A beverages holder, comprising a disposable cup (200) for containing the beverage and a carrier (100) for enabling a user to carry or support the cup, the holder being configurable in at least two of:

a first configuration in which a portion (5,12) of the carrier (100) supports a base (201) of the cup;

a second configuration in which the cup (200) is suspended beneath part (5,12) of the carrier; and

a third configuration in which the carrier (100) provides a band around the cup (200).
Fig 25

Fig 26
CONFIGURABLE CUP HOLDER

[0001] This invention relates to a holder comprising a cup or receptacle and a carrier for the cup or receptacle and also to such a carrier and a blank or flat for forming such a carrier. In particular, but not exclusively, this invention relates to a holder wherein the receptacle is a cup for vendable goods such as goods purchased from a retail or consumer store or outlet, for example, goods such as hot beverages, snacks and so on.

[0002] Conventionally hot beverages are supplied to consumers in a disposable cardboard, polystyrene or plastics cup. Such cups can be difficult for the consumer to carry, especially when they contain a hot beverage.

[0003] Some vendors of hot beverages provide the consumer with a paper napkin to wrap around the cup so as to protect the consumer’s fingers. However, although a paper napkin may protect the consumer’s fingers, it can also make the cup more difficult to hold securely and the paper napkin may easily be displaced or dropped.

[0004] Other vendors package the hot beverage containing cup in a rectangular carrier bag which may be made from paper, card or plastic, for example. Such carrier bags only enable transportation of the hot beverage containing cup and the cup has to be removed from the carrier bag to enable the hot beverage to be consumed. Furthermore, the bases of such bags do not provide a stable standing area for the hot beverage containing cup because they tend to be soft and flexible. This means that there is a likelihood of spillage of hot liquid from the cup.

[0005] Other vendors provide outer sleeves which consist of an endless band of corrugated card, recycled paper stuff or similar material that is supplied in a flattened form and opened out by the vendor or consumer so as to enable the hot beverage containing cup to be placed within the sleeve. Such sleeves do serve to protect the consumer’s fingers and assist the consumer in carrying the cup. They do, however, also transmit heat.

[0006] Each of the above described prior arrangements provides only one way of carrying the cup or receptacle.

[0007] In one aspect, the present invention provides a holder comprising a cup or receptacle and a carrier for the cup or receptacle, the holder being capable of adopting at least one or more of the following:

[0008] a first configuration in which a base of the cup or receptacle is supported by a portion of the carrier;

[0009] a second configuration in which the cup or receptacle is suspended beneath a portion of the carrier, for example the cup may extend through an aperture provided by the carrier; and

[0010] a third configuration in which the carrier provides a loop or band extending around the circumference of the cup.

[0011] In one aspect of the present invention there is provided a cup or receptacle carrier which is convertible between a flat strip or flat pack configuration for storage and transportation and a three-dimensional shape in which the carrier partially or fully encloses the cup or receptacle.

[0012] In one aspect of the present invention a cup or receptacle carrier provides a handle for enabling a user to hold the cup or receptacle without necessarily touching the side or wall of the cup or receptacle.

[0013] In one aspect, the present invention provides a carrier formed from a flat sheet or blank having edge portions and fold lines for enabling the sheet or blank to be formed into an endless or continuous loop having a three-dimensional shape. In an embodiment, the endless or continuous loop is formed without the aid of gluing enabling cheap manufacture.

[0014] As used herein, the term “fold-lines” includes any line about which the material forming the flat sheet or blank can be folded including, for example, seam lines or weakened or perforated areas.

[0015] In one aspect, the present invention provides a cup carrier, comprising an endless loop or band wherein part of the endless loop or band provides an aperture defining portion for receiving a cup or receptacle. The aperture defining portion may comprise an actual aperture, slits, perforations or a push out section. In an embodiment, the carrier provides a handle opposed to the aperture defining portion.

[0016] In one aspect the present invention provides a holder comprising a cup and a carrier for the cup, wherein the holder can adopt:

[0017] a first configuration in which a base of the cup is supported by a portion of the carrier;

[0018] a second configuration in which the cup is suspended beneath a part of the carrier, and

[0019] a third configuration in which the carrier surrounds a peripheral side wall of the cup, wherein the carrier provides a handle graspable by a user in at least one of the above configurations, preferably in both said second and third configurations.

[0020] In one aspect, the present invention provides a carrier formed from a flat or blank wherein the flat or blank defines at least one handle portion which projects from an edge of the flat or blank or is defined within the body of the flat or blank. A double thickness handle can be provided to provide increased strength by providing two handle portions which can be grasped simultaneously by the user in use of the carrier. The handle portions may be provided at, for example, opposite edges of a flat or blank forming the carrier. The flat or blank may be formed with coupling means in addition to the handle. In an embodiment, the coupling means may cooperate with the handle.

