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(54) **DISHWASHER BASKET**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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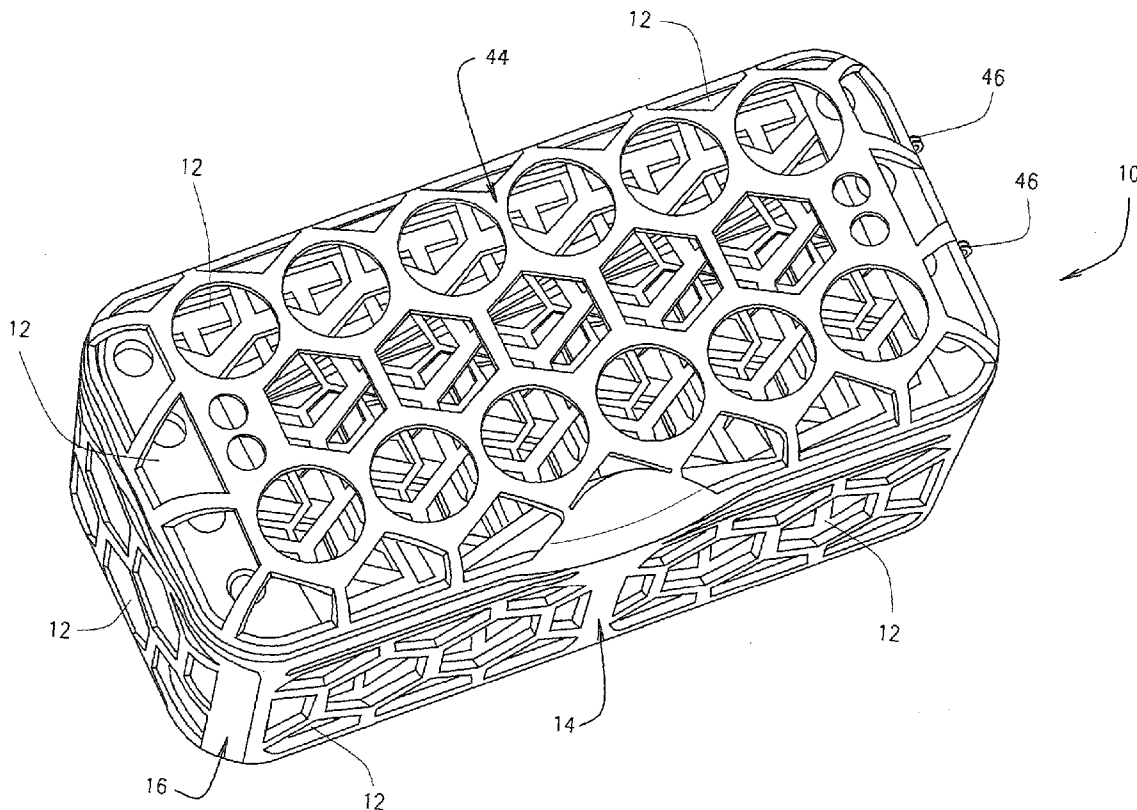
A dishwasher basket for use within an existing dishwasher for holding baby items including a main basket, at least one side basket housed within the main basket and being selectively extendable from a position within the main basket to a second position extending at least partially outside of the main basket, a lid member hingedly secured to the main basket, and a midplate member removably positionable within the main basket and located between the at least one side basket and the lid member. Each side basket includes a plurality of straw openings associated with a cover member and a plurality of cone shaped members associated with the side basket for holding a straw in an upright position within the side basket.

