout and to provide the two similarly aligned dispensing openings or apertures in the container, which provide for ingress of air pressure and egress of the container contents, thus to assure a good pouring action. With this construction, the cutter means advantageously can be resilient and snapped into proper cutting position held aligned between the opposed flat faces that are arranged chordlike within the funnel body. If desired, advantageously there can be provided horizontal slots through the flat faces of the bosses and the cutter means provided with oppositely extending seating means such as prongs for insertion into the slots to provide a secure holding in the funnel of the cutter means or insert, and when it is resilient to provide for the snap-in-type assembly which seats the cutter means into the funnel body.

The cutter means can with advantage be incorporated into a flat plate or split ring support means for fitting the cutter means into the funnel skirt and which holds the cutting blade means in proper downward and inward depending position in use. The cutting blades are advantageously configured so as to have a downwardly depending flat face connected to the support means for acting as the gripping means and connected thereto a downwardly and radially inward angled triangular cutting blade which terminates in a vertically downward piercing point. Two such cutting blade means can be oppositely spaced on the support with the triangular cutting blade inward of the flat faces to provide the novel cutter means of this invention. When both blades are the same length, a balanced, simultaneous piercing followed by even cutting out of the tabs at opposite sides of the container occurs which provides stable even telescoping during piercing and cutting, and a secure even gripping of the funnel by the container.

Advantageously, the covering connecting means between the funnel and body is saddle shaped to provide over the funnel body a flattened area engageable by a flat of the hand for pressure forcing the device over the container.

These and other objects and advantages of this invention will become more apparent when understood in light of the annexed drawings and description.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a side elevational view of the can-opening funnel device of this invention, partly cut away to show portions in section and showing a cutter means operatively inserted into the funnel body, with the device telescoped down over a container having cut apertures into it as in use, and with the funnel held to the container by a clamping of the cutter means between the aperture tabs;

FIG. 2 is a plan view from below of the device of FIG. 1 taken along a plane through line 2—2 thereof; but with the container removed and showing the bosses for positioning the cutter means;

FIG. 3 is a rear view in elevation of the device of FIG. 1 as seen from along line 3—3 thereof and partly cut away to show the slotted flat face of the front positioning boss;

FIG. 4 is a plan view from below of a platelike insert providing the cutter means, and with two triangularlike cutter blades formed thereon;

FIG. 5 is a side elevational view, partly in section, of the insert of FIG. 4 taken through a plane along line 5—5 thereof;

FIG. 6 is a view in elevation of the insert-type cutting means of FIG. 5 taken along a plane through line 6—6 thereof;

FIG. 7 is a plan view from below of an alternate insert, in ringlike form, which can be used to provide the cutter means for the funnel of this invention, and showing its two spaced-apart cutter blades in triangularlike form;

FIG. 8 is a view in elevation, partly in section, of the alternate cutter means insert in FIG. 7 taken along a plane through line 8—8 thereof; and

FIG. 9 is a view in elevation of the cutter means insert of FIG. 8, partly in section, and taken along a plane through line 9—9 thereof.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring to the drawings, the container-opening funnel device of this invention is generally indicated by numeral **10** and includes a funnel **12** provided with a hollow, funnel body portion **14** which is connected in open communication with a hollow dispensing portion or pour spout **16**, through which liquid entering the body portion can be dispensed. The funnel device **10** is provided further with a balanced or symmetrical cutter means **18** for cutting into a container **20** in order to open it and form in it a pair of spaced-apart dispensing apertures **22** and aperture tabs **24** when the device is forcibly telescoped down over the container so as to cause the cutter means to pierce and cut through one of the ends thereof (see FIG. 1).

The funnel body portion **14** is a hollow cylinder having an open bottom portion **26** which provides a depending cylindrical skirt **28** for fitting around the sides of the container so that contact between inner wall surfaces of the skirt and the container sides quickly guides the device **10** into its proper cutting and container holding position. For this purpose, skirt **28** is made sufficiently long to provide a substantially balanced centering of the body portion **14** over the end of the container **20**, which usually is cylindrically round, when telescoping the device over it, and cutting in it and forcibly turning outward the aperture tabs **24**.