[0021] In an embodiment, a cup carrier comprises a flat or blank having opposite edge portions, a handle portion and a handle receiving portion, whereby, when the flat or blank is manipulated to bring the two edge portions together, the handle can be passed through the handle receiving portion so as to form the carrier. The flat or blank may be formed with fold lines to facilitate manipulation of the flat or blank to form the carrier. The fold lines may be such that the carrier adopts a rectangular or polygonal cross sectional shapes. An additional locking tab may be provided on at least one end portion.

[0022] In one aspect the present invention provides a holder comprising a cup or receptacle and a carrier, wherein
the carrier comprises a flat or blank having a cup or receptacle receiving region and wherein, in order to use the holder, the cup or receptacle is placed on the receiving area and the flat or blank manipulated to bring edge portions of the blank together above the cup or receptacle to define a handle graspable by a user. In an embodiment, the receiving region comprises an aperture defining region so that the cup or receptacle is suspended from the carrier when the carrier is transported by a user. Generally, the side walls of the cup or receptacle will be gripped by the aperture by taking advantage of the fact that such cups or receptacles taper towards their bases. This provides a gimballed-like support reducing the possibility of spillage even if the carrier swings as the user moves about. Such a carrier may be inverted so that, when the cup or receptacle is received through the aperture, a portion of the carrier provides a support for the base of the cup or receptacle and the region of the carrier bounded the aperture surrounds the peripheral side walls of the cup or receptacle. Where a handle or handle portion is provided on the carrier, then this will lie flat against the carrier in this configuration.

[0023] A carrier embodying the invention may be provided with a moulded plastic handle or a carrying cord in place of a handle for facilitating carrying and may be placed in a conventional paper carrier bag.

[0024] In one aspect, the present invention provides a cup carrier comprising a flat or blank having fastening or coupling means provided on opposite end portions of the flat or blank the fastening means being arranged to couple together to define the carrier, one of the fastening means comprising a tab and the other a slit or slot for receiving the tab. Additional cooperating tabs and slots may be provided.

[0025] A carrier embodying the invention may be provided with other forms of fastening or coupling means such as self-adhesive areas or regions or other forms of interlocking or coupling means.

[0026] A carrier embodying the invention need not necessarily be provided with coupling means, for example the carrier may be initially formed (for example moulded) as an endless band or loop.

[0027] A carrier embodying the invention may be provided with handle portions that a user squeezes together to define an endless loop. One of the handle portions may be provided with a locking flap to lock the handle portions together.

[0028] A carrier embodying the invention may be formed from a flat or blank having regions projecting from the main area of the flat or blank to define side walls of the carrier in use.

[0029] Generally, a carrier embodying the invention will enable at least part of a cup or receptacle carried by the carrier to be viewed.

[0030] A carrier embodying the invention is adapted to be provided as a flat or two-dimensional shape and to be manipulated to provide a three-dimensional carrier by the vendor or purchaser of the goods contained in the cup or receptacle to be received the carrier.

[0031] A holder embodying the invention capable of adopting the first and second configurations mentioned above may be sized so as to enable a plurality of cups or receptacles to be received by the carrier. In such a case, the carrier may be provided with a corresponding number of cup or receptacle receiving portions which may be of the same or different sizes or shape to enable different shapes and sizes of cup or receptacle to be accommodated, for example both a cup containing a beverage and a sandwich or other take away food container.

[0032] Embodiments of the present invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0033] FIG. 1 shows a first embodiment of a flat or blank for forming a carrier in accordance with the present invention;

[0034] FIGS. 2 and 3 are perspective views showing, respectively, two different forms of a carrier formed from the blank shown in FIG. 1;

[0035] FIGS. 4 to 6 are perspective views showing three different configurations of a holder embodying the present invention comprising a carrier formed from the blank shown in FIG. 1 and a cup or receptacle;

[0036] FIGS. 7 to 29 shows various different modified forms of the flat or blank shown in FIG. 1;

[0037] FIGS. 30 to 35 show flats or blanks suitable for forming carriers for carrying 2, 3, 4, 3, 3 and 4, respectively, cups or receptacles; and

[0038] FIG. 36 shows another flat or blank for forming a carrier.

[0039] Referring now to the drawings FIG. 1 shows a first embodiment of a carrier or container 100 in accordance with the present invention.

