BULK FOOD CARRIER

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ABSTRACT
The bulk food carrier is a carrying case for securely transporting bulk food items. The bulk food carrier includes a base having a lower wall and peripheral sidewalls. The lower wall and sidewalls define an open interior region. A cover is pivotally attached to the base for selectively covering and sealing the open interior region. A lower tray is disposed within the base and is supported by the lower wall thereof. An upper tray is also removably disposed within the base. A plurality of food plates is releasably attached to respective upper surfaces of the upper and lower trays by clips, which are secured to the upper surfaces of the upper and lower trays.
BULK FOOD CARRIER

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION


BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates to carrying cases and the like, and particularly to a bulk food carrier that provides a carrying case for securely transporting bulk food items, such as multiple slices of cake.

[0004] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0005] Although food containers are well known in the art, such containers are typically adapted for holding only single portions of food. Plastic bowls with airtight covers are quite commonly used for transporting and storing a variety of foods. However, they provide limited storage space and are not well adapted for carrying food items that require a particular positioning for proper transport, such as a piece of cake. It would be desirable to provide a container or carrier allowing for the transportation and storage of bulk food items, such as a plurality of pieces of cake or the like, with the convenience of a typical food container. Thus, a bulk food carrier solving the aforementioned problems is desired.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The bulk food carrier is a carrying case for securely transporting bulk food items, such as multiple slices of cake. The bulk food carrier includes a base having a lower wall and peripheral sidewalls. The lower wall and sidewalls define an open interior region. A cover is pivotally attached to the base for selectively covering and sealing the open interior region thereof.

[0007] A lower tray is disposed within the open interior region of the base and is supported by the lower wall thereof. The lower tray is preferably removably from within the base. An upper tray is also removably disposed within the open interior region of the base. The upper tray is supported above the lower tray in spaced apart relation thereto by a plurality of brackets or the like attached to an interior surface of at least one sidewall.

[0008] A plurality of food plates for supporting the slices of cake or the like are releasably attached to respective upper surfaces of the upper and lower trays by clips, which are secured to the upper surfaces of the upper and lower trays. The clips are preferably arranged on the upper surfaces of the upper and lower trays so that a regular grid or array of food plates is releasably attached to each of the upper and lower trays. For example, five rows and five columns of food plates may be releasably attached to each of the upper and lower trays.

[0009] The cover is preferably selectively positioned or angled with respect to the base by hinged supports or the like. The cover may be releasably secured to the base to cover and seal the open interior region thereof by any suitable type of releasable fastener, such as a zipper or the like. Additionally, a plurality of transparent pockets may be attached to an inner surface of the cover, allowing the user to display, for example, advertising, photographs, ingredients, or labels for the slices of cake or the like.

[0010] These and other features of the present invention will become readily apparent upon further review of the following specification and drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a bulk food carrier according to the present invention.

[0012] FIG. 2 is a partially exploded, perspective view of the bulk food carrier according to the present invention.

[0013] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the bulk food carrier according to the present invention, shown in a closed configuration.

[0014] Similar reference characters denote corresponding features consistently throughout the attached drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0015] Referring to FIGS. 1-3, the bulk food carrier 10 is a carrying case for securely transporting bulk food items, such as multiple slices of cake C. The bulk food carrier 10 includes a base 24 having a lower wall and a plurality of peripheral sidewalls 25. The base 24 defines an open interior region. A cover 12 is pivotally attached to the base 24 for selectively covering and sealing the open interior region thereof. Cover 12 and base 24 are preferably formed from a relatively flexible and washable material, such as vinyl, which permits the bulk food carrier 10 to be folded or rolled up when not in use, and further allows the bulk food carrier 10 to be easily cleaned. Cover 12 may be pivotally secured to base 24 by any suitable type of pivotal attachment, such as a hinge or the like, or cover 12 and base 24 may be formed from fabric or any other suitable flexible material and the cover 12 may be stitched to the base 24 along respective rear edges thereof.