The body portion **14** is closed over its top area by a flatly rounded cover portion **30** which is constructed in saddlelike shape so as to form a covering connection between the body portion and the pour spout **16**. Cover portion **30** thus connects flatlike to the body portion at the rear and side upper edges thereof and slopes up over it at a low angle towards the front of the device where it connects to the pour spout close to the front side of the funnel. This construction provides for flattened-hand pressure to be applied over substantially the full top area over the body portion for fast straight downward forcing of the cutter means **18** as the top of the container **20**.

The cover portion defines a fluid outlet **32** located to one side of the vertical axis of the skirt so that fluid entering the body portion can pass therethrough and into the spout to be dispensed. In this area the cover portion also forms the saddlelike connection between body portion and spout by angling steeply, almost vertically, upward and slightly outward, and close to the front side of body portion **14**. This upwardly turned sweep of the cover portion provides a conelike pour spout inlet or breach covering **34** which is a part of the cover portion **30**, and extends upwardly therefrom at about a right or slightly obtuse angle in the depression of the saddle and coming nearer to a right or slightly acute angle at its jointure with the part of the cover portion **30** adjacent the sidewalls or skirt of the funnel.

The pour spout **16** is an elongated tapered barrel which is the frustum of a hollow cone having the narrower or outlet end thereof defining a dispensing or pour spout outlet opening **36**. The spout also has a larger or inlet end **38** which connects with the body portion **14** so the spout extends out from near one side of it at a low angle of about 20°. The spout has the lower part of its inlet end circumference joined to the front upper edge of body portion **14** and has the rest of its inlet end circumference joined with the spout inlet covering **38** so that there is a passage from the body portion into the spout through the lowermost quadrant of spout inlet covering **34**. Together, these portions also define an enlarged pour spout inlet opening **40** in open communication with the outlet **32** from the funnel body portion. It will be seen that this construction provides a large chamber **44** defined by the inlet covering and the inlet end **38** of the spout which accommodates for pouring surges of the container contents flowing into the spout. The upper portion of this chamber also provides a reserve of airspace for flow of air up into the container into the other aperture formed in it by the cutting means **18**, which assists rapid dispensing of the container contents through spout outlet opening **36**.

The body portion **14** has molded into the upper part of it a pair of spaced-apart front and rear cutter means positioning bosses **46**, **48**. The bosses hold and properly position the cutter means **18** aligned in the body portion so that in use of the device, the apertures **22** and tabs **24** will be cut in the container, also properly aligned, for efficient fluid dispensing and holding the container in the funnel. Each boss has a curved base **50** integrally molded to the interior surfaces of the skirt **28** and disposed generally as chords thereacross so they extend in opposed facing relationship inward into the interior of the body portion.

Each boss presents a pair of opposed and flat cutter means positioning faces **52** at front and rear which extend into the body portion and are joined to it as chordlike planes connecting with the inner curvature of the walls forming skirt **28**. Each of the opposed faces **52** is aligned so it intersects and is normal to the diameter across the interior of the cylindrical skirt that is aligned in the general front to rear direction of the axis of pour spout **16**. At their midareas, the faces extend radially with respect to the cylindrical skirt and face front and rear with respect to the body portion of the funnel.

Each of the bosses is formed as a pair of upper and lower shelves **54**, **56** spaced apart and connected at their outer edges by spacers **58** and the curved portions of the shelves and the spacers provide each boss with their arcuate base which is joined along the arc of curvature of the inner wall of the skirt which is subtended by the positioning faces **52**. The space between the shelves provides, centered between ends of the positioning faces, a vertically narrow and horizontally wide cutter means or insert locating slot **60** extended into the boss to the skirt wall and normal to its face **52**. Each upper shelf **54** provides a holding ledge for an end of the cutter means **18** and has a downwardly facing surface as an upper limit or stop for the said platetype cutter means or insert when it is assembled in the body portion **14**. Similarly, each lower shelf **56** provides a ledge having an upwardly facing surface for holding an opposite end of the cutter means so it is properly supported in place with one end in each slot **60** after assembly. Also, the downward facing surface of the lower shelf at each side of the body portion **14** provides a stop means or shoulder **62** available to be engaged by the rim of the container for evenly and fully seating it thereagainst in the funnel for optimum holding of it and dispensing (see FIGS. **1–3**). The slots **60** will be seen to terminate short of the sides of their respective flat faces a distance equal to the width of the spacers which provide for aligning the cutter means insert centered along the front to the rear diameter of the cylindrical skirt, and thus be directionally in alignment with the axis of the pour spout.