[0040] The carrier is in the form of a blank or flat which may be formed from, for example, a single sheet of card or paper which may be plain or corrugated. Other materials which hold their shape when folded or formed into an endless band or loop may be used such as, for example, synthetic rubber such as neoprene, rigid or semi-rigid plastic materials such as rigid polyolefins, for example polypropylenes or polyvinylchloride (PVC) and other semi-rigid plastic materials. Leather or reinforced or stiffened cloth may also be used. Where card, paper, cardboard or other relatively non-waterproof material is used, then these may be coated with a synthetic or other water resistant coating to improve wear. Decorative, advertising or informative printing may be applied to the blank and other decorating techniques such as inscribing, foiling or embossing may be used.

[0041] Generally a large number of blanks will be cut from a single sheet of the material using conventional cutting procedures.

[0042] As shown in FIG. 1, the blank is generally rectangular and has first and second elongate side edges 2 and 15 and relatively shorter end or edge portions 1 and 14.

[0043] A cup or receptacle receiving region is provided generally equi-distant from the edge portions 1 and 14. In this embodiment, the cup receiving region 8 is defined by a central circular aperture 8a, a larger concentric circular fold line 8b and a plurality of slits 8c provided in the region between the circular aperture 8a and the circular fold line 8b.
The slits 8c radiate outwardly from the common centre of the circular aperture 8a and the circular fold line 8b and are equally angularly spaced about the periphery of the circular fold line 8b.

[0044] The end portion 1 is shaped so as to provide a handle portion 1a which is, in this embodiment, a generally D or U shaped handle portion. The other end portion 14 is rounded or curved and a slit 13 is provided adjacent the end portion 14 for receiving the handle portion 1a. In this embodiment, the end portions 1 and 14 also carry coupling means in the form of a tab 16 arranged to be received in a slit 17. As shown, the slit 17 is provided at the end portion 1 in from the handle portion 1a while the tab 16 is provided in the end portion 14 closer to the end of the end portion than the slit 13. The tab is defined during the blank cutting process so that the majority of the periphery of the tab is separated from the remainder of the end portion but so that the tab remains attached to the remainder of the blank and can be pivoted or bent out of the plane of the blank.

[0045] The blank is also formed with four fold lines, 4, 6, 10 and 11 which separate the blank into a first portion 3, a second portion 5, a third portion 7, a fourth portion 9 and a fifth portion 12. As shown, the fold lines extend perpendicularly of the side edges 2 and 15.

[0046] The carrier is intended to enable a user or consumer to carry or support a cup or receptacle containing goods obtained or purchased from a supplier. In particular, the carrier is primarily intended for enabling a consumer to carry or support a disposable, generally cardboard or plastics, cup containing a hot beverage such as tea or coffee.

[0047] As will be explained below, the carrier 100 can be used with a cup or receptacle to define a number of different holder configurations. In each of these configurations, the blank is formed into an endless loop by folding the blank about the fold lines 4, 6, 10 and 11, passing the handle 1a through the slit 13 and passing the tab 16 through this slit 17.

[0048] Various configurations of holder using the carrier 100 will now be illustrated with reference to FIGS. 2 to 6.

[0049] FIG. 2 shows the carrier 100 formed into an endless band so that the cup receiving region 8 is uppermost and the handle portion 1a is positioned flat against the fifth portion 12. In this orientation, the first and fifth portions 3 and 12 form a base of the carrier while the second and fourth portion 5 and 9 form the side walls of the carrier and the third portion 7 forms a top of the carrier. The base of the carrier may be supported in the hand of a user or on a support surface such as a table, work top or desk. FIG. 5 shows a first configuration of a holder in accordance with the present invention wherein a cup 200 (shown in dotted line) is placed in the circular aperture 8a so that a base 201 (not visible in FIG. 5) of the cup is supported on the base formed by the first and fifth portions 3 and 12 of the carrier 100. In this configuration, the carrier ensures that the cup 200 is held upright. This configuration is particularly advantageous for supporting the cup on a support surface in a moving vehicle such as a train or boat and also for supporting the cup on a desk, table or work top to reduce the likelihood of the cup being knocked over spilling hot liquid on to the surrounding surface.

[0050] FIG. 4 shows a second configuration for the holder. In this configuration, the orientation of the carrier 100 is inverted so that the first and fifth portions 3 and 12 form a top and the third portion 7 forms a base of the carrier. In this configuration, the cup 200 is, by virtue of its tapering shape, gripped by the slitted portion of the carrier so as to be suspended. In order to adopt this holder configuration, the cup 200 is first placed within the aperture 8a and then the end portions 1 and 14 of the carrier are brought together to define the endless loop or band. In this configuration a user or consumer can carry the holder by the handle portion 1a of the carrier 100 securely without having to touch the walls of the cup 200 which might have become hot due to the hot liquid within the cup. This holder configuration also provides a gimbal like effect so that the carrier can be swung without spillage from the cup. This reduces the possibility of spillage of the cup when user is walking or otherwise moving around holding the carrier or the cup is being held by the user in a moving vehicle such as a car, train or boat. Also, this holder configuration enables the user to have greater freedom of movement and to carry more goods.

