United States Patent

[11] **3,550,809**

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[54] **COMBINED CONTAINER AND DISPENSER HAVING AN EXPANSIBLE WRAPPER**
18 Claims, 10 Drawing Figs.

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **221/25,** 206/56; 229/87
[51] **Int. Cl.** **B65d 85/74**
[50] **Field of Search** ..... 221/70, 25; 206/56A, 56A3, 56A4, Lifter; 53/(Inquired); 229/87F, 87M

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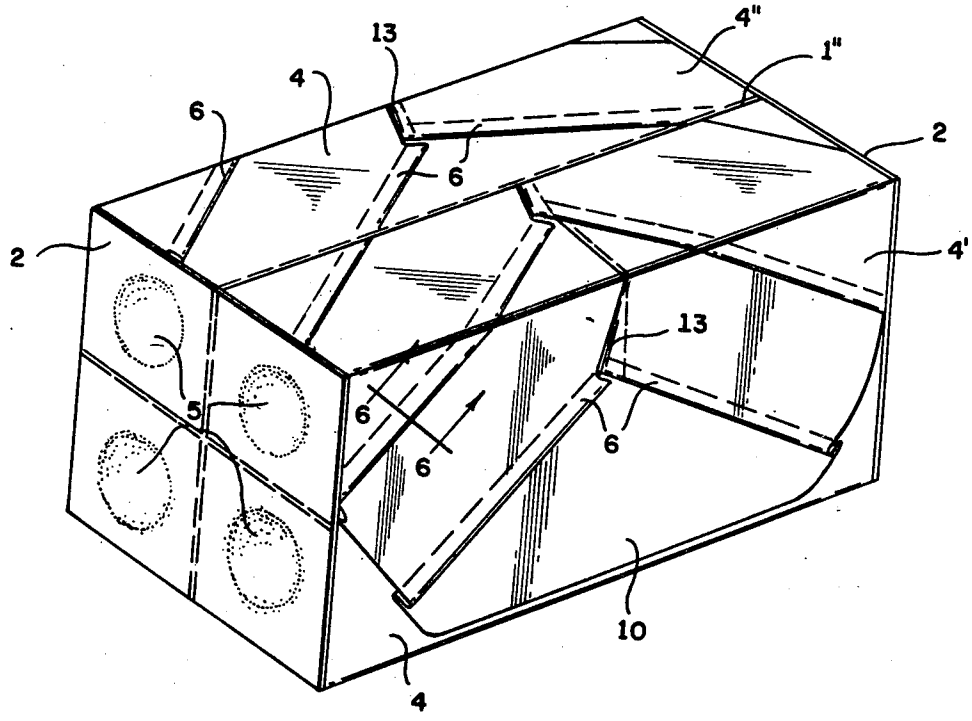
ABSTRACT: A container and dispenser for such things as butter, margarine, cheese and the like, having a central core defining four chambers for holding four sticks of table spread or the like between dimpled side members, each stick being wrapped in paper wrappers affixed to the central core and having diagonal or longitudinal Z-folds; wherein the spread is quickly and easily dispensed by pulling the wrapper taunt, thereby extending the folds and separating the wrapper from the spread, and ejecting the spread into a waiting container. To further aid in separating the wrapper from the spread, the side folds or flaps are folded so that the first flap placed under tension when the wrapper is pulled taut is the inner most flap and so on in sequence.



