

- [54] **SPOON CONSTRUCTION**
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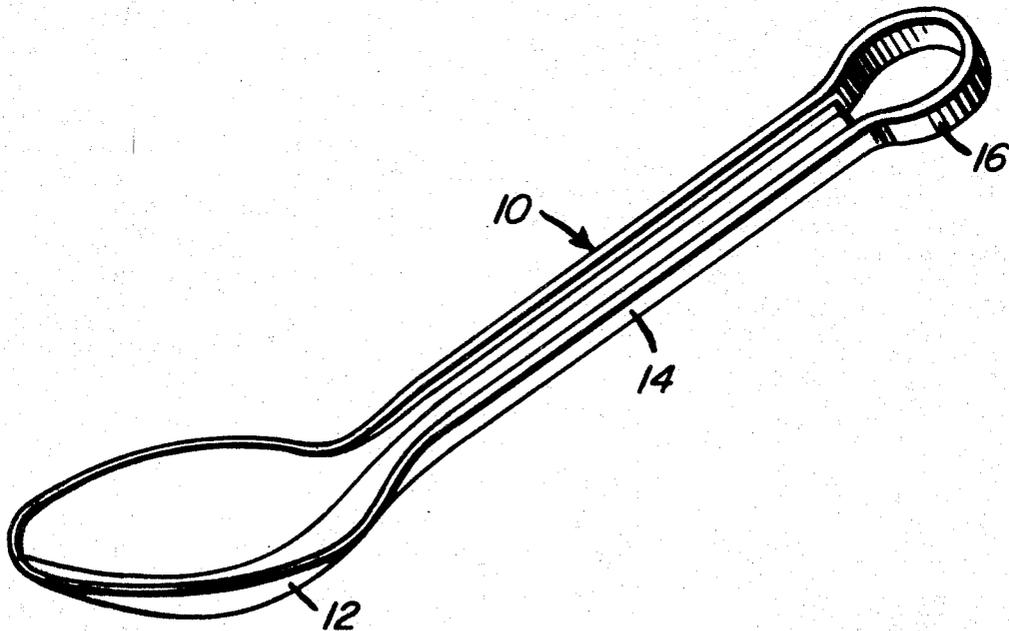
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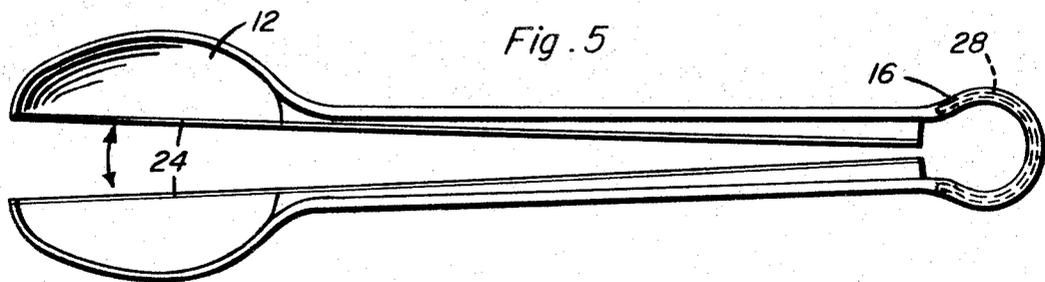
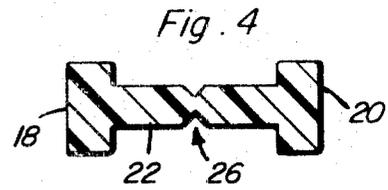
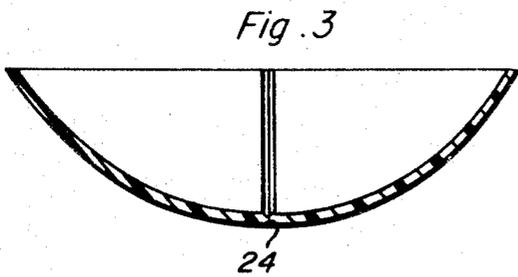
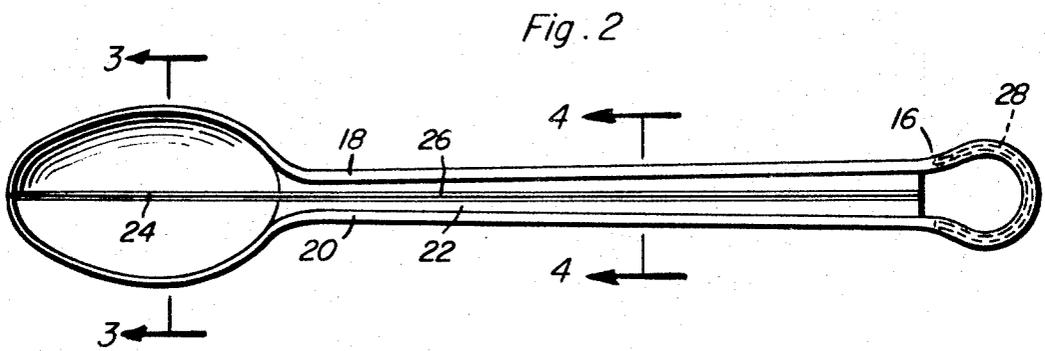
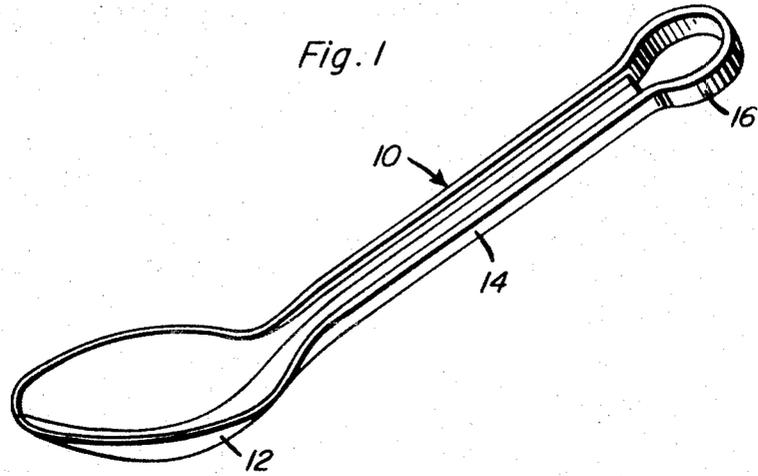
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A multi-purpose, one-piece spoon construction of molded plastic including integral bowl and handle portions with a centrally disposed break line extending therealong, and a hinge portion at the end of the handle portion to permit flexing of the spoon halves when separated along the break line to provide a bifurcated configuration for tong-like manipulation.