[0051] FIGS. 3 and 6 illustrate a third configuration that the holder can adopt. In this configuration the carrier 100 is rotated through 90 degrees from the orientation shown in FIG. 4 so that the first to fifth portions 3, 5, 7, 9 and 12 all form side walls and the handle portion 1a projects outwardly from the carrier. As shown in FIG. 6, in this holder configuration, the cup 200 is received within the carrier 100 so that the carrier forms an endless band or loop around the peripheral side walls 203 of the cup. In this configuration the holder enables the user to carry or transport the cup by grasping the handle 1a and enables the user to drink without touching the hot cup.

[0052] A user or consumer may use any one or more of the holder configuration shown in FIGS. 4 to 6. Thus, for example, a user may carry the hot beverage from the place of purchase using the holder configuration as shown in FIG. 4 and then, to enable the beverage to be consumed, may release the coupling mechanism of the carrier 100, remove the cup 200, recouple the end portions of the carrier 100 and then reposition the cup 200 within the carrier 100.

[0053] It will, of course, be appreciated that various modifications may be made to the carrier 100. Thus, for example, the cup receiving region 8 may be defined in different ways, different forms of coupling mechanism other than the handle portion 1a and slit 13 or tab 16 and slit 17 may be adopted and the location and/or number of the fold lines may be adjusted so as to accommodate cups having different aspect ratios. Indeed, the fold lines may be omitted so that the carrier forms a circular or elliptical rather than rectangular shape in cross sections. Also, the handle portion 1a may be omitted, in which case a user would grasp the top of the
carrier in the holder configuration shown in FIG. 4 and grasp the endless loop or band formed by the carrier in the configuration shown in FIG. 6.

[0054] In the embodiment shown in FIG. 1, the side edges 2 and 15 are straight and parallel to one another. This reduces the amount of waste material when a large number of blanks are cut from the same sheet and so should reduce the overall costs of the carrier 100. In addition, the curved end portion 14 may be shaped so as to further reduce the amount of waste material by, for example, making its shape the converse of the shape of the handle portion 1a or by providing a straight edge portion.

[0055] FIGS. 7 to 29 illustrate various modifications of the carrier 100 shown in FIG. 1.

[0056] The carriers 100 shown in FIGS. 7 and 8 are identical to that shown in FIG. 1 except that the side edges 2 and 15 are no longer parallel. In FIG. 7, the blank tapers towards the end portion 14 while in FIG. 8 the blank tapers towards the end portion 1.

[0057] FIG. 9 shows a blank that is identical to that shown in FIG. 1 apart from the fact that, in this case, the cup receiving region 8 is defined by first and second parallel slits 8a spaced apart in a direction perpendicular to the side edges 2 and 15 and a third transverse slit or weakened portion 8c which can be broken when pushed by a user or by a cup to define two flaps 8f and 8g which are pushed outwardly to define an aperture for receiving the cup.

[0058] FIG. 10 shows a further modification of the blank shown in FIG. 1. This blank differs from that shown in FIG. 1 in that the receptacle receiving region 8 does not provide an aperture but provides four pairs of spaced apart slots 80a and 80b with end fold lines 80c extending between adjacent edges of each pair of slots and an intermediate fold line 80d extending between centre points of the slots which coincide with the fold line 6. In this example, when the carrier is made up the regions defined by the slots 80a and 80b are pushed inwards to define right-angled strips that serve to retain the receptacle in place. This embodiment is intended primarily for receiving box-like receptacles such as sandwich packets rather than cups and the slitted regions serve to locate the receptacle securely on the base of the carrier 100 when the holder is in the configuration shown in FIG. 4. This carrier may also be used in the holder configuration shown in FIG. 6 to hold a cup rather than a box-like receptacle but would not generally be used to hold a cup in the configuration shown in FIGS. 4 and 5.

[0059] FIG. 11 shows another carrier which differs from that shown in FIG. 1 in that the cup receiving region 8 consists of a single circular aperture 81 and the fold lines are omitted so that, in this example, when the end portions 1 and 14 are coupled, the carrier forms an endless band of circular or elliptical cross sections.

[0060] FIG. 12 shows another modification of the carrier 100 shown in FIG. 1. In this modification the handle 1a is omitted and the number of slits in the area between the circular aperture 8a and the circular fold line 8b is reduced. As mentioned above, the edge of the end portion 14 may be straight rather than curved which would further reduce the amount of waste material which a plurality of blanks are cut from a single sheet.