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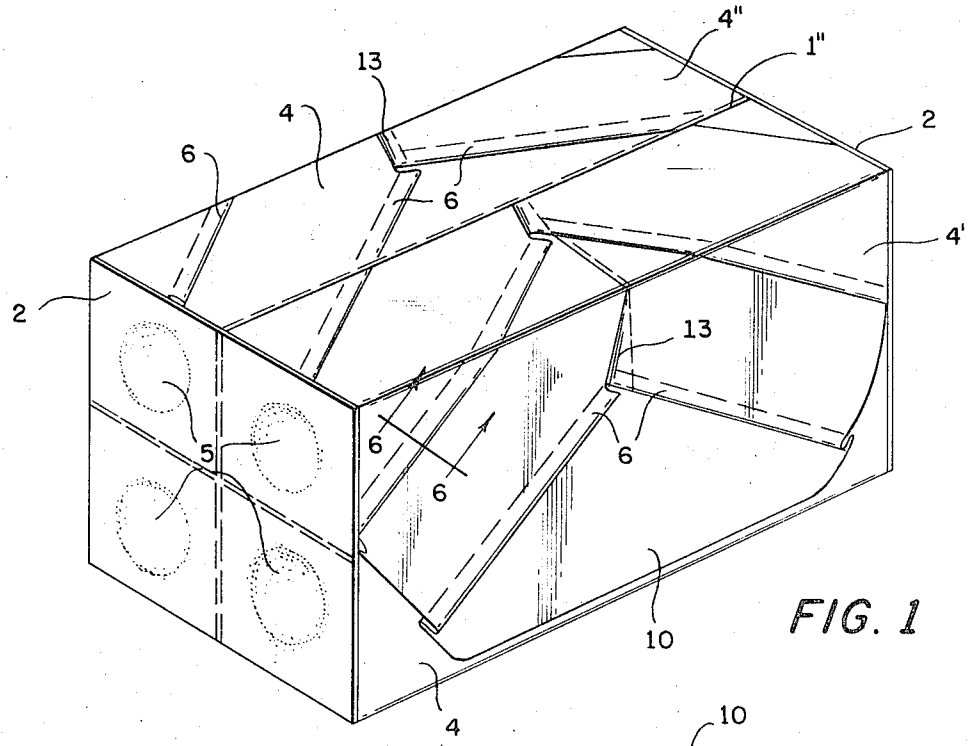