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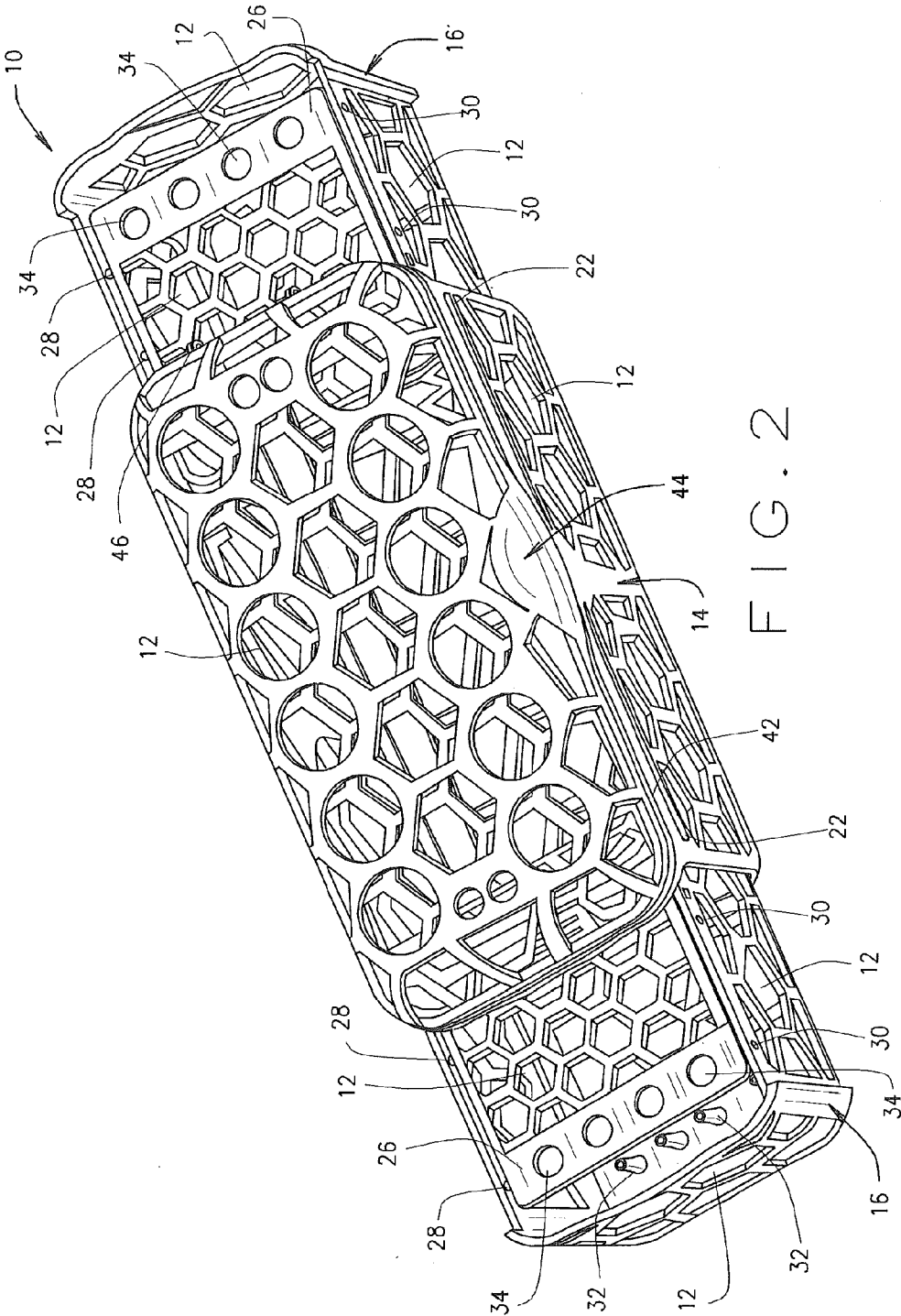