**12 Claims, 5 Drawing Figures**





## SPOON CONSTRUCTION

The present invention is generally related to spoon constructions and, more particularly, to an improved multi-purpose spoon which may be easily converted from a solid to a bifurcated configuration.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a novel multi-purpose spoon which may be easily converted from a solid to a bifurcated configuration to aid in eating, cutting, or manipulation of various foods or the like.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a unique multi-purpose spoon with an elongated break line of weakened material which may be easily flexed and broken to permit tong-like operation of the spoon halves to handle various foods.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a versatile multi-purpose spoon which is durable, easy to manipulate, and of disposable, one-piece molded plastic construction which is relatively inexpensive to manufacture.

These together with other objects and advantages which will become subsequently apparent reside in the details of construction and operation as more fully hereinafter described and claimed, reference being had to the accompanying drawings forming a part hereof, wherein like numerals refer to like parts throughout, and in which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the multi-purpose spoon construction of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a plan view of the spoon construction as shown in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is an enlarged sectional view taken along section 3—3 of FIG. 2.

FIG. 4 is an enlarged sectional view taken along section 4—4 of FIG. 2.

FIG. 5 is a plan view of the spoon construction in its bifurcated configuration.

Referring now, more particularly, to the drawings, the multi-purpose spoon construction of the present invention is generally indicated by the numeral 10 and includes a concave bowl portion 12 connected to an elongated handle portion 14, the end of which is provided with a generally U-shaped flexible hinge portion 16. Preferably, the spoon is made of one-piece molded construction formed from plastic materials such as polystyrene, polyethylene, or the like. Any one of the well-known plastic materials may be utilized depending upon the degree of rigidity or flexibility desired.