FIG. 1

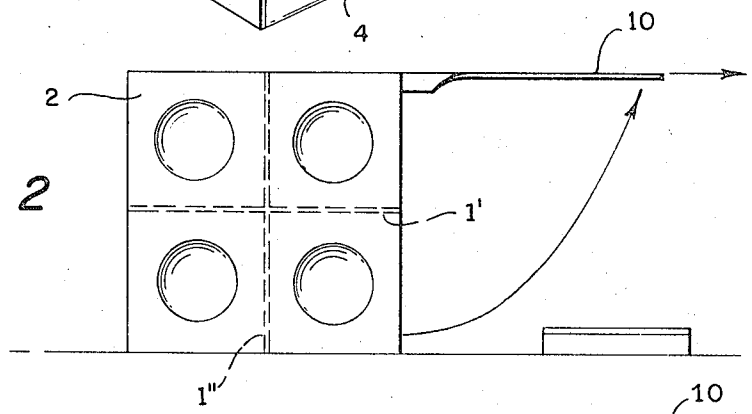

FIG. 2

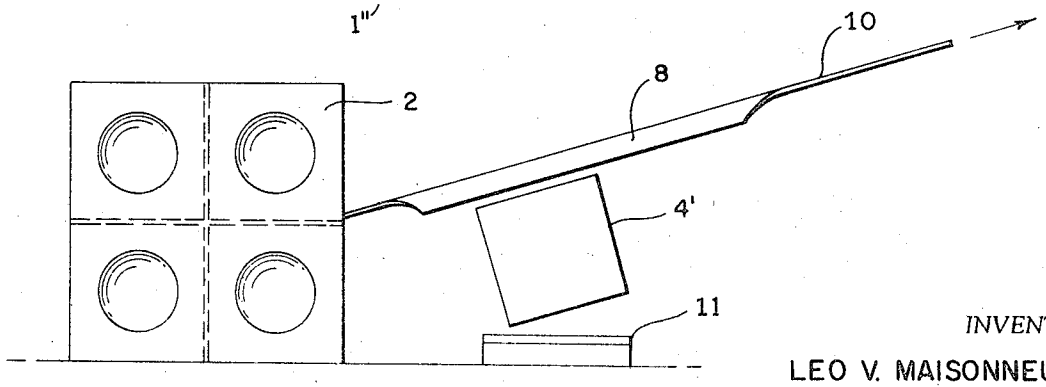

FIG. 3

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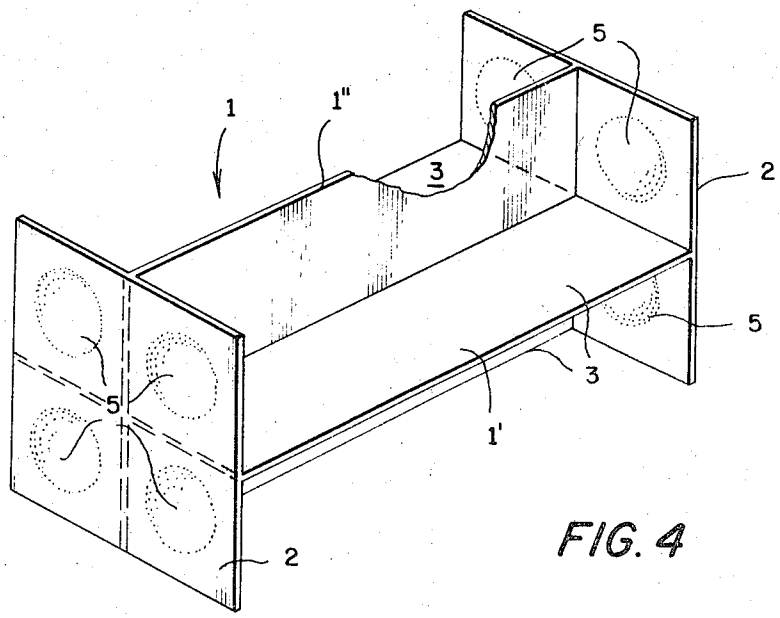

FIG. 4

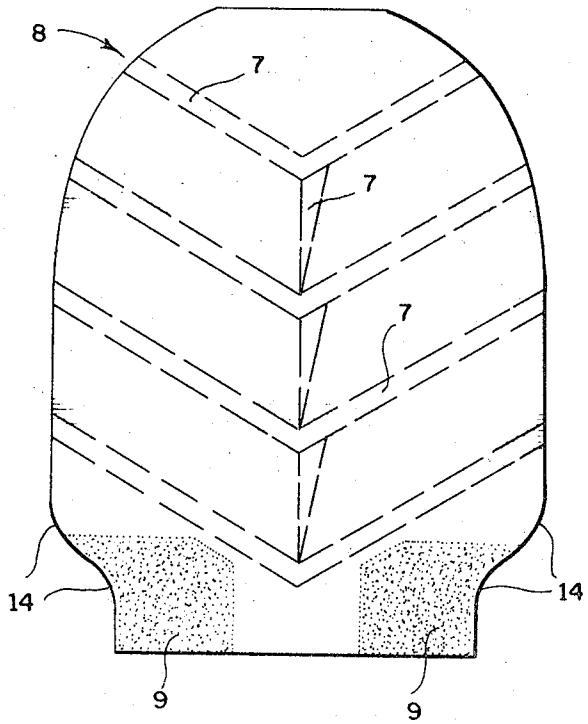

FIG. 5

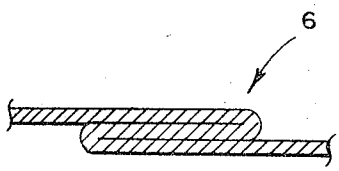

FIG. 6

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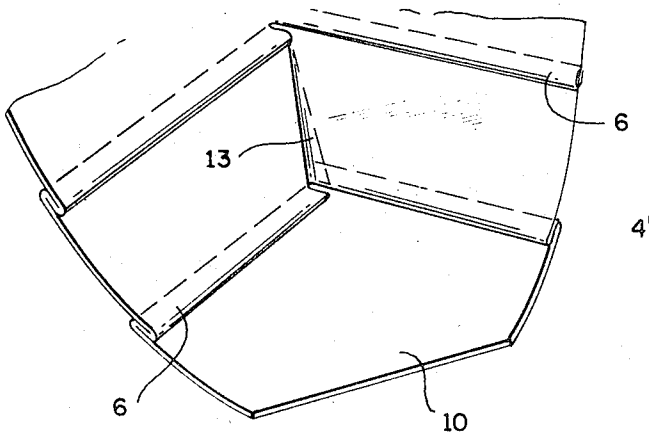