FIG. 2

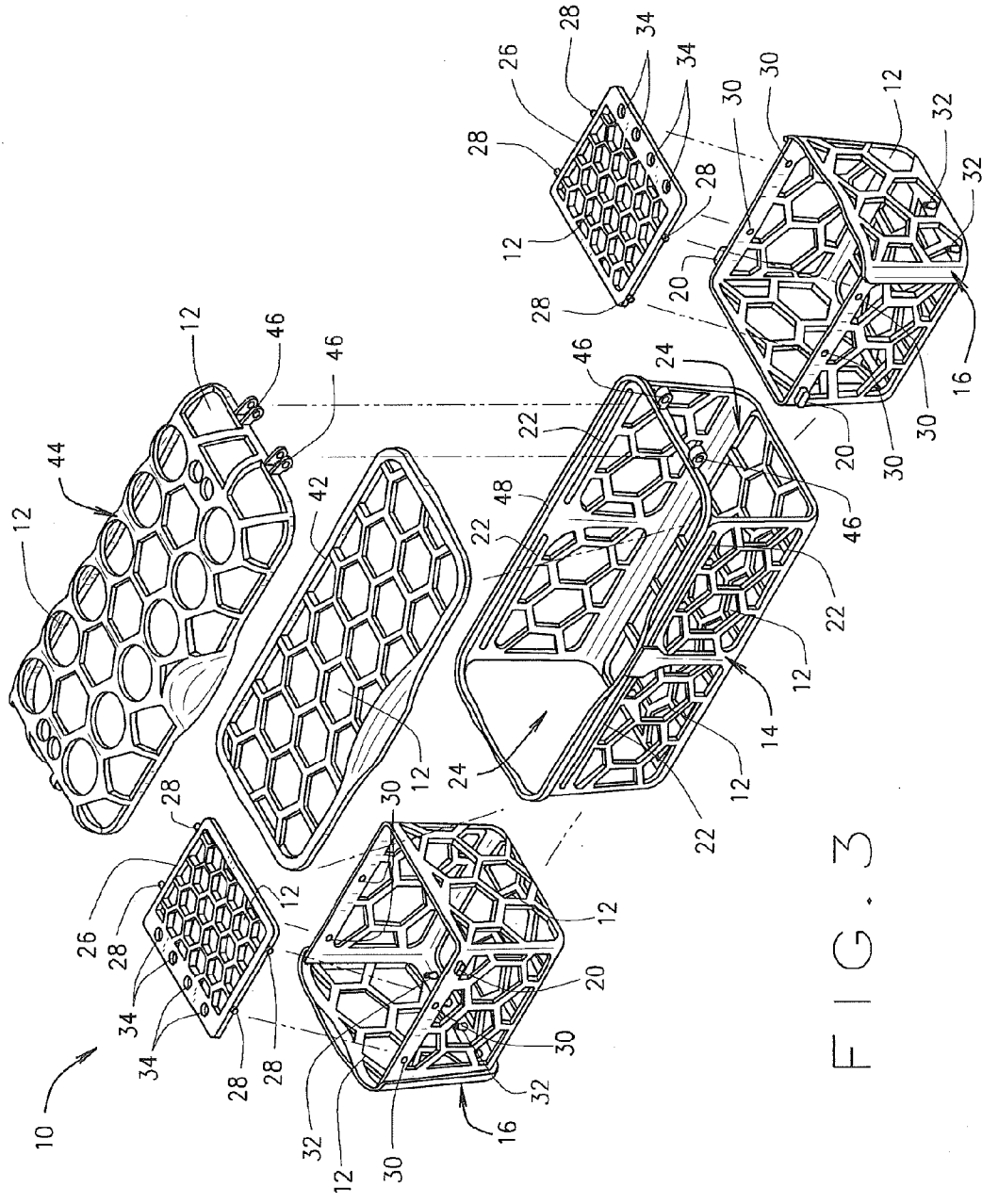


FIG. 3

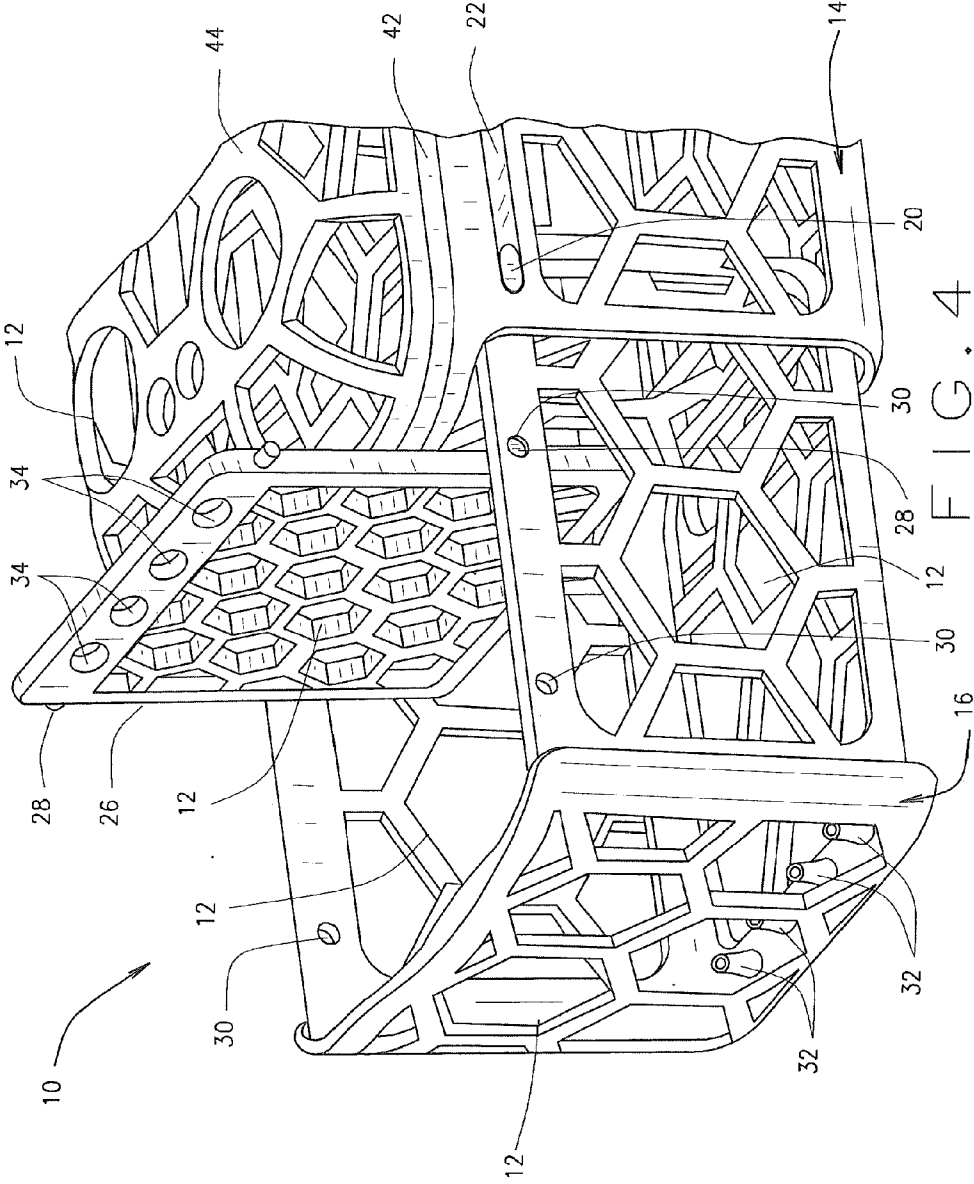


FIG. 4

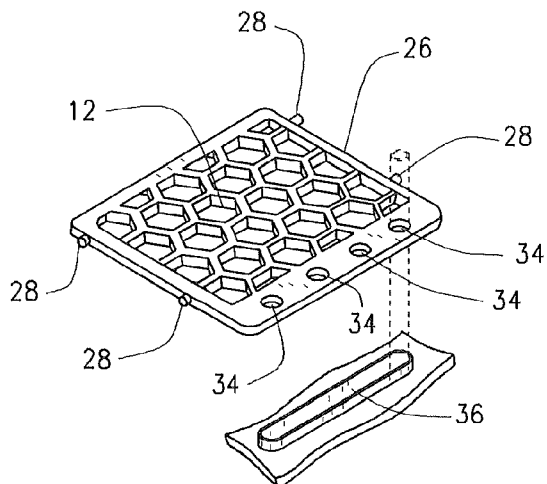


FIG. 5A

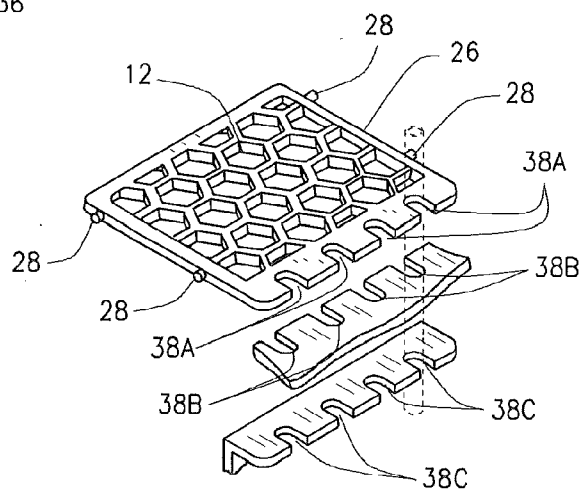


FIG. 5B

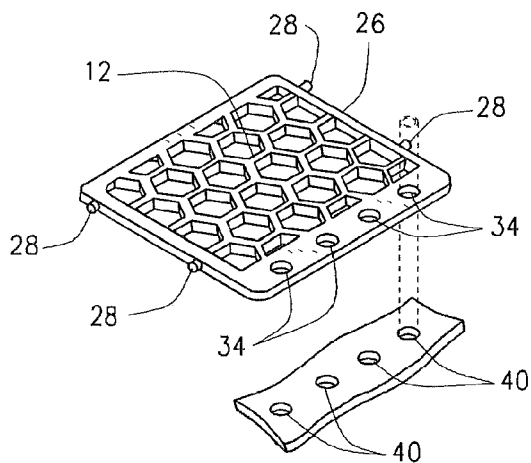


FIG. 5C

## DISHWASHER BASKET

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates generally to a dishwasher basket and, more particularly, to a device for securing baby bottles and other component parts related thereto as well as other baby items such as baby bottles, nipples, collars, caps, straws, cups and the like.

[0002] There are a number of items used to assist in the feeding and nourishment of young children and infants including, but not limited to, baby bottles, sippy cups, non-spill cups, straw cups, straws, eating utensils, and much more. Oftentimes, these items include a number of small component parts such as baby bottle nipples, collars, caps, cup lids, straws, valves and the like. These items are difficult to wash properly in a dishwasher because they tend to be awkwardly shaped and, because of their small size, may get dislodged during washing. Currently, such items are placed randomly within the dishwasher, or in a dishwasher accessory such as a silverware basket. In order to wash these items properly, they must be thoroughly cleansed with the water from the jets of the dishwasher. However, because traditional dishwashers and dishwasher accessories are not designed to adequately hold these types of items, it is difficult to retain them within the confines of the dishwasher basket or accessory, and to get them properly cleaned. Consequently, these items are often washed by hand, which takes considerable time and does not necessarily guarantee effective cleaning.