[0061] The modified carrier shown in FIG. 13 is, like the carrier shown in FIG. 10, intended to receive a box-like receptacle so that, in the holder configuration shown in FIG. 4, the box like receptacle is supported on the base portion 7 rather than suspended therefrom. This carrier may also be useable to carry cups in the configuration shown in FIG. 6. In addition, the carrier shown in FIGS. 10 and 13 may also be useable to carry cups in the configuration shown in FIG. 5 if the receptacle supporting region 82 is bounded by a weakened portion or is otherwise fragile so that an aperture can easily be formed to receive a cup. It will, of course, be appreciated that, once this is done, the carrier may no longer be used to support a box-like receptacle on its base when in the configuration shown in FIG. 4. FIG. 13 also shows a differently shaped handle portion 1a.

[0062] FIG. 14 shows a modified carrier which differs from that shown in FIG. 1 solely by virtue of the shape of the handle portion 1a (the slits have been omitted in the cup receiving region 8 in the interest of simplicity).

[0063] FIG. 15 shows a carrier that differs from that shown in FIG. 11 in that the straight edges 2 and 15 are replaced by wavy edges while FIG. 16 shows a carrier that differs from that shown in FIG. 1 (again the slits 8c in the cup receiving region 8 have been omitted in the interest of simplicity) by virtue of the fact that the fold lines 6 and 10 are curved rather than straight.

[0064] FIG. 17 shows a carrier that differs from that shown in FIG. 1 in that the fold lines 4, 6, 10 and 11 are at an acute angle to the edges 2 and 15 with the slit 13 being parallel to the fold lines. FIG. 18 shows a further modification in which the fold lines 4 and 6 are no longer parallel to the fold lines 10, 11 and the slit 13 while FIG. 19 shows a variation in which the side edges 2 and 15 are not perpendicular to the base of the carrier 100 and FIG. 20 shows a variation in which the side edges 2 and 15 both bow outwardly. A further variation would be for these two edges to both bow inwardly, of course. These variations enable different decorative or visual effects to be achieved without affecting the overall function of the carrier.

[0065] FIG. 21 shows a blank for a carrier which differs from that shown in FIG. 1 in that each of the end portions 1 and 14 has a handle portion 1a and 14a and no separate coupling means is provided. With this blank, a user brings the two handle portions 1a and 14a together and the carrier 100 is formed into an endless loop by virtue of the user gripping and holding together the two handle portions 1a and 1b. This facilitates rapid returning of the carrier to its flat form and interchange between the configurations shown in FIGS. 4 and 6. Although there is no fastening mechanism between the handle portions 1a and 14a in this blank, it may still be possible to adopt the holder configuration shown in FIG. 5 because the weight of the cup or receptacle 200 pressing the handle portions down onto the supporting surface will hold the end portions 1 and 14 of the carrier together. A fastening mechanism may be provided by, instead of cutting out the D-shape portion 14d, defining an arcuate cut line 14e and a fold line 14f forming a D shaped flap 14g which can be received through the cut-out 1b of the other handle portion 1a and pivoted about the fold line 14f to hold the two handle portions together.

[0066] FIG. 22 shows a blank for a carrier which differs from that shown in FIG. 1 (again the slits 8c are omitted
from the cup receiving region 8 for simplicity) by the provision of side regions 9b projecting transversely from the fourth portion 9 and each having an end flap 9a. With this blank, when the carrier is in the configuration shown in FIG. 4 or 5, the side portions 9b may be bent to 90° relative to the portion 9 and the end flaps 9a tucked inside the end portion 5 so as to define side walls for the carrier which may reduce the possibility of any accidental spillage from the cup 200 soiling the clothes of the user in the configuration shown in FIG. 4 and may, in both the configuration shown in FIG. 4 and in FIG. 5, assist in retaining heat in the receptacle 200. This carrier may also be used in the configuration shown in FIG. 6 by folding the side portions with their end flaps to the inside of the carrier.

[0067] FIG. 23 shows a variation of the blank shown in FIG. 22 in which four flaps 9a to 9d are provided each formed with a slit 9c. When this blank is made up into the carrier, the flaps 9a and 9c and the flaps 9b and 9d are folded towards one another and one slit is received by another to define side walls.

[0068] FIG. 24 shows a blank for a carrier that is identical (the slits 8c in the cup receiving region 8 are omitted in the interest of simplicity) to that shown in FIG. 1 except that the relative dimensions of the portions 3, 5, 7, 9 and 12 have been adjusted to enable accommodation of receptacles of different aspect ratio. This would provide the carrier with relatively high side walls in the configuration shown in FIG. 4 so that the cup 200 may stand proud of the base.