Inspection of FIGS. **1** through **3** also will reveal that each positioning face **52** has a recess cut out of the inner directed edge of the lower shelf **56** in the center area of the slot **60** which receives a downward directed cutting blade portion of the cutter means. The recess assists to center the blade portions so the slot and recess together provide a centered positioning and seating means for resiliently snapping into and out of place the cutter means **18** when it is inserted in the funnel body after molding of it and for removing the cutter means to sharpen it. The recess has an inward facing edge or surface which provides a vertically flat abutment means **66** which in some cases prevents distorting of the blade means out of proper position. It will be appreciated that the downward directed portions of the cutting blades define slots with adjacent wall portions of the cylindrical or annular skirt which receives the rim of the container or can when it is seated in the funnel.

A preferred embodiment of a cutter means **18** or cutter means insert is illustrated in FIGS. **4** through **6** and it is shown

in its assembled position inserted in the device 10 in FIGS. 1 through 3. Thus, cutter means 18 has a flat, narrow substantially rectangular support plate 68 and at each end of it is a cutting blade or means 70 supported therefrom in downwardly depending position. At each of the four corners of the plate, there is a small inserting means or seating prong 72, the pair at each end rounded at the outer corners and fitting into the slots 60 at the sides thereof. When so fitted, the blades 70 are seen to be adapted to fit between side edges of their respective recess 64 in the positioning faces 52 and are properly set in from the funnel sidewalls. Defined through the center of the plate is a rectangular plate aperture 74 which lightens the cutter means and provides a passage for fluid, e.g., liquid, to flow therethrough when dispensing the contents of the container 20.

The cutter blades at each end of the plate depend straight downwardly therefrom for a portion of their length a short but significant distance along that length so as each to provide a rectangularly flat holding or gripping surface 76 near opposite sides of the funnel. The blades are each provided below surface 76 with downward and inward tapered triangular sections 78, the upper edge of which joins to the lower edge of the respective gripping surface where sections 78 are then turned radially inward about 45° in opposed directions, that is, moving together in directions away from the skirt walls. Near each apex of the triangle, the blades are again turned about 45° to the sections 78 to extend straight downward to provide a puncturing point or tip 80 for straight-on, even piercing through the wall of the container as each blade is of the same length. It will be apparent that each blade is identical and disposed in mirror opposite arrangement. The entire blade portion including point, tapered portion, and the flat holding or gripping surface has its edges beveled and sharpened to provide a cutting edge which can cleanly slice through the container wall.

Thus, in using the device 10, the triangular sections 78 of the blades can first pierce, then cut the triangular apertures 22 through the container top with the baseline of each triangle located nearest the sides of the container and their opposite apices directed inwardly therefrom. With this cutting, the aperture tabs will remain depending and somewhat extended inward towards one another from the baseline of the triangles. After the triangular sections of the blades have formed the tabs from the material of the container top, continued downward pressure on device 10 forces the gripping surfaces 76 straight downward until the rim of the can is seated against the shoulders 62. This action forcibly turns the tabs radially downward and outward towards opposite sides of the container and their resilience clamps or grips the holding or gripping surfaces 76 between the tabs at each side of the funnel thereby holding the container, by oppositely balanced forces from each side thereof, tightly secured within the body of the funnel. The cutaway surfaces or tabs of the openings formed in the container can also hold the blades at their sides inwardly against outward directed edges of the openings or apertures, e.g., with resilient cutter means.

