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(54) **Title**: TABLEWARE DEVICE FOR EFFICIENT CONSUMPTION OF COOKIES AND MILK

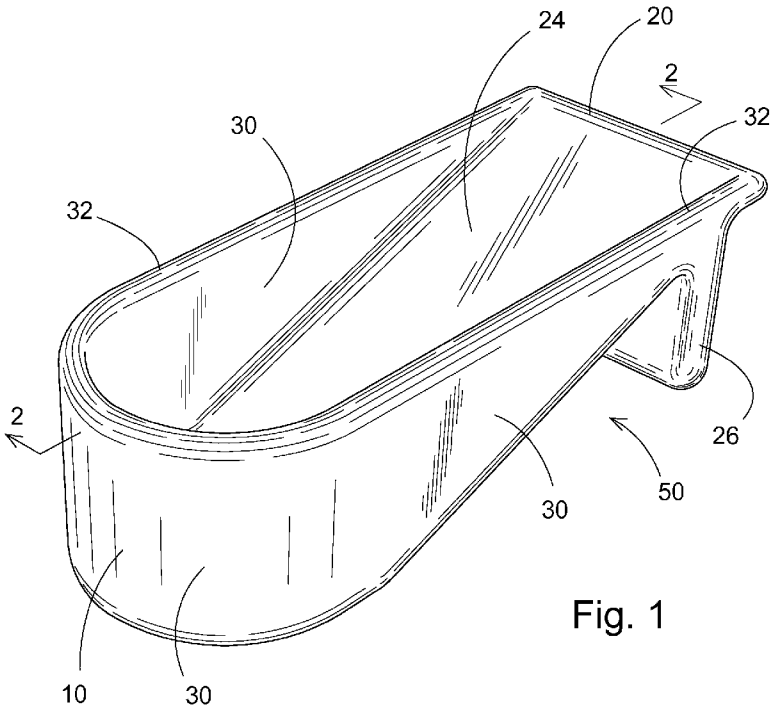


Fig. 1

(57) **Abstract**: A tableware vessel is provided that significantly improves the time efficiency of eating cookies and milk when the user desires the cookies to be thoroughly soaked in the milk. The vessel is elongated to permit simultaneous side -by-side soaking of multiple cookies. A uniquely configured sloped floor allows the volume of milk to be limited to the quantity desired by the user. The sloped floor guides the cookies from one end of the vessel to the other as they soak. The user can then remove each thoroughly soaked cookie, in sequence, from the scooping end of the vessel, where the floor is lowest.

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Patent Application of Arnold W. Cross

for

Tableware Device for Efficient Consumption of Cookies and Milk

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/923,618.

FIELD OF INVENTION

The present invention is directed to an article of tableware for personal consumption of food items soaked in fluid.

BACKGROUND

This specification concerns a device for soaking multiples of a food item of specific size in a fluid for immediate human consumption. The qualifier, "of specific size", means the food item is normally consumed one at a time and is produced with consistency in its dimensions. To provide a familiar context for the reader, the terms "cookie" and "milk" are used throughout this specification as proxies for the food item of specific size and the fluid. Wherever "cookie" or "milk" appears, it should be understood to mean "food item of specific size" or "fluid", respectively. The specific size may differ from one embodiment to another and is referenced as the "intended cookie size".

The vessel traditionally used to eat cookies soaked in milk is the cup. Milk is held in the cup, and the cookie is introduced to the milk. One common method is for the user to hold the cookie while dipping it in the milk. Another method, which provides more thorough soaking of the cookie, is for the user to place the cookie in the milk and scoop it out with a spoon once it has absorbed the requisite amount of milk. Each thoroughly soaked cookie is then eaten, and the next cookie is placed into the cup. This method requires the user to wait for each cookie to be thoroughly soaked and removed from the cup before the next cookie is introduced. If the user introduces a second cookie while a first cookie is still soaking, then the user is faced with the challenge of removing the first cookie from beneath the second cookie. Inserting the second cookie beneath the first cookie is not practical, because buoyancy of the second cookie tends to lift the first cookie out of the milk. Orienting cookies vertically and placing them side by side in the cup causes uneven saturation. The time inefficiency inherent in eating cookies soaked with milk in a cup has not been effectively addressed in the prior art.

Another type of vessel that can be used to eat cookies and milk is a bowl. It allows cookies to be simultaneously soaked, but it has other disadvantages. A bowl requires a larger quantity of milk to achieve an adequate milk depth. While the cookies may be conveniently removed from the bowl, doing it in sequence requires tracking the location of each cookie in the bowl. As the milk depth becomes low, the user must lift one side of the bowl in an awkward and generally not very effective effort to give full milk exposure to the cookies.