[0069] FIG. 25 shows a blank for a carrier which is identical to that shown in FIG. 1 (the slits 8c in the cup receiving region 8 are omitted in the interest of simplicity) except that the handle portion 1a has a mirror image handle portion 1b connected to a reinforcing portion 19. The mirror image handle portion 1b is connected to the handle portion 1a by a fold line or weakened portion 18 allowing the mirror image handle portion 1b to be folded back down on top of or beneath the handle portion 1a so as to reinforce the handle portion.

[0070] FIG. 26 shows a blank for a carrier that differs from the blank shown in FIG. 1 (again the slits in the cup receiving region 8 are omitted in the interest of simplicity) in that the slits 13 through which the handle portion 1a passes is supplemented by tabs 20 provided on either side of the slit 13 and arranged to fold over the end portion 1 on either side of the handle portion 1a when the end portions 1 and 14 are coupled together. These tab portions 20 serve to increase the robustness of the coupling mechanism.

[0071] FIG. 27 shows a further variant which, like the variant shown in FIG. 25, has a mirror image handle portion 1b (in this drawing fold lines are shown as dashed). In this embodiment, the handle portion 1b is provided with a tab 1c, which, when the handle portion 1b is folded back on the handle portion 1a, is wrapped around the handle portion 1a to hold the two together. In addition, the score or cut lines used to define the slit 13a also define small tabs 20a on either side of the slit 13a which function in the same manner as the tabs 20 shown in FIG. 26. FIG. 27 also shows a different way of forming the tab 16a by defining a curve, generally semi-circular, cut in the blank. Also, in this embodiment, a number of the flap portions 8c defined by the slits 8c are removed so as to reduce the resistance to insertion of a cup into the aperture 8a. Also, the end portion 14 is shown as generally straight so as to reduce wastage of the material when a number of blanks are cut from the same sheet.

[0072] FIG. 28 shows a further variant in which fold lines are shown as dotted lines and cut through lines are shown as solid lines. This variant differs from that shown in FIG. 1 in that: the handle portion does not project from an end portion of the blank but is formed as a cut out 1a′ within the body of the portion 9; the cup receiving region is defined by a circular fold line 8b and a number of arcuate and straight cut through lines 8i to define, again, a number of flaps 8j that are pressed outwardly by insertion of the cup to define an aperture; and the slit and tab coupling arrangement shown in FIG. 1 is replaced by a slot 17a and tabs 16a and 16b.

[0073] In this embodiment, when the end portions are coupled together, the tabs 16a and 16b are folded round respective edges of the portion 1c of the end portion 1 between the edge of the end portion and the slot 17a. When a cup is received in the cup receiving region the flaps 8j extend over a greater portion of the cup side wall than in the carrier shown in FIG. 1 and help to return heat in the cup.

[0074] FIG. 29 shows a variant of the blank shown in FIG. 28 in which the flaps 8j of the cup receiving region 8 have been shortened by defining an inner circular aperture and in which the handle portion is provided by both a cut-out handle portion 1a and a projecting handle portion 12a which, when the carrier is made up, can be grasped together by the user to provide a stronger handle.

[0075] It will be appreciated that many different combinations of the modifications shown in FIGS. 7 to 29 may be applied to the carrier shown in FIG. 1. In addition, the carrier need not have a releasable coupling means. Rather, the first and second end portions have self-adhesive regions or may be permanently fixed together to define the endless loop or band. This would allow the carrier to be used interchangeably in the configuration shown in FIGS. 5 and 6 and in the configuration described above where a box like receptacle is rested on the base of the carrier in the configuration similar to that shown in FIG. 4. However, if a releasable coupling mechanism is not provided, then, if the carrier is coupled into the configuration shown in FIG. 4, the carrier will need to be destroyed to remove a cup. This provides a tamper-proof feature for retail outlets.

[0076] Each of the carriers described above is designed to carry a single cup or receptacle. FIGS. 30 to 35 show carriers capable of carrying multiple cups or receptacles. These carriers are designed to be able to adopt the configuration shown in FIG. 4 or FIG. 5 but not the configuration shown in FIG. 6.

[0077] The carriers shown in FIGS. 30 to 32 are based on the carrier shown in FIG. 1 with the exception, that in each case, the coupling mechanism comprising the tab 16 and 17 is doubled up so that each carrier has two tabs and two slits and in the case of FIGS. 30 and 31 the width of the carrier is increased so as to accommodate two and three, respectively, cup receiving regions 8 and in the case of the carrier shown in FIG. 32, both dimensions of the portion 7 are increased so as to accommodate four cup receiving portions.