[0016] A lower tray 32 is disposed within the open interior region of the base 24 and is supported by the lower wall thereof. The lower tray 32 is preferably removably from within the base 24. An upper tray 26 is also removably disposed within the open interior region of the base 24. FIG. 1 illustrates upper tray 26 disposed within base 24, and FIG. 2 illustrates the upper tray 26 removed from the base 24, exposing the lower tray 32. The upper tray 26 is supported above the lower tray 32 in spaced apart relation thereto by a plurality of brackets 35 (only one is shown) or the like secured to an interior surface of sidewalls 25. Any suitable spacer or support may be used to support the upper tray 26 above the lower tray 32 to prevent contact with the lower surface of upper tray 26 by the cake slices C supported on lower tray 32, and further to releasably attach the upper tray 26 to the base 24.

[0017] A plurality of food plates P for supporting the slices of cake C or the like are releasably secured to respective upper surfaces of the upper and lower trays 26, 32 by clips 28 secured to the upper surfaces of the upper and lower trays 26, 32. It should be understood that the plates P and slices of cake C are shown for exemplary purposes only, and that carrier 10 may be used to carry any desired food items. Similarly, clips 28 are shown for exemplary purposes only, and any suitable type of retainers may be used to releasably secure plates P to the upper and lower trays 26, 32. The plurality of clips 28 are preferably arranged on the upper surfaces of the upper and lower trays 26, 32 so that a regular grid or array of food plates P is releasably secured to each of the upper and lower trays 26,
32. For example, five rows and five columns of food plates \( P \) may be releasably secured to each of the upper and lower trays 26, 32.

[0018] The cover 12 is preferably selectively positioned or angled with respect to the base 24 by hinged supports 27 or the like. Such hinged supports 27 are well known in the art of briefcases. It should be understood that any suitable type of support may be used to selectively and releasably position or angle cover 12 with respect to base 24. Further, the cover 12 may be releasably attached to the base 24 to cover and seal the open interior region thereof by any suitable type of releasable fastener, such as a zipper 38 or the like.

[0019] Additionally, a plurality of transparent pockets 16, 18, 20, 22 may be disposed on an inner surface 14 of the cover 12, which allows the user to display, for example, advertising, photographs, ingredients, or labels for the slices of cake or the like. Preferably, the pockets are provided in a variety of sizes, permitting the display of a variety of different information. For example, pocket 16 may have dimensions of approximately four inches by six inches, allowing for the display of a photo. Pocket 18 may have dimensions of approximately eight inches by ten inches, allowing for the display of a typical advertising flyer. Pocket 20 may have dimensions of approximately five inches by seven inches, allowing for the display of ingredients of the slices of cake C. And pockets 22 may have dimensions of approximately two inches by three inches, with five pockets being provided, allowing for each column of plates \( P \) and slices of cake C to be labeled as to type, for example. It should be understood that the number, size and shape of the pockets are shown for exemplary purposes only in the Figures.

[0020] As best shown in FIG. 2, a fold or score line 34 is preferably formed across the length of upper tray 26, allowing the upper tray 26 to be folded when not in use. A similar fold or score may be formed in lower tray 32. Additionally, removable covers formed from plastic wrap or the like may be used to cover the slices of cake \( C \) and plates \( P \) when the carrier is in use.

[0021] As best shown in FIG. 3, a pair of handles 36 may be attached to the outer surface of the at least one sidewall 25 for carrying the carrier 10 when in the closed configuration. Although carrier 10 may have any desired dimensions or configuration, depending upon the volume and type of food-stuffs to be transported therein, the carrier 10 may have a substantially rectangular contour, as shown in FIGS. 1-3, with exemplary dimensions of a length of approximately twenty inches, a width of approximately fourteen inches, and a thickness of approximately ten inches.

[0022] It is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to the embodiments described above, but encompasses any and all embodiments within the scope of the following claims.