Prior inventions relating to the immediate consumption of food items soaked in fluid can be divided into three categories: utensils which hold cookies as they are dipped in milk, bowls with separation features, and bowls with consolidation features.

With respect to utensils that hold cookies as they are dipped in milk, their focus is on holding and controlling the cookies and are silent with respect to the features of the vessel that holds the milk.

Bowls with separation features are directed toward eating granular food items in fluid, "granular" meaning that it is normally scooped into the mouth in multiples. Their stated objective is to keep the food item dry until the user is ready to mix it with the fluid, not to control the soaking process. They all have varying degrees of the disadvantages described above for bowls.

Bowls with consolidation features are directed toward controlling small quantities of granular food items, such as peas or corn. They are not effective in overcoming the disadvantages of bowls with respect to soaking of cookies in milk.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

My device and its method of use have advantages which overcome the difficulties in the prior art. The user is able to soak multiple cookies simultaneously without losing track of the sequence that they were introduced to the milk. The user is able to conveniently remove the soaked cookies in sequence. The amount of milk used is similar to the amount that would be used in a cup for the same purpose, but the time it takes to consume a satisfying quantity of thoroughly soaked cookies is drastically reduced.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Two drawing sheets, showing the following figures, are included with this application.

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a basic embodiment.

Fig. 2 is a longitudinal sectional view of the embodiment of Fig. 1.

Fig. 3 is a perspective view of an embodiment with several optional features.

Fig. 4 is a longitudinal sectional view of the embodiment of Fig. 3.

DESCRIPTION

In this description and the claims, "accommodate" refers to a condition in which lateral movement of a single food item is restricted, and longitudinal movement is limited by the number of food items accommodated without the food items overlapping. This definition applies when the food items are oriented with their smallest dimension vertical. Accommodation may include allowance for variability of the food item size and clearance for insertion of a utensil, such as a spoon, around the food item.

One embodiment of my device, shown in Fig. 1 and Fig 2, is a vessel having a scooping end 10 and an entry end 20 and having a length to width ratio of at least two to one, with the width sized to accommodate the intended cookie size. The scooping end 10 has a level floor 14 which is essentially level over a longitudinal distance commensurate with the intended cookie size. The scooping end 10 is partially bounded by a wall 30 which at that end resembles a circumferential half of the wall of a coffee cup, shortened in height by about a third. Where that part of the wall 30 opens toward the level floor 14, the laterally opposed sides of the wall 30 continue longitudinally to the entry end 20 of the vessel. The upper edge of the wall 30 is its rim 32. The edge of the level floor 12 which is not bounded by the wall 30 merges with a sloped floor 24 which runs the remaining length of the vessel, bounded on its lateral sides by the wall 30. The sloped floor 24 is sloped, aligning with the level floor 14 toward the scooping end 10 and aligning with the rim 32 at the entry end 20. The level floor 14, the sloped floor 24 and the wall 30 are merged to form a vessel body 50 which is capable of holding a fluid. A support structure 26 is affixed to the underside of the vessel body 50 for support at the entry end 20.

The device may be constructed of any material suitable for tableware, including combinations of materials. Suitable materials include fired clay, glass, plastic, wood, metals, paper, and composites. One method of manufacturing in clay is as follows.

- Cut the floors from a slab as a single piece.
- Cut the wall from a slab.

- Score and slip the floor and wall pieces and join them to form the vessel body.
- Cut the support structure from a slab and join it to the vessel body by scoring and slipping.
- Reinforce all joins with coils.
- Dry, fire, glaze, and fire as is customary in the art of Ceramics.

Slip casting, ram pressing and pressure casting are other well understood methods that can be employed for manufacturing in clay. Manufacturing in other materials can be accomplished with methods that are well known in their respective arts.

Operation:

In this description and the claims, the "desired quantity" of milk or fluid refers to the amount of fluid that is expected to be consumed by a user during one consumption session. For a given intended cookie size, a person in the culinary arts would generally recognize a reasonable range for the desired quantity of fluid.