[0078] The multiple cup or receptacle carriers shown in FIGS. 33 to 35 are based on the carrier shown in FIG. 25. In the case of the carrier shown in FIG. 33, again the tab and slot arrangements 16 and 17 is doubled up and the width of
the carrier is increased to accommodate three cup receiving regions. In the case of the carriers shown in FIGS. 34 and 35, the dimensions of the portion 7 of the carrier are increased to accommodate 3 and 4 respectively, cup receiving areas.

[0079] FIG. 36 shows a variant of the blank shown in FIG. 23. The rectangular flaps are replaced by generally elliptical flaps 9a to 9d inset into the body of the blank and having inner edges defined by fold lines 90. When this carrier is made up, the curved fold lines 90 cause the side walls or flaps 9a to 9d to bow inwardly. Again, these flaps, serve to retain heat. This modification can be applied to any of the carriers described above.

[0080] In the above described embodiments, the carrier may be provided with an integral handle. As another possibility, the carrier may be provided with apertures for receiving a carrying cord.

[0081] In the majority of the embodiments described above, the cup or receptacle receiving region provides an aperture through which at least part of the cup may be passed. The aperture may be present in the carrier or may be defined by a frangible portion which is removed by pressure from, a user or by pressing the cup on to the blank or an already-formed carrier. As another possibility, the cup or receptacle receiving area need not necessarily define an aperture but may define a depression into which the cup or receptacle is seated. In this case, if the holder configuration shown in FIG. 4 is to be adopted, then the side walls defined by the portions 9 and 5 of the blank should have sufficient height to accommodate the cup once received in the depression.

[0082] In one aspect, the present invention provides a cup carrier formed from a blank into an endless band or loop which, in use, bounds or defines an aperture which receives the cup so that the band or loop surrounds and grips the cup and which also has an integrally provided handle for enabling a user to carry the cup.

[0083] In one aspect, the present invention provides a cup carrier formed from a blank into an endless loop having an integral handle, with a portion of the carrier defining a cup receiving region in which, in use, the cup sits beneath the handle.

[0084] In one aspect, the present invention provides a cup carrier formed from a blank into an endless loop defining a cup receiving region for supporting a cup in an upright position on a surface.

[0085] Although a carrier embodying the present invention is intended primarily for enabling a user to carry or transport disposable cups or receptacles containing a hot beverage, the carrier may also be used with disposable or non-disposable cups or other receptacles for containing cold beverages, take away food packets or containers (for sandwiches, pasta, salad etc) snacks and other consumer products including, for example, gardening items such as bulbs or the like to be planted.

[0086] In any of the above described examples, the receptacle or cup receiving region will be shaped and sized to receive a particular cup or receptacle and need not necessarily be circular but could be rectangular, for example. Where a carrier provides more than one receptacle or cup receiving region then these may have different sizes and/or shapes enabling for example both a beverage cup and a take away food packet or container to be carried.

1-41. (canceled)

42. A carrier for enabling a purchaser to support or carry a receptacle containing purchased goods, the carrier being formed from a carrier blank as an endless loop with a portion of the wall of the loop being formed with an aperture, aperture defining region or depression to provide a receptacle receiving region, the carrier being deformable to provide at least two of:

a first configuration in which the receptacle is receivable by the receptacle receiving region so that a base of the receptacle is supported on a surface region of the endless loop opposed to the receptacle receiving region, thereby enabling the receptacle to be supported in an upright condition;

a second configuration in which the receptacle is receivable by the receptacle receiving region and the surface region provides a handle for enabling the purchaser to carry the carrier so that the receptacle is suspended below the handle; and

a third configuration in which the receptacle is receivable within the endless loop so that the wall of the endless loop forms a band around the receptacle and provides a handle so that the receptacle can be carried by the purchaser grasping the handle.

43. A carrier according to claim 42, configurable in the third configuration.

44. A carrier according to claim 42, configurable in at least the second and third configurations.

45. A carrier according to claim 42, configurable in the first configuration, wherein the receptacle receiving region provides an aperture defining region for providing an aperture through which part of the receptacle can extend in the first configuration so that the base of the receptacle is supported by the surface region opposed to the receptacle receiving region.

46. A carrier according to according to claim 42, configurable in the second configuration, wherein the receptacle receiving region provides an aperture defining region for providing an aperture through which part of the receptacle can extend in the second configuration so that the receptacle is suspended from the carrier in the second configuration.

47. A carrier according to claim 42, configurable in at least the first and second configurations, wherein the carrier receptacle receiving region provides an aperture defining region for providing an aperture through which part of the receptacle can extend so that the base of the receptacle is supported by the surface region opposed to the receptacle receiving region in the first configuration and through which part of the receptacle can extend in the second configuration so that the receptacle is suspended from the carrier.