[0003] Although there are some dishwasher baskets designed in an attempt to effectuate thorough cleaning of the component parts of infant feeding equipment, an improved dishwasher basket intended for use in securing these components to ensure complete cleaning during the various dishwashing cycles is desirable. Therefore, a need exists for a multi-compartmental dishwasher basket which is adjustable in size to accommodate a variety of baby items, as needed, while securing such items within the dishwasher basket to ensure thorough cleaning.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The present invention is directed to a dishwasher basket which is intended to secure the components of baby bottles, sippy cups, non-spill cups, straw cups, straws, eating utensils and other similar items during the various dishwashing cycles. The dishwasher basket is designed to be placed within a dishwasher so that the component parts of infant feeding vessels may be positioned and held therein to be thoroughly washed and secured in order to prevent these items from becoming lost within the dishwasher. The dishwasher basket may be fashioned from any suitably washable material such as, but not limited to, organic polymers, elastomeric material, thermoplastic, thermosetting polymer, polycarbonate, polyethylene, polypropylene, polystyrene, polyvinyl chloride, silicone, polytetrafluoroethylene, nylon, stainless steel and the like. The dishwasher basket may include a plurality of drainage holes across its various surfaces to facilitate complete cleaning and to allow for the removal of water during the various dishwashing cycles.