The funnel device with its now securely embraced container can, by grasping and inverting the funnel device—which can be done by one hand—carry with it the held container, and the pour spout then directed downward as desired which allows emptying the contents therefrom in a dispensing action.

An alternate embodiment of a cutter means or insert suitable for use with the funnel of this invention is shown in FIGS. 7 through 9 generally designated by the numeral 118. In these figures, three-digit designator numbers in the 100 series are used to indicate comparable parts to two-digit numbers in the preceding illustrated embodiment. In this embodiment, the cutter means can be inserted and held in the body portion 14 of funnel 12 by a support in the form of a resilient, split ring 168, which carries the pair of oppositely arranged cutting means or blades 170 spaced apart on either side of it. The ring is a narrow metal band and has provided at two opposite sides flattened areas or flats 172 from which the cutter blades depend and which space the blades inward of inner sidewalls of the body portion for proper positioning over the end of the container 20.

When no bosses 44, 46 are molded into the funnel, the ring 168 can be resiliently fitted or snapped into the upper part of the body portion 14 with the flattened areas aligned with the spout 16 and the curved portion of the ring engaging the curved inner surface of the skirt 28 body portion. This also aligns the cutter blades with the front-to-rear axial direction of the spout 16. The ring is insertable into device 10 in the same manner when the bosses 44, 46 are provided molded into the funnel, which is the preferred embodiment, in which case the flattened areas 172 fit against the flat positioning faces 52 of the bosses providing for aligning the cutter blades in proper position. Each flattened area at its downward directed edge also provides a pair of spaced-apart rim stops 174 for the container rim to seat evenly against at four locations about the rim which properly positions it to be held symmetrically balanced in the funnel device. In some cases, the ring type of cutter means has distinct advantages, e.g., by its fully open area defined with its periphery. This can be helpful, where liquids to be poured are quite viscous, so that there is no impediment to their flow out of the container and into the bore of spout 16.

It will be appreciated that the ring-type cutter means or insert 168 can be cemented in place in the funnel and in some instances other types of attaching and/or holding means can be used to secure it in place, as for example, by screws, brads, snaps and the like or one or more ledges can be provided above or below its assembled portion in the skirt for holding the ring after snapping it into place.

The funnel of this invention is preferably formed of high impact resistant, moldable plastic material, for example, polycarbonate material. Other materials can be used such as formaldehyde resins, acrylic materials and the like, or it can be formed of metal. Also, the cutter means are preferably formed of suitable carbon steel, it having been found that an SAE 1045 carbon steel having a carbon content or from about 0.40 percent to about 0.50 percent is preferable, and the entire plate-type or ring-type insert and their cutting blades can be formed of such steel. Also, the ring or plate support portions of the inserts can be separately formed and the cutting blades attached thereto by suitable fastening devices, e.g., rivets, clips, adhesives, or the like.

It will be appreciated that the flattened cover portion 30 provides for distributing pressure during cutting over a wide area of the user's palm when it is flattend for downward pressure and this optimizes pressure distribution over substantially the full area of the cover for even, balanced placing and forcing of the device with its blades down on a container. This provides a quick and, if desired, one-handed operation to open the container by simultaneous quick cutting through both sides of the top of it, thus effecting a secure gripping of the container to the device. The flattened cover portion lying over the major top area of the body portion of the funnel has been found satisfactory when it slopes up at about 10° to about 30° from the horizontal and preferably at about 20°.

It will also be appreciated that the large size of the pour spout at its inlet end, particularly when its diameter approaches that of the cylindrical body, together with the low angle it makes with the body portion of the funnel provide a large handgrip area to one side of the body as a handle for grasping the device to operate it with one hand to fit it over a container and force the cutter means fully into the container end wall. It has been found that when the axis of the pour spout extends out of the body portion at an angle to the horizontal of from about 15° to about 25°, and preferably about 20°, this action is optimized.

