PACKAGE HAVING MULTIPLE SEALED COMPARTMENTS

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A package has a pair of separated compartments for holding two elements. A container forms one compartment and has an opening with a flange there around. A first cover extends across and closes the opening by being attached to the flange. A second cover extends over the first cover and is attached to the flange, thereby forming a second compartment between the covers. A second element is contained within the second compartment. By detaching a first tab from the flange, the second cover attached to that tab can be removed from the container. The first cover is attached to a second tab of the flange and is removed by detaching the second tab from the container.
FIG. 6
PACKAGE HAVING MULTIPLE SEALED COMPARTMENTS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] Not Applicable

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

[0002] Not Applicable

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] 1. Field of the Invention

[0004] The present invention relates to containers having multiple separated, airtight compartments, and more specifically to such a container with one compartment suited for a liquid and another compartment for holding a non-liquid. This type of container is particularly suited for dispensing communion elements or other elements intended to be consumed or used with each other.

[0005] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0006] The sacrament of holy communion, which is celebrated in most Christian churches, involves partaking the bread followed by the wine or grape juice. These elements often require extensive, relatively time-consuming preparation and special serving plates or containers which are passed to the communicants and then collected. The communion elements (bread and wine or juice) are usually served consecutively inasmuch as they are taken in different parts of the service and it is relatively difficult for the average participant to hold both elements for an extended period of time.

[0007] In some faiths, a common cup of the wine is shared by the communicants. This poses a health problem as communicable diseases can be passed among the people taking communion despite various methods used to cleanse the lip of the cup between users. During winter months when colds are prevalent, worshipers may fear contracting communicable diseases and thus avoid taking communion.

[0008] When communion is provided to small groups, shut-ins or in remote areas, such as battlefield services for example, the necessary preparations can become difficult and the communion elements may not be readily available. Therefore, celebration of communion can become infrequent.

[0009] Compartmentalized, single-use containers, such as the one described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,246,106, have been devised which contain both the host and the liquid elements of communion. These prepackaged communion dispensers greatly simplified the preparations for serving communion and their disposable nature eliminated washing cups used in the religious service. However, many kinds of prior compartmentalized containers were difficult for worshipers to open, especially by elderly persons who suffer from arthritis and other conditions affecting manual dexterity. In addition such containers must provide airtight seals for the compartments so that the prepackaged communion elements will not spoil or leak out during storage prior to use.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] A package comprises a container that is sealed by a pair of covers to form two separate compartments for holding different elements. The container defines a first compartment for a first element and has an opening preferably with a flange extending there around. A first cover, such as a metallic foil for example, is releasably attached to the flange thereby closing the container. A second cover, such as a plastic film for example, extends over the first cover outwardly from the container and is releasably attached to the flange. A second compartment is formed between the first and second covers within which a second element received. The second cover is removable from the flange to provide access to the second element and the first cover is separately removable from the flange to provide access to the first element.

[0011] In a preferred embodiment, the flange of the container has a first tab to which a portion of the second cover is attached. The first tab is detachable from a remainder of the flange to aid in removing at least a portion of the second cover from the container and thereby gain access to the second element. A second tab of the flange has a portion to which the first cover is bonded. The second tab can be detached from a remainder of the flange to aid in removing at least a portion of the first cover from the container so as to access the first element.

[0012] The present package is particularly adapted for dispensing the host and liquid elements of the communion sacrament during a religious service, although it can be used to distribute medicine and other materials that are intended to be consumed or used with each other.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] FIG. 1 is a top view of a sealed package that has two separate compartments;

[0014] FIG. 2 is a side view of the sealed package;

[0015] FIG. 3 is a side cross-sectional view of the package showing details of a pair of covers attached to a container of the package;

[0016] FIG. 4 is cross sectional view showing removal of a cover to access one compartment of the package; and

[0017] FIG. 5 is cross sectional view showing removal of another cover to access the other compartment of the package; and