[0005] The dishwasher basket may further include a main basket for housing a plurality of side baskets. The side baskets are selectively extendable from the opposite sides of the main basket and are normally housed therewithin. Each of the side baskets may include at least one projection for slidable

engagement with a corresponding channel associated with the main basket, the at least one projection securing each side basket to the main basket and it allows the side baskets to be adjusted in order to accommodate varying storage needs within the dishwasher basket. When the side baskets are fully extended, they are positioned substantially outside the side-wall openings of the main basket and outside the side wall perimeter of the main basket so that the main basket may be used for additional storage, as needed.

[0006] Each side basket may further include a cover located on the top face of the side basket for securing items within the side basket when it is in an extended position. The cover may further include a plurality of projections, each projection intended for engagement with one of a plurality of holes located in the side walls of each side basket for removably securing the cover to the side basket. Each side basket may further include a plurality of cone shaped members located within the side basket, each cone shaped member being adapted for receiving a first end of a straw for holding it substantially in place within the dishwasher basket. A plurality of straw holes are located within the cover, each straw hole being in substantial alignment with a corresponding cone shaped member located therebelow and each straw hole being sized to hold a second end of a straw substantially in place within the dishwasher basket. Thus, each of the cone shaped members cooperate with each of the corresponding straw holes located in the cover to hold the straws in an upright position in order to facilitate complete cleaning during the various dishwashing cycles.

[0007] The dishwasher basket may further include a midplate and a lid for storing small component parts of infant feeding equipment therebetween such as, but not limited to, baby bottle nipples, collars, caps, cup lids, valves and the like. The lid may be attached to the main basket by a hinge, or a plurality of hinges. The midplate may be positioned against at least one ridge or flange member associated with each opposite side of the main basket, the ridge members being located above the corresponding channels for receiving the projections associated with the side baskets. The midplate is operably secured against the ridge members when the lid is in a closed position, and it rests upon the ridge or flange members when the lid is in an open position. Thus the midplate may be removed from the dishwasher basket when more vertical space within the main basket and/or the side baskets is desired.

[0008] Specific advantages and features of the present dishwasher basket will be apparent from the accompanying drawings and the description of several illustrative embodiments of the present invention.

### [0009] DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] FIG. 1 is a top perspective view of one embodiment of a dishwasher basket constructed in accordance with the teachings of the present invention.

[0011] FIG. 2 is a top perspective view of the dishwasher basket of FIG. 1 with the extendable side baskets extending outward from the main basket.

[0012] FIG. 3 is an exploded top perspective view of the dishwasher basket of FIG. 1.

[0013] FIG. 4 is a partial side perspective view of the dishwasher basket of FIG. 1 showing the cover associated with one side basket in an open position.

[0014] FIG. 5A is a partial perspective view of another embodiment of a straw holder associated with the side baskets of FIGS. 1-4.

[0015] FIG. 5B is a partial side perspective view of another embodiment of a straw holder associated with the side baskets of FIGS. 1-4.

[0016] FIG. 5C is a partial side perspective view of still another embodiment of a straw holder associated with the side baskets of FIGS. 1-4.

[0017] It should be understood that the present drawings are not necessarily to scale and that the embodiments disclosed herein are sometimes illustrated by fragmentary views. In certain instances, details which are not necessary for an understanding of the present invention or which render other details difficult to perceive may have been omitted. It should also be understood that the invention is not necessarily limited to the particular embodiments illustrated herein. Like numbers utilized throughout the various figures designate like or similar parts or structure.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0018] Referring now to the drawings more particularly by reference numbers, FIGS. 1-4 illustrate one embodiment of a dishwasher basket 10 constructed in accordance with the teachings of the present invention. FIG. 1 shows the present dishwasher basket 10 in its closed position and FIG. 2 shows the side baskets 16 in their extended position. The dishwasher basket 10 is intended to secure baby items including the components parts associated therewith such as, but not limited to, baby bottles, sippy cups, non-spill cups, straw cups, straws and other similar baby related items during the various dishwashing cycles. The dishwasher basket 10 is designed to be placed within a dishwasher so that the component parts of infant feeding items may be positioned therewithin to be thoroughly washed and held secured therewithin in order to prevent these items from becoming dislodged or lost within the dishwasher. In one embodiment of the present invention, various aspects of the dishwasher basket 10 may be constructed directly into the racks of dishwashers themselves. Furthermore, various aspects of the dishwasher basket 10 may be utilized independent of the dishwasher basket 10 and thus designed as separate accessories to be used in conjunction with existing dishwasher racks, silverware baskets or dishwasher baskets. In addition to its intended use, the dishwasher basket 10 may be readily adapted for any number of uses including washing a variety of other components, or uses not related to dishwashing (such as storage) without departing from the teachings and practice of the present invention.