FIG. 7

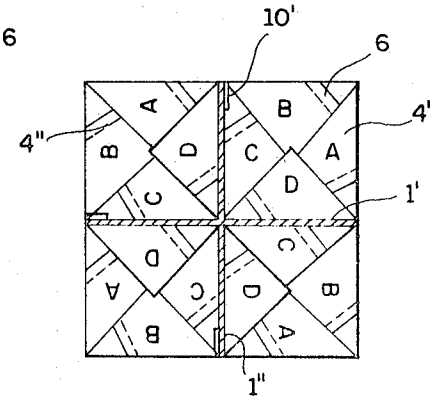
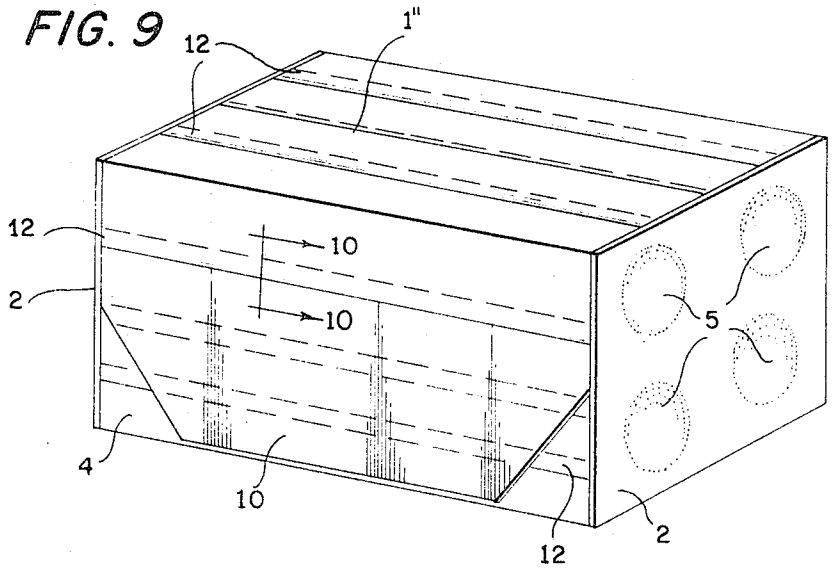


FIG. 8

FIG. 9



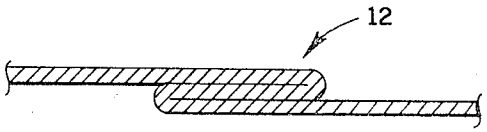


FIG. 10

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COMBINED CONTAINER AND DISPENSER HAVING AN EXPANSIBLE WRAPPER

This invention relates to a container and dispenser for wrapped objects held on or by a base member, particularly those in which the object has a tendency to stick or cling to the wrapper. More specifically the invention has found particular application in providing a container for table spreads such as butter, margarine, cheese and the like from which the spread can be easily dispensed or ejected without directly touching the spread and the disclosure will be particularly directed thereto.

However, the principles of the invention can be applied to any situation in which there is a desirability of quickly and easily dispensing or ejecting a wrapped object carried on or by a base member.

Heretofore table spreads have been commonly packaged in boxes containing four or more individually wrapped sticks and in such instances it has been necessary to physically remove from the box and proceed to unwrap manually the various folds of the wrap which tends to cling to the spread particularly when the spread is relatively soft. In unwrapping the spread, the consumer often had direct physical or personal contact with the spread causing messy hands and contaminated spread. Such packaging and manual dispensing has been unsatisfactory for obvious reasons and the present invention overcomes these problems.

It is thus a basic object of the present invention to provide a container or base member for one or more objects from which the object can be quickly and easily dispensed without necessitating the manual handling of the object.

It is a further object to provide a wrapper for an object on a base or in a container which has special release features whereby, quick and easy separation of the object from the wrapper is assured.

It is a particular object of the present invention to provide a container and dispenser for table spread, e.g., butter or margarine in stick form which safely and hygienically protects the spread and from which the stick(s) can be quickly and easily be dispensed, unwrapped and ready to use.

Other objects and advantages will become clear and apparent from the detailed description below taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is perspective view of the invention as embodied in a container and s dispenser for four sticks of table spread;

FIGS. 2 and 3 are side views of the embodiment of FIG. 1 showing the first leading edge of the wrapper extended away from the container and horizontal and then extended its full length, respectively;

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the inner core of the embodiment of FIG. 1;

FIG. 5 is a plan view showing a suitable wrapper with the folded areas indicated by phantom lines;

FIG. 6 is a cross-sectional view of the Z-fold of the wrapper, taken along sectional lines 6–6 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 7 is a perspective view showing the details of the grasping, leading edge of the initial wrapper;

FIG. 8 is a side view of the invention with the side member of the inner core removed to show the end flaps of the wrappers;

FIG. 9 is a perspective view of a second embodiment of FIG. 1 with the wrappers having longitudinal folds rather than diagonal ones; and

FIG. 10 is a cross-sectional view taken along sectional lines 10–10 of FIG. 9 similar in view to fig FIG. 6.