[0018] FIG. 6 illustrates a second embodiment of a sealed package with two compartments.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0019] With initial reference to FIGS. 1 and 2, a package 10 has two compartments 11 and 12 for holding two elements, such as the host and the liquid elements for communion. For example, a first compartment 11 may contain the wine or grape juice, while the second compartment 12 retains the host wafer. However, the package 10 also can be used to hold other liquids, such as medicines or water for example, a solid object, a powder, a granular material, or the like.
The package 10 comprises a container 14, preferably in the form of a cup that has a tapered side wall 15, a closed bottom 17 and an opening 18 at the top. The container 14 includes a flange 20 extending around the opening 18 and having a flat upper surface 22. For example, the container 14 may be fabricated of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic using a conventional molding process. The container 14 is adapted to hold a liquid first element 16 (FIG. 3), such as juice or wine which is an element of communion at a religious service. Although the exemplary container 14 has a circular cup shape with a generally round flange 20, the present inventive concepts can be used with containers having a wide variety of other shapes and configurations.

The flange 20 has a first tab 24 on one side of the opening 18 and a second tab 26 on the opposite side. The first tab 24 is defined by a first groove 28 scored in the underside of the flange 20 to provide a breaking line at which the first tab 24 can be detached from the remainder of the container 14, as will be described. Similarly, the second tab 26 can be detached from the remainder of the container 14 by breaking it along a second groove 30 scored in the underside of the flange 20.

With reference to FIG. 3, the opening 18 of the container 14 is sealed by first and second covers 32 and 34, respectively. The first cover 32 extends across the opening 18 and has a perimeter region 33 that is attached directly to the flange 20 by a suitable adhesive, thermal bonding, or other suitable means. For example, the first cover 32 comprises a sheet of a metallic foil or plastic, which as shown in FIG. 1 extends around the opening 18 so that the attachment to the flange 20 seals that opening. The first cover 32 may be colored to distinguish it from the container and a second cover to be described. The term "attached directly" as used herein means that the two respective components, such as the first cover 32 and the container 14, are connected to each other without any intervening component other than adhesive or other bonding agent. The attachment of the first cover 32 to the container flange 20 hermetically seals the first compartment 11. A portion 36 of the first cover 32 projects over and is adhered to the second tab 26, however the first cover does not extend onto nor is it attached to the first tab 24. The first cover 32 is depressed into the opening 18 of the container 14 so as to form the second compartment 12 within which a second element 40 is held. When the package 10 is used for communion purposes, the second element 40 is a host wafer.

The second cover 34 extends entirely over the second element 40 and the first cover 32 and is attached at its perimeter region 35 to the container flange 20. In the preferred embodiment of the package 10, the second cover 34 has a size and shape which conforms to that of the container flange 20 and thus covers the entire upper surface 22 of the flange 20. It should be noted that the second cover 34 extends over and is attached to both the first and second tabs 24 and 26. However, the two covers 32 and 34 are not attached to one another. The second cover 34 preferably is a transparent plastic sheet or film, for example, but may be a metallic foil or other suitable materials. By attaching the second cover 34 entirely around the periphery of the flange 20, a hermetic seal is created for the second compartment 12 in which the second element 40 is contained. In addition, such attachment of the second cover 34 provides a double seal for the first compartment 11 and the first element 16 residing therein.

The package 10 is made by first forming the container 14 by conventional methods. For example, a plastic container can be fabricated by any of several molding techniques, such as thermoforming from a plastic sheet. The first element 16, such as grape juice or wine for communion, is placed into the formed container 14. Then, adhesive, such as a hot glue for example, is applied to the inner portion of the flange 20 around the opening 18 and the first cover 32 is placed onto that portion of the flange, centered over the opening. This bonds the first cover directly to the container 14. Next the second element 40, e.g. the host wafer, is positioned onto the first cover 32 over the container opening 18. Then additional adhesive is applied to the outer portion of the flange 20 around the first cover 32 and the second cover 34 is placed over the entire assembly which bonds the second cover directly to the container. Alternatively, the adhesive may be applied to the entire upper surface 22 of the flange 20 at one time, provided that the working time of the adhesive is sufficiently long to accommodate application of both covers 32 and 34 onto the flange. As noted previously, other methods may be employed to attach the covers to the container.

