

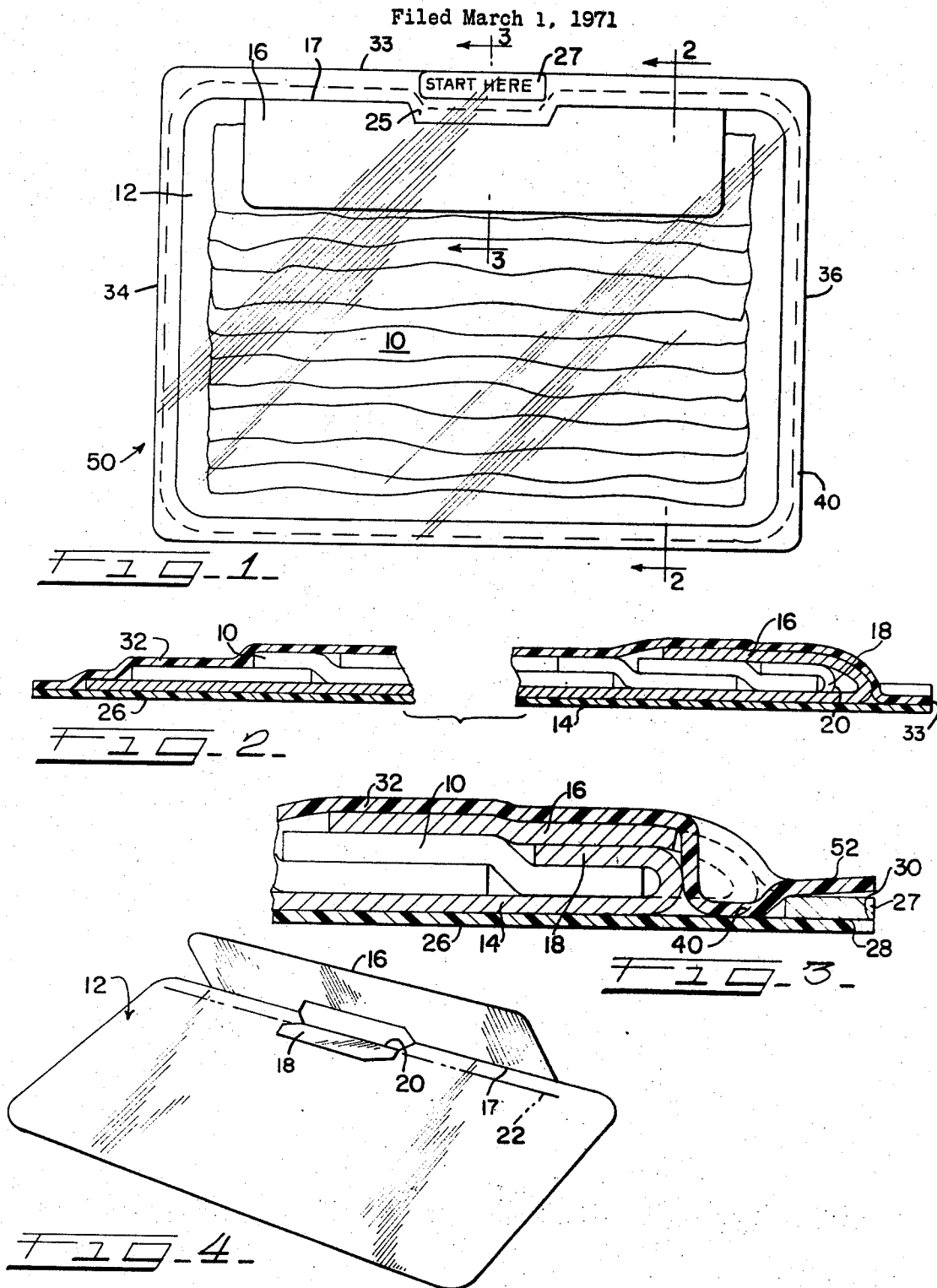
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EASILY OPENED BACON PACKAGE

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## EASILY OPENED BACON PACKAGE

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### ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Sliced bacon, placed on a fold-over bacon board, is hermetically enclosed within a peripheral seal between opposing sheets of packaging film. The fold-over board includes a lower support panel and a flap, joined to the panel along a fold line. The fold line is discontinuous at a recess die-cut from the fold line. The cut-out die-cut board material remains attached to the bacon board and is folded under the board flap to provide an inner restrictive barrier for preventing bacon from reaching the recess area. An easy opening tab is positioned between the opposing films outside the seal area but within the recess region to provide for a smooth, continuous edge of the package. The inner restrictive barrier prevents inadvertent placement of a grease "print" in the seal region due to contacting of bacon with the film in that region. Such a grease print would interfere with the formation of a hermetic seal on manufacture, or with reclosing the package after opening.