The invention has found particular utility as a container and dispenser for table spreads such as butter or margarine and, as such, the invention as shown in FIGS. 1 and 4 includes basically an inner core member 1 consisting of horizontal 1′ and vertical 1″ members and to which is attached two side members 2 which define four elongated chambers 3 designed to hold, support and protect four sticks 4 of table spread. Each of the side members 2 are dimpled inwardly at the four areas 5 adjacent the sticks 4 of table spread so as to engage the sticks 4 and hold them under compression. A sixteenth of an inch dimple is adequate.

Each stick 4 of table spread is wrapped in paper or some other suitable material having diagonal V-folds 6, that is, folds whose axes are not parallel to the longitudinal axis of the stick 4 and form a V-shape. These folds 6 are also Z-folds, that is, folds in which the material is at least doubly folded back on itself (note FIG. 6). The Z-fold 6 aids in causing a quick, clean release or separation of the wrapper from the table spread when the fold is expanded and pulled taut. Having the Z-fold in a path diagonal and intersecting to form a V-pattern insures that the folded areas 7 between the wrapper 8 all intersect or interconnect and that there will be positive releasing areas throughout the entire length and breadth of the wrapped stick 4. The wrapper 8 is further cut with a curved outline at its lower extremity 14 to prevent tears in the wrapper 8 from forming. The wrapper 8 is secured to the inner core 1 by any appropriate means, for example, by adhesive portions 9 being glued to the shelf portion of the inner core either on the under side of the shelf in the adjacent chamber or near the edge of the upper side on which the wrapped stick sits. The wrapper illustrated in FIG. 5 is cut for the former. Because of the intersection of the two sets of diagonal folds a lateral crimp or ridge 13 is formed which can be folded over and provides an auxiliary releasing action.

The sticks 4, as shown in FIG. 8 are wrapped at their ends in much the same manner as is standard in the art except that to further aid in releasing the wrapper 8 from the table spread 4 the end flaps are folded in a particular sequence. That is, in dispensing and ejecting the table spread (explained further below), the first flap A to be released is the inner most flap, i.e., in direct contact with the stick 4, the second flap B to be released is folded on top of A, C on top of B and D on top of C, D then being the outermost flap. As an alternative, rather than folding the end flaps over the end of the stick 4, the flaps could be folded over, and attached, for example, by heat sealing, to the side members 2. As a further alternative, the end flaps could be eliminated altogether with the ends of the stick 4 being covered by the side member 2 directly.

The table spread is dispensed and ejected from its container in the following manner. The leading edge 10 of the initial stick 4′ to be released is grasped by the fingers with the container being held fast and is raised up away from the container (note FIG. 2). In the same motion the wrapper 8 is fully extended and in the process the table spread 4′ is dispensed out of the container and ejected into a waiting receptable 11 (note FIG. 3). The entire operation takes only a few seconds.

After the initial stick 4′ is dispensed, the leading edge 10′ of the second stick 4″ to be dispensed is exposed. The second stick 4″ can be ejected after rotating the container ninety degrees in a clockwise direction (from the perspective of FIG. 8) in the same manner as the initial stick 4′, that is, by grasping the leading edge 10′ and pulling it taut. After each stick 4 is dispensed, the wrapper 8 can be torn off and disposed of. Appropriate weakened areas or perforation in the wrapper can be provided for this purpose.

As shown in FIG. 9, a second embodiment of the invention, similar to the embodiment of FIGS. 1—8, utilizes a wrapper having longitudinal folds 12, that is, folds which generally are parallel to the longitudinal axis of the stick of table spread. The folds 12, as shown in FIG. 10, are Z-type folds which when extended aid in causing a quick, clean separation of the stick from the wrapper. The advantage of the longitudinal type fold lies in the relative ease of producing such folds in the wrapper, while the advantage of the diagonal V-folds lies in the greater and more extensive release areas 7. A further alternative of fold design which has some of the advantages of each of the folds illustrated is a set of parallel diagonal folds, that is, folds which are parallel to each other and not parallel to the longitudinal axis of the stick but, in like the V-style, do not intersect.

In manufacturing the container of the present invention many advantageous techniques are possible. For example, the

inner core 1 with the side members 2 can be molded as an integral piece of plastic in which the side members exhibit a flexibility which is highly desirable, resulting in a more dynamic dimple and permitting greater ease of dispensing or insertion during packaging. To further protect the table spread during shipping and consumer handling, an outer sheath could be a boxlike member, open at least one end, which could be slid on and off as desired. Another protective feature would be to provide the container shown in FIG. 1 or 9 with a removable lateral band which would insure that the sticks would not fall out accidentally. Moreover, to aid in mass production of the invention each stick could be wrapped uniformly so that all four sticks had wrappers with identical leading edges. In such a design, any of the four sticks could be dispensed first and they need not be dispensed in any particular sequence. Furthermore, to ensure a more secure wrap, the wrapper could be designed to extend around to the initial face of the stick so as to provide an overlapping position on the initial face. Likewise, the material of the wrapper is a matter of some choice and includes besides paper and other materials common in the act, elastic and stretchable material. In fact in the latter instance, the folds are not required.