I claim:

1. A bulk food carrier, comprising:
   a base having a lower wall and peripheral sidewalls, the lower wall and peripheral sidewalls defining an open interior region;  
   a cover pivotally attached to the base for selectively covering and sealing the open interior region thereof;  
   an upper tray removably disposed within the open interior region of the base tray, the upper tray having an upper surface;  
   means for supporting the upper tray above the lower tray in spaced apart relation thereto, and for releasably attaching the upper tray within the open interior region of the base;  
   clips attached to the upper surfaces of the upper and lower trays for releasably attaching a plurality of food plates to the respective upper surfaces of the upper and lower trays.

2. The bulk food carrier as recited in claim 1, wherein said means for supporting includes at least one bracket attached to the peripheral sidewalls.

3. The bulk food carrier as recited in claim 1, wherein said base and said cover are fabricated from a flexible and washable material.

4. The bulk food carrier as recited in claim 1, further including a releasable fastener for sealing said cover to said base.

5. The bulk food carrier as recited in claim 4, wherein said releasable fastener comprises a zipper.

6. The bulk food carrier as recited in claim 1 further including handles disposed on said peripheral sidewalls.

7. A bulk food carrier, comprising:
   a base having a lower wall and peripheral sidewalls, the lower wall and peripheral sidewalls defining an open interior region;  
   a cover pivotally attached to the base for selectively covering and sealing the open interior region thereof, the cover having an inner surface;  
   a lower tray disposed within the open interior region of the base, the lower tray being supported by the lower wall of the base, the lower tray having an upper surface;  
   an upper tray removably disposed within the open interior region of the base, the upper tray having an upper surface;  
   means for supporting the upper tray above the lower tray in spaced apart relation thereto, and for releasably attaching the upper tray within the open interior region of the base;  
   a plurality of clips attached to respective upper surfaces of the upper and lower trays for releasably attaching a plurality of food plates thereto;  
   a fastener having mating portions attached to the base and the cover for selectively and releasably sealing the cover to the base.

8. The bulk food carrier as recited in claim 7, wherein said means for supporting includes at least one bracket attached to the peripheral sidewalls of the base.

9. The bulk food carrier as recited in claim 7, wherein said base and said cover are fabricated from a flexible and washable material.

10. The bulk food carrier as recited in claim 7, wherein said fastener for selectively and releasably sealing the cover to the base comprises a zipper.

11. The bulk food carrier as recited in claim 7, further including handles disposed on said peripheral sidewalls.

12. The bulk food carrier as recited in claim 7, further including an plurality of transparent pockets disposed on the inner surface of said cover.

13. The bulk food carrier as recited in claim 7 wherein said upper tray has a length and wherein said fold line is formed along the length of said upper tray.
14. A bulk food carrier, comprising:
   a base having a lower wall and peripheral sidewalls, the
   lower wall and peripheral sidewalls defining an open
   interior region;
   a cover pivotally attached to the base for selectively cov-
   ering and sealing the open interior region thereof, the
   cover having an inner surface;
   a lower tray disposed within the open interior region of the
   base, the lower tray being supported by the lower wall of
   the base, the lower tray having an upper surface;
   an upper tray removably disposed within the open interior
   region of the base, the upper tray having an upper sur-
   face;
   a plurality of brackets attached to the peripheral sidewalls
   for supporting the upper tray above the lower tray in
   spaced apart relation thereto, and for releasably attach-
   ing the upper tray within the open interior region of the
   base;

   a plurality of clips attached to the respective upper surfaces
   of the upper and lower trays for releasably attaching a
   plurality of food plates thereto; and

   a zipper attached to the base and the cover for selectively
   and releasably sealing the cover to the base.

15. The bulk food carrier as recited in claim 14, further
   including handles disposed on said peripheral sidewalls.

16. The bulk food carrier as recited in claim 14, further
   including a plurality of transparent pockets disposed on the
   inner surface of said cover.

17. The bulk food carrier as recited in claim 14 wherein
   said upper tray and said lower tray have respective lengths
   and wherein a respective fold line is formed along each of the
   respective lengths of said trays.

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