Sliced bacon, and the like, is conventionally placed in a shingled array on a fold-over board having a relatively small flap along one edge thereof which folds down over a small portion of the product. The flap provides a label surface upon which important source-of-goods and other information can be imprinted and viewed without turning over the package. Use of transparent packaging films to enclose such a package enables the consumer to inspect the enclosed product. A method and equipment for manufacturing such packages enclosed between transparent films are disclosed in U.S. Pat. 3,083,106, issued Mar. 26, 1963 to E. C. Sloan et al., which patent is assigned to a common assignee with this application. The disclosure of the aforementioned patent is incorporated herein by reference thereto.

Placement and utilization of opening-tabs outside a marginal peelable seal between opposing films is known. However, it would be highly desirable to provide such opening-facilitating tabs which do not extend substantially beyond the normal edge of the package, and yet are large enough to be readily grasped for opening the package.

It would be highly desirable to provide such a package which is reclosable. It is imperative that no product be trapped in between the opposing sheets in the region to be sealed. Moreover, it is important that no grease-containing products such as bacon, or the like, contact that region, even momentarily. Even momentary contact of a grease-containing product, such as bacon slices or the like, with the seal region leaves a grease "print" analogous to a fingerprint, and such a print will subsequently interfere with formation of a hermetic seal during manufacture of the package, or with subsequent reclosing, if previously opened by a consumer.

It is an object of this invention to provide a bacon package utilizing convenient opening tabs which need not extend beyond the normal edge of the package.

It is a further object of this invention to provide such a package in which risk of inadvertent formation of a grease "print" in the seal area adjacent the mouth of the package is virtually eliminated.

These and other objects which will be apparent hereinafter are all provided by the novel package of this invention which will be described in general, and by means of a preferred embodiment which is set forth in specific detail hereinafter, in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a top plan view of a completed package in accordance with this invention;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged fragmentary cross sectional view taken approximately along the line 2—2 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is an enlarged fragmentary cross sectional view taken approximately along the line 3—3 of FIG. 1; and

FIG. 4 is a reduced scale top perspective view of a fold-over bacon board which is usable in the package of this invention.

In the illustrated preferred embodiment, bacon slices 10 are placed in shingled array on a fold-over bacon board, generally indicated at 12 (FIG. 4). The fold-over board 12, in accordance with this invention, comprises a main support panel 14 and fold-over flap 16 which is integral therewith. The fold line 17 between main panel 14 and flap 16 constitutes one edge of the fold-over bacon board 12. As indicated in FIG. 4 a portion of both the main support 14 region and fold-over flap region is die-cut and inwardly folded to provide restrictive barrier flap 18 which remains connected along its fold line 20 to bottom panel 14. An imaginary line 22, constituting an extension of fold line 20, is shown on FIG. 4. Folding of barrier tab 18 as indicated in FIGS. 2 and 3 leaves a cut-out or recess 25 extending interiorly from fold line or edge 17. As a shingled array of bacon slices 10 is placed on bottom panel 14, the slices are restricted from movement beyond imaginary line 22 by the restrictive flap or barrier 18, and hence are prevented from being exposed in cut-out or recess region 25.

The resulting partly assembled package comprising board 12 and slices 10 is placed over a bottom film 26 and a tab 27 is positioned on the upper face of film 26 to coincide with recess 25, though it is spaced from board 12.

The lower surface 28 of tab 27 includes an adhesive which enables tab 27 to adhere to film 26. Upper surface 30 of tab 27 is suitably coated, e.g., with a release agent of known type, to prevent adhesion of tab 27 to upper film 32. Thus bottom film 26 and top film 32 are positioned below and above the partially assembled package respectively and the films are hermetically joined along seal line 40 closely adjacent the periphery of board 12 by known method. In accordance with this invention, however, it is particularly important that the seal line 40 extend into the recess 25 between tab 27 and board 12.

In accordance with this invention, it is essential that, at least along edge 33, which is adjacent fold-line 17, seal 40 be openable, preferably peelable. It is preferred that a part of the adjacent edges 34, 36 be provided with an openable, and preferably a peelable, seal. Seal 40, around the remaining periphery of the package can be permanently joined, if desired.

Methods of, and materials for, forming peelable seals between packaging films are well known. Any known method of forming a peelable seal, and any known material used to form a peelable seal can be used in this invention. A particular method or material is not at the heart of this invention which relates to a novel combination of structural elements.

When it is desired that the resulting package 50 be opened for access to the enclosed product, tab 27 and opposed unattached marginal portion 52 of film 32 are grasped and are pulled apart to separate films 32 and 26 along seal 40 along openable edge 33. Although it is essential that at least edge 33 have an openable seal, it

3

is preferred that only a portion of the films be separated, e.g., up to approximately half of the package, whereby board 12 and bacon slices 10 thereon can be removed through the resulting opening. If less than all the slices 10 of bacon are taken from board 12, it is preferred that board 12 and remaining bacon slices 10 then be reinserted between the plastic sheets and hand pressure applied along seal line 40 to reclose the package. In a preferred embodiment, a peelable portion of seal 40 is resealable.