[0019] The dishwasher basket 10 may be fashioned from any suitably material such as, but not limited to, organic polymers, elastomeric material, thermoplastic, thermosetting polymer, polycarbonate, polyethylene, polypropylene, polystyrene, polyvinyl chloride, silicone, polytetrafluoroethylene, nylon, stainless steel and the like. The dishwasher basket 10 may include a plurality of drainage holes 12 located across its various surfaces as illustrated in FIGS. 1-5 to facilitate complete cleaning and to allow for the removal of water during the various dishwashing cycles. In alternative embodiments, any number of the slots, spaces or cutouts 12 of varying shapes and/or sizes may be integrated within the various surfaces of the dishwasher basket 10 without departing from the teachings and practice of the present invention.

[0020] As illustrated in FIGS. 1, 2 and 3, the dishwasher basket 10 includes a main basket 14 and a pair of side baskets 16. The side baskets 16 are housed within main basket 14 and each are selectively extendable from a first position wherein a side basket 16 is located substantially within the main basket

14 and a second position wherein a side basket 16 is located substantially outside of the main basket 14. In this regard, each opposite end portion of the main basket 14 is open and includes an opening 24 to receive a side basket 16 and one end portion of the side basket 16 forms the closed end portion of the main basket 14 when the side basket is in its closed position. Each of the side baskets 16 may include at least one projection 20, and preferably two projections 20, one on each opposite side of the basket 16 as best illustrated in FIG. 3, for slidable engagement with a pair of corresponding channels 22 associated with the main basket 14. The channels 22 may extend partially or completely through the main basket 14 as best illustrated in FIGS. 2-4. When positioned within the channels 22, the projections 20 secure the side baskets 16 to the main basket 14 and allow the side baskets 16 to be slidably adjusted between their respective first and second positions in order to accommodate varying storage needs within the dishwasher basket 10. When the side baskets 16 are extended, they are positioned at least partially outside the sidewall openings 24 of the main basket 14, and at least partially outside of the perimeter of the main basket, so that the main basket 14 may be used for additional storage, as needed, and other items may be positioned within the side baskets 16. The projections 20 also function as stop members when the side baskets 16 are fully extended, the projections 20 engaging one end portion of each respective channel 22. It is also understood that the side baskets 16 may be moveably secured within the main basket 14 using a variety of other mechanisms, as desired, to accommodate various alternative designs of the dishwasher basket 10 without departing from the teachings and practice of the present invention.

[0021] As illustrated in FIGS. 2, 3 and 4, each side basket 16 may further include a cover 26 located on the top face thereof for securing items placed within the side basket 16 when it is in an extended position. The cover 26 includes a plurality of projections 28, each projection 28 intended for engagement with one of a plurality of holes 30 located in the side walls of the side basket 16 for removably securing the cover 26 to the side basket 16. The side basket 16 and/or the cover 26 are made of sufficiently flexible material to facilitate the removal and insertion of the projections 28 into the holes, as desired. In one embodiment, the cover 26 can be pivotally rotated about a pair of projections 28 to open and close the cover 26 as best shown in FIG. 4. The other pair of projections 28 can be flexibly or resiliently maneuvered into and out of their corresponding holes 30 to open and secure the cover 26 in its closed position. In other embodiments, the cover 26 may be connected to the side basket 16 in still other various ways including, but not limited to, a snap-in connection, a friction-based connection, the use of channels and/or notches for receiving the cover projections 28, or any other suitable connection means. The cover 26 may also be held in place with a hinge or still other securing means.

[0022] Each side basket 16 may further include a plurality of straw holes 34 located within the cover 26 as best illustrated in FIGS. 2-4, each straw hole 34 being adapted to receive a straw when placed therethrough. Each basket 16 may also include a plurality of cone shaped members 32 located within the side basket 16 as best illustrated in FIGS. 2 and 4, each cone shaped member 32 being adapted to receive one end portion of a straw when placed thereover. Each of the cone shaped members 32 cooperates with and is positioned in substantial alignment with a corresponding straw hole. 34 located on the cover 26 so that one end portion of the straw is

placed over the cone shaped member 32 and a second portion of the straw is held in a vertical orientation by extending through the corresponding straw hole 34 located thereabove. Placing a straw through one hole 34 and engaging its opposite end portion with a corresponding cone shaped member 32 allows the straw to be held in an upright position in the basket 10 in order to facilitate complete cleaning during the various dishwashing cycles.

[0023] In alternative embodiments a variety of other receiving members may be utilized which permit straws to be held in an upright position to ensure complete cleaning during the various dishwashing cycles without departing from the teachings and practice of the present invention. For example, in the embodiment illustrated in 5A, the cone shaped members 32 are replaced with a receiving channel 36 which is likewise located within the side basket 16 and cooperates with the straw holes 34 located within the cover 26. In this embodiment, the one end portion of the respective straws merely sit within the channel 36 and the combination of the channel 36 and holes 34 hold the straws within the dishwasher basket 10 in an upright position.

[0024] In the embodiment illustrated in 5B, a plurality of spaced notches 38A replace the straw holes 34 located within the cover 26 and face in the same direction as a plurality of spaced notches 38C which replace the cone shaped members 32 located within the bottom portion of the side basket 16. An additional row of spaced notches 38B are located within the basket 16 and are located intermediate the notches 38A and 38C, the notches 38B facing the opposite direction from the notches 38A and 38C. Each notch 38A cooperates with a vertically corresponding notch 38B and 38C so that when a straw is inserted within the respective notches, it will be held within the dishwasher basket 10 in an upright position.