Many other variations in the details of the invention beside the exemplary ones indicated above may be made without separating from the scope and spirit of the invention and the same should be measured only by the scope of the claims in light of the disclosure which appears below.

I claim:

1. A combined holder and dispenser for at least one extended object having a longitudinal axis comprising a base member for said object and a wrapping member being attached to said base member and wrapped around said object and being expansible, said wrapping member includes at least one Z-fold to provide expansibility, said Z-fold being disposed diagonally to the longitudinal axis of said object; whereby when said wrapping member is expanded, said object is dispensed or ejected from said base member.

2. The combination of claim 1 wherein there is a set of multiple Z-folds disposed parallel to each other.

3. The combination of claim 1 wherein said wrapper further includes an additional set of multiple parallel and diagonal Z-folds disposed at an angle to and which intersect the first set.

4. A combined holder and dispenser for at least one object comprising a base member for said object and a wrapping member for said object, said wrapping member being expansible, said wrapping member including a series of end flaps which are folded over the preceding end flap in the same sequence as the end flaps are released as the wrapper is expanded; whereby when said wrapping member is expanded said object is dispensed or ejected from said base member and whereby the innermost end flap is the first to release during the expansion of the wrapper.

5. A combination holder and dispenser for at least one elongated object comprising a base member which holds and supports the object and a wrapping member attached to said base member and in which the object is wrapped, said wrapping member including expansible means for aiding in the release of said wrapping member from the object during dispensing, said expansible means comprising at least one Z-fold, the bottom leg of the Z-fold being in face-to-face contact with the surface of said object; whereby the object can be easily and quickly dispensed from said base member and whereby the Z-fold's contact with the surface of the object aids in the releasing of the wrapping member from said object.

6. The combination of claim 5 wherein said expansible means further includes a set of parallel folds having Z-cross sections.

7. The combination of claim 6 wherein said set of parallel folds are disposed parallel to the longitudinal axis of said object.

8. The combination of claim 6 wherein said set of parallel folds are disposed diagonally to the longitudinal axis.

9. The combination of claim 8 wherein said expansible means includes an additional set of parallel Z-folds disposed at an angle to and which intersect the first set of parallel folds.

10. A combined container and dispenser for a table spread in multiple-stick form numbering four sticks comprising: an extended inner core member comprising two crossed, flat sheet sheets disposed vertically to one another defining four chambers each having an L-shaped cross section wherein the sticks are held and supported; a wrapper for each of the sticks attached at one of its ends to the bottom leg of each chamber wall; each wrapper including initiating means at its other end for grasping and pulling to produce relative motion between said wrapper and said inner core; whereby a wrapped stick can be easily and quickly dispensed from its chamber by grasping said initiating means and pulling it taut.

11. The container of claim 10 wherein said wrapper further includes a multiple number of end flaps for folding over the end of the stick, said end flaps being folded over each other in the same sequence as the end flaps are released as said wrapper is pulled taut; whereby the innermost end flap is the first to release during the pulling of the wrapper.

12. The combination of claim 10 wherein said inner core member further includes two generally parallel flexible side members for holding the sticks in said chambers under compression.

13. The combination of claim 12 wherein said side members are dimpled to produce the requisite compression.

14. The combination of claim 10 wherein each said wrapper is expansible and includes at least one Z-fold to provide the expansibility, the bottom leg of the Z-fold being in face-to-face contact with the surface of the stick; whereby the Z-fold's contact with the surface of the stick aids in the releasing of the wrapper from the stick when the wrapper is pulled taut.

15. The combination of claim 14 wherein each wrapper includes a series of said Z-folds.

16. The combination of claim 15 wherein said Z-folds are disposed parallel to the longitudinal axis of the stick.

17. The combination of claim 15 wherein said Z-folds are parallel and are disposed diagonal to the longitudinal axis of the stick.

18. The combination of claim 17 wherein each said wrapper includes an additional set of parallel Z-folds disposed at an angle to and which intersect the first set.