CUSTOMIZABLE SERVING TRAY

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ABSTRACT
A customizable serving tray formed from a transparent thermoplastic and having a main portion including an upper side and a lower side, and four raised lateral portions. The main portion of the serving tray is formed from two parallel sheets of thermoplastic and an integral slot on the lower side for receiving a decorative insert, which may include a particular customized graphic thereon. Two of the raised lateral portions, on opposite sides of the main portion, may include apertures forming handles for supporting the serving tray. The remaining two raised lateral portions do not include apertures.
CUSTOMIZABLE SERVING TRAY

CLAIM OF PRIORITY

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/334,772 entitled “Customizable Serving Tray” which was filed May 14, 2010 and which is hereby incorporated by reference.

FIELD OF INVENTION

[0002] This invention relates to a customizable serving tray.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] In the prior art, customizable serving trays included decorative inserts which were placed upon the serving surface. However, the inserts for such trays were easily damaged by either catastrophic events such as spills or gradual degradation due to normal use because the surface of the insert was exposed. An object of the present invention is to provide a customizable serving tray having a decorative insert which is essentially immune to damage from both normal use and from catastrophic events. Still further objects and advantages will become apparent from a consideration of the following description and drawings.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] To achieve the foregoing objects, and in accordance with the purposes of the invention as embodied and broadly described herein, the present invention provides a serving tray formed from a transparent thermoplastic and having a main portion including an upper side and a lower side, and four raised lateral portions. The main portion of the serving tray is formed from two parallel sheets of thermoplastic and an integral slot on the lower side for receiving a decorative insert, which may include a particular customized graphic thereon. Two of the raised lateral portions, on opposite sides of the main portion, may include apertures forming handles for supporting the serving tray. The remaining two raised lateral portions do not include apertures, in the preferred embodiment.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005] The following detailed description, given by way of example and not intended to limit the present invention solely thereto, will best be understood in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

[0006] FIG. 1 is a right elevated perspective view of a customizable serving tray of the present invention;
[0007] FIG. 2 is a top view thereof;
[0008] FIG. 3 is a bottom view thereof;
[0009] FIG. 4 is a front view thereof;
[0010] FIG. 5 is a rear view thereof;
[0011] FIG. 6 is a side view thereof; and
[0012] FIG. 7 is right elevated perspective view of the customizable serving tray showing the insert removed.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0013] Referring now to the drawings and in particular FIGS. 1 and 2 show a customizable serving tray 10 formed from a transparent (or semi-transparent) thermoplastic, e.g., the thermoplastic polymethyl methacrylate, or PMMA, which is sold under many brand names including Lucite®. Tray 10 includes a central flat portion 60 and four raised lateral portions 20, 30, 40, 50. Two opposing lateral portions 20, 30 may include corresponding apertures 25, 35 forming handles for the tray 10. The shape of apertures 25, 35 should allow a user to adequately grip tray 10, but any shape may be chosen which meets this requirement. An insert 75 having a customized graphic 70 may be inserted underneath the central flat portion 60, as discussed in greater detail below. In this manner, a wide variety of different graphics may be provided by simply providing different inserts 75 with different graphics 70. In addition, since the insert 75 is provided underneath the central flat portion 60 and not on top thereof, insert 75 is effectively insulated from exposure to any spilled food or drink which is on the serving tray 10. Like reference numerals in the various drawings refer to the same corresponding structure and a description thereof is not provided in subsequent drawings.

[0014] FIG. 3 is a bottom view of tray 10, with the bottom of lateral portions 20, 30, 40 and 50 demonstrating the orientation of tray 10 in contrast with FIGS. 1 and 2. Tray 10 is actually formed from two parallel sheets of thermoplastic, a first sheet 100 which forms the central flat portion 60 of FIGS. 1 and 2 and a second sheet 90 which forms the exposed bottom surface. Sheets 100 and 90 are separated by a spacing and connected on three sides, the sides corresponding to lateral portions 20, 30 and 50, but are not connected at the side corresponding to lateral portion 40 so as to form a slot (not shown) for insertion of the insert 75 (not shown) into this spacing, which, as one of ordinary skill in the art will readily understand, allows insert 75 to fit snugly therein. A cutout 110, preferably formed as a semicircle, is provided in sheet 90 at a central point along the edge corresponding to lateral portion 40 to assist in the removal/insertion of insert 75.

[0015] FIGS. 4, 5 and 6 are front, rear and side views, respectively, of tray 10 which show the two sheets 90, 100 of thermoplastic and the slot 120 (FIGS. 5 and 6 only) formed for insertion of insert 75 (not shown) into the spacing therebetween. FIG. 5 also shows the cutout 110.

[0016] FIG. 7 is a right elevated perspective view which shows tray 10 with the insert 75 removed, and which demonstrates by way of the arrow 140 how insert 75 is inserted into the spacing between sheets 90 and 100 via slot 120 to provide a customized serving tray 10.

[0017] While the present invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to the preferred embodiments and various aspects thereof, it will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art that various changes and modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. It is intended that the appended claims be interpreted as including the embodiments described herein, the alternatives mentioned above, and all equivalents thereto.

What is claimed is:

1. A serving tray formed from a thermoplastic and comprising:
a main portion including an upper side and a lower side, wherein the main portion of the serving tray is formed from two parallel sheets of transparent thermoplastic separated to form an integral slot having an opening on the lower side for receiving a decorative insert; and
four raised lateral portions.

2. The serving tray of claim 1, further comprising a decorative insert inserted into the integral slot and having a customized graphic thereon.
3. The serving tray of claim 1, wherein two of the raised lateral portions, on opposite sides of the main portion, include apertures forming handles for supporting the serving tray.

4. The serving tray of claim 1, further comprising a cutout formed in the lower parallel sheet of the main portion adjacent to the slot opening for assisting in the insertion and/or removal of the decorative insert.

5. The serving tray of claim 4, wherein the cutout is formed as a semicircle in the lower parallel sheet of the main portion.

6. The serving tray of claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic is transparent.

7. The serving tray of claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic is semitransparent.

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