[0025] In the embodiment illustrated in 5C, a plurality of recessed cavities 40 replace the cone shaped members 32 at the bottom of the each basket 16 and each cavity 40 cooperates with a corresponding straw hole 34 located within the cover 26 for again holding straws within the dishwasher basket 10 in an upright position.

[0026] The dishwasher basket 10 may further include a midplate 42 and a lid 44 for storing small component parts of infant feeding equipment therebetween such as baby bottle nipples, collars, caps, cup lids, valves and the like. These smaller items can be placed on the midplate 42 and can be trapped between the midplate 42 and the lid 44, when closed, to retain these items within the basket 10. The lid 44 may be attached to the main basket 14 by one or more hinges 46. In another embodiment, the lid 44 may be selectively connected to the main basket 14 by any suitable means including, but not limited to, a snap-in and/or a friction based connection. In one embodiment, the midplate 42 may rest upon and be positioned against ridge members 48 located on each opposite side of the main basket 14 above the channels 22 as best illustrated in FIG. 3. The midplate 42 rests upon and is operably secured against the ridge members 48 when the lid 44 is in its closed position. The midplate 42 may be removed from the dishwasher basket 10 by simply lifting the member 42 off of the ridges 48 when more vertical space within the main basket 14 and/or the side baskets 16 is desired. The lid 44 can be closed with or without the midplate 42 in place within the basket 10. In another embodiment, the midplate 42 may be selectively connected to the main basket 14 in various ways including, but not limited to, a snap-in connection, a friction-based connection, notches for receiving the midplate 42, or

any other suitable connection. In yet another embodiment, the midplate 42 may be slidably insertable via a narrow opening located within the upper side wall portion of the main basket 14, or by any other process which secures the midplate 42 within the main basket 14. It is also further envisioned that multiple midplates 42 may be housed within the main basket 14 and/or within the lid 44 without departing from the teachings and practice of the present invention. The midplate 42 may be totally within the main basket 14, or at least a portion thereof may rest upon the top edge portion of the main basket 14.

[0027] The present dishwasher basket 10 therefore provides an expandable dishwasher basket made specifically to hold a wide variety of different types of baby items as discussed above. Each respective side basket 16 can be extended to a position outside of the main basket 14 for placing items therewithin. When one or both of the side baskets 16 are loaded, they can then be re-inserted into the main basket 14. Additional smaller items can be placed on the midplate 42 and captured between the midplate 42 and the lid 44 when the lid is moved to its closed position. If additional space is needed, the side baskets 16 can be left in their extended positions and additional items can be placed inside the main basket 14. Still further, if straws are to be cleaned using the present basket 10, these straws can be placed within the straw openings 34 and can be further engaged with any one of the plurality of holding means including the cone-shaped members 32, the channel 36, the notches 38A, 38B, and 38C, and the recessed cavities 40. When straws are to be cleaned, the side baskets 16 will be at least partially extended outside of the perimeter of the main basket 14 so that the straws can remain in an upright vertical position without interfering with the midplate 42 and/or the lid 44. It is also recognized and anticipated that other items besides baby related items can be placed within the basket 10 for cleaning within a typical dishwasher. Still further, it is also recognized that the overall dimensions of the present basket 10 including the extendible side baskets 16 as well as the specific shape and configuration of the various members associated therewith are also subject to wide variations and may be sized and shaped into a wide variety of different sizes and configurations so as to be compatible for placement within known existing dishwashers, or to conform with any space limitations associated therewith without impairing the teachings and practice of the present invention. Other variations and modifications to the various components comprising the present dishwasher basket 10 are also contemplated.

[0028] Thus, there has been shown and described several embodiments of a novel dishwasher basket. As is evident from the foregoing description, certain aspects of the present invention are not limited by the particular details of the examples illustrated herein, and it is therefore contemplated that other modifications and applications, or equivalents thereof, will occur to those skilled in the art. The terms "having" and "including" and similar terms as used in the foregoing specification are used in the sense of "optional" or "may include" and not as "required". Many changes, modifications, variations and other uses and applications of the present invention will, however, become apparent to those skilled in the art after considering the specification and the accompanying drawings. All such changes, modifications, variations and other uses and applications which do not depart from the

spirit and scope of the invention are deemed to be covered by the invention which is limited only by the claims which follow.