It is noted that presence of barrier flap 18 prevents shifting of bacon slices 10 into the region of recess 25 during the reinsertion thereby preventing formation of a grease print along seal line 40 in the region of recess 25. Moreover, larger flap 16 also shields the edge seal regions from a grease print, and serves as a convenient handling surface by which the package contents can be gripped by the consumer during removal or reinsertion of board 12 without touching the foodstuff.

In the illustrated embodiment only a single barrier flap 18 and opening tab 27 is shown. It is contemplated that modifications of the illustrated embodiment can be employed without departing from the invention. For example, a plurality of barrier flaps 18 and opening tabs 27 can be employed, if desired—the tabs 27 and recesses 25 can be positioned near the center, as illustrated or they can be positioned along one or both edges. In the illustrated embodiment, barrier 18 is fabricated by cutting a flap from across fold line 17 by a three sided cut, with barrier 18 remaining integral with base panel only along fold line 20. However, a two sided cut could be employed to leave the barrier joined to both top flap 16 and bottom panel 20 along fold lines analogous to line 20. Along an edge of the package, only a single cut would be required to accomplish a similar result in which a recess 25 and barrier 18 would be formed.

Therefore the illustrated embodiment and disclosure set forth herein is illustrative, and not limiting, unless defined as essential, and the invention is to be considered as limited only to the accompanying claims.

We claim:

1. In a package of sliced bacon wherein a plurality of bacon slices are positioned in shingled array on a bacon board, and wherein the bacon board comprises a lower support panel and a folded-over first flap joined to said lower support panel at a first fold line therebetween, which fold line constitutes an edge of the lower support panel, said fold-over bacon board and shingled array being enclosed between a pair of packaging material films hermetically joined together in a seal region closely adjacent the periphery of the bacon board, wherein edges of said films define the edges of the package, the improvement comprising: a product-restraining second flap cut from portions of said lower panel and said first flap across said first fold line, said second flap being joined to said bottom panel along a second fold line, said product-restraining second flap being folded back in the direction away from said first fold line and laying between said first flap and said bottom panel, thereby forming a recess at said edge, said recess extending into said bottom panel and said first flap; wherein one edge of said shingled array is positioned against said product-restraining second flap; wherein said hermetic seal region extends into the recess; wherein tab means for initiating opening of the enclosing films is secured to at least one of said films outside said seal region within said recess and wherein said tab does not extend substantially beyond the edge of said package; and wherein said seal region is openable by said tab means at least along that edge of the package which is adjacent said first fold line.

4

2. The improvement of claim 1 wherein the seal region is peelable along that portion thereof which is adjacent said fold line, and further continuously extending along a portion of the sides adjacent said that portion, and is nonpeelable along the remaining periphery of the package.

3. In a bacon package comprising a fold-over bacon board, an array of bacon slices positioned on said board, wherein the bacon board comprises an underlying bacon support panel and an integral fold-over flap joined to said panel along a fold line, said board and array being hermetically enclosed within a seal region between opposing sheets of packaging material film, wherein edges of the sheets define the edges of the package, the improvement wherein said board has a pair of cuts at a medial region of said fold line, said cuts defining edges of a product-restraining barrier which is cut from a portion of said support panel and from a portion of said flap in the region of said fold line, said barrier being joined to said panel, and being folded back between said flap and said support panel in the direction away from said fold line, and wherein said fold line is discontinuous, by reason of said cuts and folded-back barrier, to provide an edge recess adjacent said fold line between said cuts wherein said opposing sheets can contact each other in said recess; separating tab means positioned between said opposing sheets at an edge thereof at said recess, which tab means do not extend substantially beyond the edge of the package; and wherein the seal region passes between said tab means and said board in said recess; and wherein the seal region is openable by said tab means at least along an entire edge of the package which is adjacent said fold line.

4. The improvement of claim 3 wherein the seal region is peelable along that portion thereof which is adjacent said fold line, and further continuously extending along a portion of the sides adjacent said that portion, and is non-peelable along the remaining periphery of the package.

5. In a bacon board of suitable relatively stiff, flexible material consisting essentially of a suitably sized bottom support panel and a relatively narrow flap integral with said bottom support panel and foldable over a portion of said bottom support panel along a fold line which constitutes an edge of said bottom support panel, the improvement wherein said board includes a product-restraining barrier flap integral with said bottom support panel; and wherein the material from which said barrier flap is taken includes both a portion of said bottom support panel and said flap adjacent said original fold line thereby providing a recess from said edge extending into both said bottom support panel and said flap in the region of said barrier; and, wherein said product-restraining barrier is folded back in a direction extending away from the fold line.

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