The funnel of this invention can advantageously be formed by molding as a single piece or in parts later joined together in which case the cutter means can be inserted in place before final joining of the parts. The device can also be formed advantageously either with or without the bosses. When these positioning bosses are used, they can be made integrally with

the funnel or separately attached by suitable means such as adhesives, rivets or other fastening means. When no positioning bosses are used, which somewhat simplifies construction, the cutter means can be inserted and held in the device by various fastening means, for example, by rivets, brads, cementing or the like, and other means of supporting and retaining the cutter means or insert in the device can be advantageously employed such as by use of molded ledges, clips, brads, or the like.

It will be appreciated that various modifications of this invention may occur to those having the benefit of the teachings herein shown and described.

What is claimed is:

1. A can-opening dispensing funnel comprising an annular skirt adapted to be positioned down over and enclose the upper sidewall portions of a can, a cover portion having a first wall portion having a flatly rounded arcuate configuration connected to the upper periphery of said annular skirt and extending upwardly therefrom above the top of the can and covering the major portion of the area of the top of the can to constitute a surface for the application of flattened hand pressure to attach the funnel to the can, said cover portion also including a second arcuate wall portion connected to said first wall portion and angling steeply upwardly and outwardly with respect to said first wall portion, a tubular elongated pour spout having an enlarged inlet end connected to said second wall portion and extending upwardly and outwardly therefrom, said pour spout having a centerline forming an obtuse angle with the centerline of said skirt, said cover portion defining a chamber above and extending over the entire top of the can and essentially below said pour spout and communicating with said pour spout when the funnel is in operative position, said annular skirt having a pair of downwardly depending cutter means positioned between therein, each of said cutter means having a portion thereof angularly disposed towards the vertical centerline of said skirt and adapted to pierce and then to cut openings in the can when said skirt is positioned over the top of the can and the cutter means are pressed into the top surface thereof, each of said openings providing direct communication between the interior of the can and said chamber, the inlet end of said pour spout being substantially larger than the openings provided in the can by said cutter means, each cutter means having a vertical upper surface adapted to grip the cutaway surfaces of each of the openings cut in the can so as to hold it in fixed position in the dispensing funnel for discharge of contents of the can through the pour spout.

2. The can-opening dispensing funnel of claim 1 in which the pair of cutter means are oppositely confronting cutting blades spaced apart in the upper portion of the skirt and in directional alignment with the axis of the pour spout.

3. The can-opening dispensing funnel of claim 1 in which the vertical upper surfaces are parallel with respect to each other and define with the adjacent sidewall of the skirt a pair of slots adapted to receive the rim of a can when each of the vertical upper surfaces is in gripping relationship with its respective cutaway surface after cutting the openings in the can.

4. The can-opening dispensing funnel of claim 1 in which each of said downwardly depending cutter means has a vertical flat portion and a tapered flat portion integrally connected thereto, said tapered flat portion being inclined towards the centerline of said skirt for a portion of it with the remaining portion extending vertically downward and forming at its free end a piercing point.

5. The can-opening dispensing funnel of claim 4 in which the edges of each said cutter means are beveled to form a cutting edge to enhance the cutting of the openings in the top of said can.

6. The can-opening dispensing funnel of claim 1 in which said cutter means comprises a cutting blade support means operatively connected to the upper portion of the inner surfaces of the wall of the skirt, and a pair of downwardly depending cutting blades attached to said cutting blade support means spaced from the wall of said skirt and each having a flat position, a portion angularly disposed towards the centerline of the annular skirt, and a downwardly extending vertical portion terminating in a piercing point, each of said cutting blades being the mirror image of each other.

7. The can-opening dispensing funnel of claim 6 in which said inner wall of said annular skirt has means for receiving and holding said cutting blade support means.

8. The can-opening dispensing funnel of claim 6 in which said cutting blade support means is a flat plate with said cutting blades depending therefrom, said flat plate defining an opening therein between the depending cutting blades.

9. The can-opening dispensing funnel of claim 6 in which said cutting blade support means is a ringlike support member attached to the inner surface of the wall of said annular skirt and having said downwardly depending cutting blades fixedly supported thereby.

10. The can-opening dispensing funnel of claim 9 in which said ringlike support member is split to provide for spring insertion of said support member before its attachment to the inner surface of the wall of said skirt.

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