A user employs my device for the purpose of eating food items of specific size soaked in a fluid. The user sits at a table with the device placed upon the table in front of the user. Initially the device is filled with a desired quantity of milk. The user may insert the first cookie into the milk from either end, but it should be guided to the scooping end 10 while it is floating on the milk. If the cookie is not buoyant in the milk, then the sloped floor 24 will guide it toward the scooping end 10, and the user may help it along with a utensil. The user inserts the second cookie into the milk at the entry end 20. If the device is sufficiently long with respect to the size of the cookies, the user may optionally introduce the third cookie or more at the entry end 20 before extracting the first cookie. When the first cookie has soaked in the milk to the user's satisfaction, the user extracts it at the scooping end 10 with a spoon or other appropriate utensil and eats it. The user then guides the second cookie to the scooping end 10 and inserts the next cookie at the entry end 20. The process of extracting from the scooping end 10 and inserting at the entry end 20 is successively repeated, which provides a time efficient method to consume a fulfilling number of cookies. Once the milk is reduced to a level where it will no longer accommodate multiple cookies, the user may either soak the final few cookies one at a time at the scooping end 10 or simply drink the remainder of the milk.

Variations:

An embodiment which incorporates a few of many possible optional features is shown in Fig. 3 and Fig. 4. This embodiment includes the features described above for Fig. 1 and Fig. 2, which are identified by the same reference numerals. Their descriptions remain the same, except as noted here. The wall 30 is drafted at a slight angle, which can facilitate manufacture by slip casting or ram pressing and can provide clearance for a spoon to be inserted under a cookie. Two protrusions 34 are built into the wall 30 to provide additional clearance for a spoon and a place for the user to rest the spoon when not in use. The sloped floor 24 does not rise all the way to the rim 32. Instead, a ridge 22 is formed into the entry end 20 to enable mating of the devices when one is stacked upon another. The ridge 22 contacts the support structure 26 of the stacked device to prevent sliding. The draft of the wall 30 allows mating of the two devices at the entry end 10, thereby completing a means for stacking.

Other embodiments may incorporate any one or more of the following optional variations.

- The wall 30 may be contoured at the scooping end 10 to shapes other than semicircular.
- The wall 30 may have contours other than straight and parallel along the sides of the sloped floor 24.
- The vessel body 50 may follow paths other than linear. In such cases, references herein to the scooping end 10 and entry end 20 refer to the lower and upper levels of the sloped floor 24, respectively, and references to length or the longitudinal direction refer to the central path of the sloped floor 24.
- The vertical cross section of the wall 30 may have a non-linear profile to enhance spoon angle, milk containment, cookie positioning, ease of drinking or other minor conveniences.
- The level floor 14 may extend a longitudinal distance less than the intended cookie size, still providing a particular location for convenient extraction of the cookie, even to the extent that the longitudinal distance is zero.
- The support structure 26 may take any of an infinite number of forms, including some which may be interpreted as multiple structures.
- Handles may be attached to or molded into the device.

- The lower end of the sloped floor 24 may align higher than the level floor 14 so that the last of the milk is contained in a bounded area commensurate with the intended cookie size.
- The level floor 14 may be concave rather than flat, so crumbs and the last of the milk accumulate at its center.
- The sloped floor 24 may have a concave lateral cross section to channel crumbs and to give the milk a curved edge at the entry end.
- The rim 30 may be raised near the entry end 20 to reduce spillage caused by shoaling of the milk.

CLAIMS

I claim:

1. An article of tableware comprising:

a level floor which is essentially level and is sized to accommodate a food item of specific size;

a sloped floor joining said level floor at one edge of said level floor, sloping upward from said level floor, and having a width which accommodates one sample of said food item; and

a wall rising up from said level floor, bordering said level floor except where said level floor joins with said sloped floor, said wall continuing to border on each side of said sloped floor such that said level floor, said sloped floor and said wall form a vessel body;

wherein the horizontal run and vertical rise of said sloped floor allow said vessel body to accommodate at least two of said food item and give said vessel body a volume suitable for a desired quantity of fluid plus the accommodated number of said food items.

2. The article of claim (1), further comprising a support structure beneath said sloped floor which stabilizes said vessel body and maintains said level floor and said sloped floor in their level and sloped orientations, respectively.

3. The article of claim (1), further comprising means for stacking said article, one upon another.

4. The article of claim (1), wherein said wall has a rim and said vessel body has an entry end at which said sloped floor is flush with said rim.

5. A tableware item comprising a containment means for soaking a plurality of a food item of specific size in a desired quantity of fluid and a sloping means for introducing said food item and for channeling said food item in sequence, while soaking, to a particular location of said containment means whereat said food item may be conveniently extracted, in sequence, for personal consumption;

wherein said tableware item simultaneously soaks two or more or said food items when containing said desired quantity of fluid and reduces its soaking capacity as the fluid level reduces, such that only said particular location can contain a soaking food item as the last of said fluid is soaked up.