What is claimed is:

1. A dishwasher basket comprising:
  - a main basket;
  - at least one side basket housed within said main basket, said side basket being selectively extendable between a first position wherein said at least one side basket is located substantially within said main basket and a second position wherein said at least one side basket resides at least partially outside of said main basket; and
  - a lid secured to said main basket for providing access thereto;
  - said main basket, said at least one side basket, and said lid including a plurality of openings to facilitate cleaning and to allow for the removal of water during various dishwashing cycles.
2. The dishwasher basket according to claim 1 wherein said at least one side basket is selectively extendable through a side wall opening associated with said main basket.
3. The dishwasher basket according to claim 1 including a midplate removably positionable within said main basket, said midplate lying between said at least one side basket when said side basket is located within said main basket and said lid.
4. The dishwasher basket defined in claim 1 wherein said lid is hingedly attached to said main basket.
5. The dishwasher basket defined in claim 1 wherein said at least one side basket includes a cover, said cover including a plurality of openings to facilitate cleaning and to allow for the removal of water during various dishwashing cycles, said cover being movable between a first position wherein said cover provides access to the interior of said at least one side basket and a second position wherein said cover extends over the interior of said at least one side basket.
6. The dishwasher basket defined in claim 5 wherein said lid cover further includes a plurality of straw holes for receiving a straw when positioned therethrough.
7. The dishwasher basket defined in claim 6 wherein said at least one side basket further includes a plurality of cone shaped members, each cone shaped member being positioned in substantial alignment with one of said plurality of straw holes, each said cone shaped member being adapted to receive one end portion of a straw when positioned thereon.
8. The dishwasher basket according to claim 6 wherein said at least one side basket further includes a receiving channel, said receiving channel being positioned in substantial alignment with said plurality of straw holes and being adapted for receiving one end portion of a straw positioned therein.
9. The dishwasher basket according to claim 6 wherein said at least one side basket further includes a plurality of recessed cavities, each recessed cavity being positioned in substantial alignment with a corresponding straw hole, each recessed cavity being adapted to receive one end portion of a straw when positioned therein.
10. The dishwasher basket according to claim 5 wherein said cover includes a plurality of notches, and wherein said at least one side basket includes a plurality of first notches, said plurality of first side basket notches being positioned in substantial alignment with said plurality of cover notches for holding a straw in a substantial vertical arrangement when positioned respectively through one of said cover notches and through one of said corresponding first side basket notches.

11. The dishwasher basket according to claim 10 wherein said at least one side basket further includes a plurality of second notches positioned at an intermediate location between said plurality of cover notches and said plurality of first side basket notches, said plurality of intermediate second notches being positioned in substantial alignment with said plurality of cover notches and with said plurality of first side basket notches, said plurality of intermediate second notches facing in an opposite direction as compared to said plurality of cover notches and said plurality of first side basket notches.

12. The dishwasher basket according to claim 1 including a pair of side baskets housed within said main basket, each side basket being selectively extendable from a first position wherein each side basket is located substantially within said main basket and a second position wherein each side basket extends at least partially outside said main basket.

13. The dishwasher basket according to claim 3 wherein said main basket includes a ridge member associated with each opposite side of said main basket, said midplate resting on said ridge members when position within said main basket.

14. A dishwasher basket comprising:

- a main basket;
- at least one side basket housed within said main basket, said at least one side basket being selectively extendable from a first position wherein said at least one side basket is located substantially within said main basket and a second position wherein said at least one side basket extends at least partially beyond the perimeter of said main basket;
- a midplate removably positionable within said main basket; and
- a lid attachable to said main basket;
- said main basket, said at least one side basket, said lid and said midplate including a plurality of drainage holes for facilitating cleaning and for allowing the removal of water during various dishwashing cycles.

15. The dishwasher basket according to claim 15 wherein said at least one side basket includes a cover, said cover including a plurality of straw holes for receiving a straw when positioned therethrough.

16. The dishwasher basket according to claim 15 wherein said at least one side basket further includes a plurality of cone shaped members, each cone shaped member being positioned in substantial alignment with one of said plurality of straw holes, each cone shaped member being adaptable for receiving one end portion of a straw when positioned thereon.

17. A dishwasher basket comprising:

- a main basket;
- a pair of side baskets, each side basket being housed within said main basket and each being selectively movable from a first position wherein said side basket is located substantially within said main basket and a second position wherein said side basket extends at least partially outside of said main basket;
- each side basket further including a cover member which is movable between a first position wherein said cover member extends over the interior of said side basket and a second position providing access to the interior of said side basket, each cover member including a plurality of straw holes;
- a lid hingedly secured to said main basket; and
- a midplate removably positionable within said main basket between said pair of side baskets and said lid;

each side basket further including a plurality of cone shaped members, each cone shaped member being positioned in substantial alignment with one of said plurality of straw holes, each cone shaped being adapted to receive one end portion of a straw when positioned thereon;

said main basket, said pair of side baskets, said cover members, said lid and said midplate each including a plurality of drainage holes to facilitate cleaning of objects positioned therein and to allow for the removal of water during various dishwashing cycles.

**18.** The dishwasher basket according to claim **17** wherein said main basket includes at least a pair of channel members associated with each opposite side thereof, and wherein each of said pair of side baskets includes at least one projection associated therewith for engagement with a corresponding channel member, each said projection member being slidably movable within a corresponding channel member for allowing said side baskets to be slidably adjustable between their first and second positions.

**19.** The dishwasher basket according to claim **18** wherein said main basket further includes at least one ridge member associated with each opposite side of said main basket, said ridge members being positioned above said channel members.

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