The handle portion is comprised of a pair of elongated, oppositely disposed flanges 18 and 20 which are connected together by way of a transverse web 22 of decreased thickness. While web 22 is illustrated as extending approximately the entire length of the handle portion, this is not essential and may be varied, as required. The flanges 18 and 20 provide additional strength to the handle portion and permit easy manipulation with a user's fingers. Preferably, the flanges are co-extensive with the U-shaped hinge portion 16 and are of approximately the same thickness.

The spoon is manufactured in a one-piece molded construction as best illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2. The spoon and handle portions are provided with weakened areas of decreased thickness indicated at 24 and 26 which define an elongated break line extending along the center line of the spoon. It will be appreciated that the spoon may be converted from its solid configura-

tion to a bifurcated configuration by merely flexing along the weakened areas to provide a break in the material.

The bifurcated configuration of the multi-purpose spoon construction is illustrated in FIG. 5. It will be appreciated that since the hinge portion 16 is relatively thick in construction and co-extensive with flanges 18 and 20, adequate strength is maintained along the length of each of the spoon halves during flexing and manipulation. While the spoon construction in its solid configuration is suitable for obtaining liquids in the bowl portion 12, the bifurcated configuration is suitable for utilizing the bowl halves in a tong-like manner to grasp various food to aid in eating, serving, or the like. Preferably, the weakened break line area 24 along bowl portion 12 is formed from a pair of oppositely disposed V-shaped indentations which serve as cutting edges when the spoon is utilized in the bifurcated configuration. By grasping the food between the bowl halves and squeezing inward on the handle portion, a cutting action may be achieved when handling relatively light, soft foods.

It will also be appreciated that the spoon in its bifurcated configuration may be utilized for manipulation through the opening of a container to grasp food such as olives or cherries which are suspended in a syrup or liquid or to remove the fertilized portion of an egg which heretofore have been difficult to handle with conventional spoon constructions. The multi-purpose spoon of the present invention may be molded in various colors and may be provided in slightly different shapes to best suit the particular application. A resilient leaf spring 28 or the like may be molded into the spoon in its compressed condition to provide outwardly directed biasing forces acting on the spoon halves. The spoons may be mass produced at a relatively low cost such that they may be sold as a disposable or throw-away item. As such, the spoons may be utilized for picnics or events catering to large numbers of people where disposable utensils are most desirable.

The foregoing is considered as illustrative only of the principles of the invention. Further, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction and operation shown and described, and accordingly all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the invention.

What is claimed as new is as follows:

1. A multi-purpose spoon comprising a concave bowl portion, an elongated handle portion connected at one end to said bowl portion, and a hinge portion of relatively flexible material connected to and integral with the opposite end of said elongated handle portion, a relatively thin weakened area extending through said bowl portion to define a break line for separating said bowl and handle portions into halves, said hinge portion connecting said handle portion halves when separated along said break line to permit flexing of said spoon in a bifurcated configuration.

2. The structure set forth in claim 1 wherein said weakened area extends along the center of said elongated handle portion.

3. The structure set forth in claim 2 wherein said hinge portion is generally U-shaped in configuration.

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4. The structure set forth in claim 3 wherein said spoon is of molded, one-piece construction.

5. A multi-purpose, one-piece spoon comprising a concave bowl portion, an elongated handle portion integral with said bowl portion, said handle portion including a pair of oppositely disposed flanges extending along its length and a transverse web interconnecting said flanges, and a hinge portion integral with the end of said handle portion, said bowl portion and said web having co-extensive weakened areas defining a break line for separating the spoon into a bifurcated configuration.

6. The structure set forth in claim 5 wherein said hinge portion is co-extensive with said oppositely disposed flanges.

7. The structure set forth in claim 6 wherein said weakened areas are relatively thin with respect to the surrounding web and bowl portion.

8. The structure set forth in claim 7 wherein said break line lies near the center line of said bowl and handle portions.

9. The structure set forth in claim 8 wherein said flanges are substantially thicker than said web to provide easy gripping and manipulation by a user.

10. The structure set forth in claim 7 wherein said spoon is of one-piece molded plastic construction.

11. The structure set forth in claim 10 wherein said weakened areas are defined by a pair of oppositely disposed V-shaped indentations which provide cutting edges when the spoon is in the bifurcated configuration.

12. The structure set forth in claim 5 wherein said spoon includes a resilient spring molded into said hinge portion in a compressed condition when said spoon is in a solid configuration.

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