The finished package 10 then is packed with other identical packages for shipment to a consumer, such as a church in the case of use as a communion cup.

When the present package 10 contains the elements for communion, a separate sealed package is distributed to each worshiper during the religious service. Such distribution may occur by passing a tray containing a plurality of packages 10 along the church pews as is commonly done in Protestant services, or by handling a package to each worshiper who walks to the front of the church as is common in Roman Catholic services. At the appropriate time, the worshiper opens the package 10 by grasping the container 14 in one hand and with the other hand, bending the first tab 24 up or down along the first groove 28 to detach the tab from the remainder of the container 14. As seen in FIG. 1, the first tab is designated by the number "1" printed on either that tab or the potion the second cover over that tab to indicate which tab to break-away first. With reference to FIG. 4, the worshiper then pulls the first tab 24 and the portion of the second cover 34 adhered thereto, upward away from the opening 18 of the container 14, as indicated by the arrow. This action opens the second compartment 12, exposing the second element 40. The worshiper then removes the second element 40, the communion wafer, from the package. Depending upon the procedure of the communion service, the worshiper may either consume a wafer immediately or hold the wafer while opening the package 10 further. As an alternative method to gain access to the second compartment 12 and to the second element 40 therein, a portion of the second cover 34 may not be attached to the first tab 24 allowing the used to grasp that portion and peel the second cover away from the container 14.

In order to access the first element 16, the grape juice or wine for communion, the worshiper continues to hold the container 14 in one hand while now grasping the second tab 26 between the thumb and index finger of the other hand. As seen in FIG. 1, the second tab is designated...
by the number “2” printed on either that tab or the portion the second cover 34 over that tab to indicate which tab to break-away last. The second tab 26 is then bent up and down along the second groove 30 to detach that tab away from the remainder of the container 14, as depicted in FIG. 5. The first cover 32 is then pulled upward away from the flange 20 of the container 14, releasing the adhesive bond there between. As the second tab 26 is pulled upward as indicated by the arrow, the portion of the second cover 34 that is attached thereto is pulled along with that second tab 26. The separation of the first cover 32 from the container 14 continues until a large enough opening has been created to allow the worshiper to drink the liquid element 16. The first cover 32 may be completely removed from the container 14 or pulled sufficiently there from such that only a small portion that is adjacent the first groove 28 remains attached to the container. At that time, if the wafer has not been consumed previously, the worshiper may drip the host in the liquid within the first compartment 11 and then consume the host.

[0028] As an alternative method to gain access to the first compartment 11 and to the first element 16 therein, the user may penetrate the first cover 32 without removing its perimeter section from attachment to the container 14. In this event, the first cover does not have to be releasable from the container.

[0029] At the completion of the communion sacrament, the empty package 10 can be disposed of in a waste receptacle or placed in the appropriate holder on the rear of the pew in front of the worshiper.

[0030] With reference to FIG. 6, a second version of a dual compartment package 50 has a container 52 similar to container 14 in that it has a tapered side wall 54, a closed bottom and an opening at the top. A flange 56 extends around the top opening and has an outwardly projecting tab 57. However, the second container 52 has an annular rim 58 extending around the interior of the container and spaced inwardly from the flange 56.

[0031] The second container 52 is sealed by first and second covers 60 and 62. The first cover 60 has a perimeter attached directly to the interior, annular rim 58 by a suitable adhesive, thermal bonding, or other suitable means. This forms a first compartment 64. The first cover 60 has a pull tab 63 by for grasping by a use to remove the first cover from the second container 52. This forms an inner, first compartment 64. The second cover 62 is attached at its perimeter directly to the container flange 56 and extends over the tab 57, thereby forming an outer, second compartment 66 in the package 50.

[0032] The foregoing description was primarily directed to a preferred embodiment of the invention. Although some attention was given to various alternatives within the scope of the invention, it is anticipated that one skilled in the art will likely realize additional alternatives that are now apparent from disclosure of embodiments of the invention. Accordingly, the scope of the invention should be determined from the following claims and not limited by the above disclosure.