48. A carrier according to claim 45, wherein the aperture defining region comprises a frangible portion.

49. A carrier according to claim 45, wherein the aperture defining region comprises an aperture pre-formed in the carrier blank.

50. A carrier according to claim 45, wherein the aperture defining region comprises a plurality of slits or slots.
51. A carrier according to claim 45, wherein the aperture defining region comprises an aperture bounded by a slitted periphery.

52. A carrier according to claim 42, wherein the receiving region comprises a depression.

53. A carrier according to claim 42, wherein the carrier has a plurality of receptacle receiving regions each adapted to receive a receptacle.

54. A carrier according to claim 42, wherein first and second ends of the carrier blank forming the carrier have respective coupling portions which are coupled together to provide the endless loop.

55. A carrier according to claim 54, wherein at least one of the coupling portions also provides the handle.

56. A carrier according to claim 54, wherein one of the coupling portions comprises a slot and the other comprises a tab or projection which extends through the slot to form the endless loop.

57. A carrier according to claim 54, wherein each coupling portion comprises a slot and a projection or tab with the slot and projection or tab of one coupling portion cooperating with the projection or tab and slot, respectively, of the other coupling portion to form the endless loop.

58. A carrier according to claim 54, wherein the coupling portions comprise end portions of the carrier blank that are adhered together to form the endless loop.

59. A carrier according to claim 54, wherein the coupling portions comprise at least one selected from a group consisting of: cooperating tabs or projections, cooperating projections and slits, cooperating handle portions and a slit and a cooperating handle portion.

60. A carrier according to claim 54, wherein the coupling portions comprise handle portions holdable together by the purchaser to define the endless loop and the handle.

61. A carrier according to claim 42, wherein the surface region provides the handle as an integral handle.

62. A carrier according to claim 61, wherein the handle is provided by a cut out formed in the endless loop.

63. A carrier according to claim 42, wherein the carrier blank has fold lines that facilitate deformation of the carrier to enable adoption of said at least two of said first to third configurations.

64. A carrier according to claim 42, wherein the carrier blank has fold lines that define separate wall portions of the carrier and that facilitate deformation of the carrier to enable adoption of said at least two of said first to third configurations.

65. A carrier according to claim 42, further comprising projecting side portions for closing open sides of the carrier during use.

66. A carrier according to claim 42, wherein the carrier is formed from at least one of a group consisting of: paper, card, cardboard, a plastics material, corrugated paper, plastics, cardboard, rubber, reinforced cloth, and leather.

67. A holder comprising a carrier in accordance with claim 42, and a receptacle adapted for operable engagement with the carrier.

68. A holder according to claim 67, wherein the receptacle is a beverage cup.

69. A holder according to claim 67, wherein the receptacle is a food container.

70. A holder according to claim 67, wherein the receptacle is disposable.

71. A blank adapted to form a carrier according to claim 42, wherein the blank has opposed end portions and an intermediate portion, the intermediate portion having an aperture, aperture defining region or depression to provide a receptacle receiving region, wherein the blank is provided with an integral handle portion that projects from one end portion and is arranged to be received by a slit, provided by the other end portion so as to couple the end portions of the blank together to form an endless loop in use.

72. A blank according to claim 71, wherein there are two handle portions and one of the handle portions defines a securing element receivable through an aperture in the other handle portion.

73. A blank according to claim 71, wherein the receptacle receiving region comprises at least one of the slots, cut outs and fold lines for defining a depression for receiving a receptacle in use.

74. A blank according to claim 71, wherein the receptacle receiving region is an aperture defining region.

75. A blank according to claim 74, wherein the aperture defining region comprises at least one of a frangible section, slit and an aperture.

76. A blank according to claim 71, wherein the blank has a plurality of receptacle receiving regions each arranged to receive a receptacle.

77. A blank according to claim 71, having fold lines that facilitate deformation of a carrier formed from the blank.

78. A blank according to claim 71, having fold lines that define a plurality of portions each providing a respective different wall region of the carrier in use and that facilitate deformation of a carrier formed from the blank.

79. A blank according to claim 71, further comprising projecting side portions, for closing open sides of the carrier during use.

80. A blank according to claim 71, wherein the blank is formed from at least one of a group consisting of: paper, card, cardboard, a plastics material, corrugated card, plastics or cardboard or paper, rubber, reinforced cloth and leather.

81. A vendable goods holder, comprising:

- a receptacle for receiving goods and a carrier for enabling a purchaser of the goods to carry or support the receptacle, the holder being configurable in at least two of:
  - a first configuration in which a portion of the carrier supports a base of the receptacle;
  - a second configuration in which the receptacle is suspended beneath part of the carrier; and
  - a third configuration in which the carrier provides a band around the receptacle.

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