1. A package comprising:
   a container for receiving a first element and having an opening with a flange extending around the opening;
   a first cover releasably attached to the container thereby closing the opening; and
   a second cover extending over the first cover outwardly from the container and releasably attached directly to the container, wherein a compartment is formed between the first cover and the second cover within which a second element is received;

wherein second cover is removable from the container to provide access to the second element, and the first cover is separately removable from the container to provide access to the first element.

2. The package as recited in claim 1 wherein the first cover is releasably attached to the container.

3. The package as recited in claim 1 wherein the container includes a flange extending around the opening and to which the first cover and the second cover are attached.

4. The package as recited in claim 1 wherein the first cover comprises a sheet of material with a perimeter region attached to the container.

5. The package as recited in claim 1 wherein the second cover comprises a sheet of material with a perimeter region attached directly to the container.

6. The package as recited in claim 1 wherein the container has a first tab to which a portion of the second cover is attached, the first tab being removable from a remainder of the container to aid in removing at least a portion of the second cover from the container.

7. The package as recited in claim 1 wherein the container has a second tab to which a portion of the first cover is attached, the second tab being removable from a remainder of the container to aid in removing at least a portion of the first cover from the container.

8. The package as recited in claim 1 wherein the container has a first groove that aids in detaching the first tab, and has a second groove that aids in detaching the second tab.

9. The package as recited in claim 1 further comprising indicia associated with one of the first tab and the second tab and indicating which tab to detach first in order to open the package.

10. The package as recited in claim 1 wherein the container has a tab to which a portion of the first cover is attached, the tab being removable from a remainder of the container to aid in removing at least a portion of the first cover from the container.

11. The package as recited in claim 1 wherein said first element comprises a liquid and the second element comprises a solid.

12. The package as recited in claim 1 wherein said first element comprises one of communion wine and communion grape juice, and the second element comprises a communion wafer.

13. The package as recited in claim 1 wherein the first cover and the second cover are each attached directly to the container by adhesive.

14. The package as recited in claim 1 wherein the first cover comprises a metallic foil.

15. The package as recited in claim 1 wherein the second cover comprises a plastic film.

16. The package as recited in claim 1 wherein the first cover and the second cover each comprises a sheet of material.
17. A package comprising:
   a container for receiving a first element and having an opening with a flange extending around the opening, the flange having a removable first tab and a removable second tab;
   a first cover closing the container by releasable attachment to the flange and particularly to the second tab; and
   a second cover extending over the first cover and releasably attached to the flange and particularly to the first tab at locations surrounding the first cover, wherein a compartment is formed between the first cover and the second cover within which a second element is received;

   wherein second cover is removable from the flange by detaching the first tab to provide access to the second element, and the first cover is removable from the flange by detaching the second tab to provide access to the first element.

18. The package as recited in claim 17 wherein the flange has a first groove that aids in detaching the first tab, and has a second groove that aids in detaching the second tab.

19. The package as recited in claim 17 further comprising indicia associated with one of the first tab and the second tab and indicating which tab to detach first in order to open the package.

20. The package as recited in claim 17 wherein the first cover comprises a sheet of material with a perimeter region attached directly to the flange of the container.

21. The package as recited in claim 17 wherein the second cover comprises a sheet of material with a perimeter region attached directly to the flange of the container.

22. The package as recited in claim 17 wherein said first element comprises a liquid and the second element comprises a solid.

23. The package as recited in claim 17 wherein said first element comprises one of communion wine and communion grape juice, and the second element comprises a communion wafer.

24. The package as recited in claim 17 wherein the first cover and the second cover are each attached directly to the container by adhesive.

25. The package as recited in claim 17 wherein the first cover comprises a metallic foil.

26. The package as recited in claim 17 wherein the second cover comprises a plastic film.

27. The package as recited in claim 17 wherein the first cover and the second cover each comprises a sheet of material.

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