6. A method of soaking in fluid and consuming a plurality of a food item of specific size, comprising:

pouring a desired quantity of fluid into a vessel having a width that accommodates said food item, a length that accommodates two or more said food items, a floor which is essentially level at one end, the soaking end, and slopes from near that end to meet the other end, the entry end, at or near the top of the vessel, the vessel defining a volume to contain the desired quantity of fluid and two of said food items;

placing into said fluid one of said food item;

placing into said fluid from said entry end another of said food item;

placing into said fluid from said entry end, as fluid quantity allows, additional said food items,

guiding in sequence with a utensil, as necessary, each soaking food item to said soaking end; and

removing with said utensil from said soaking end each food item and eating it.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the food item is a cookie.

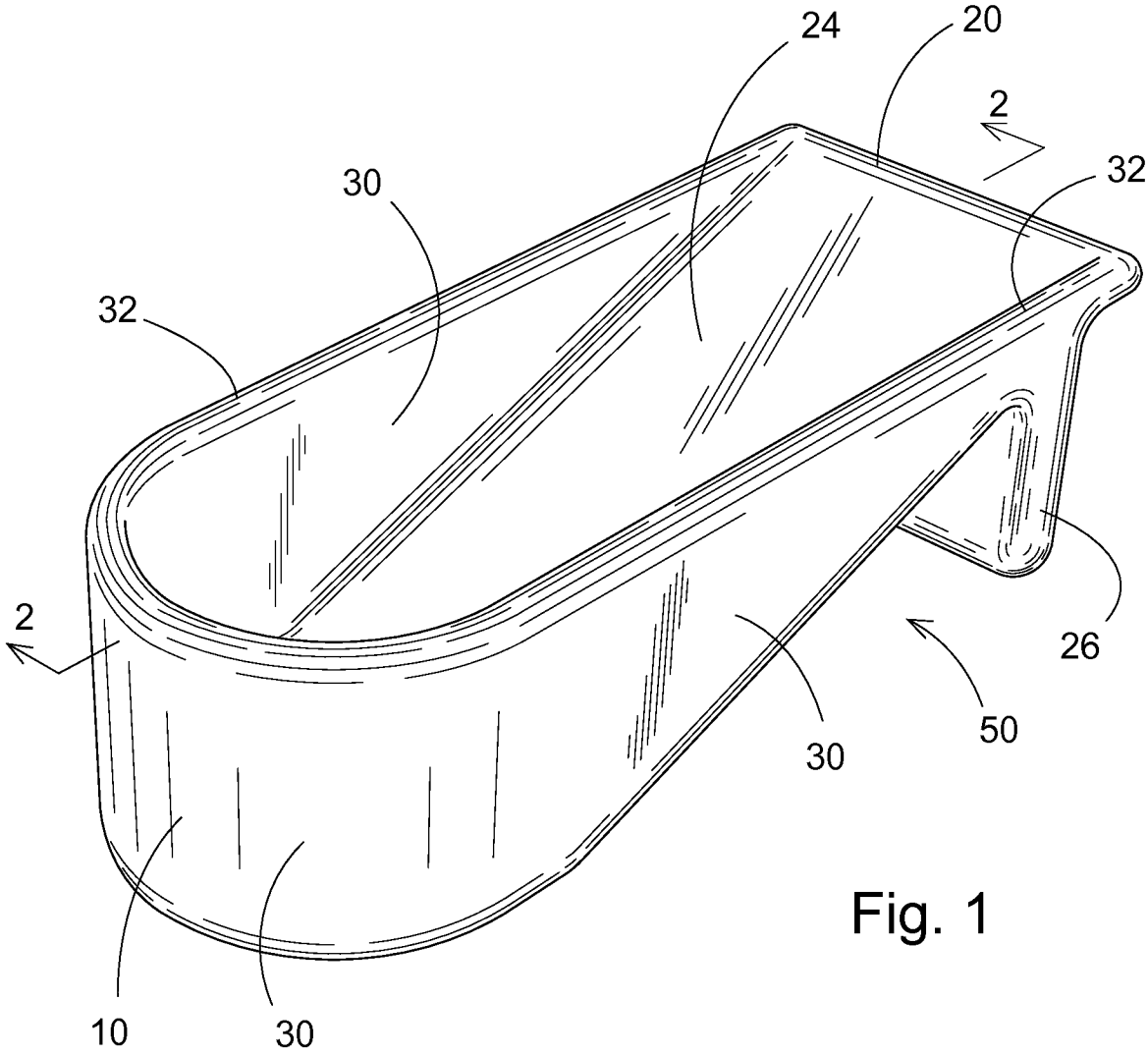
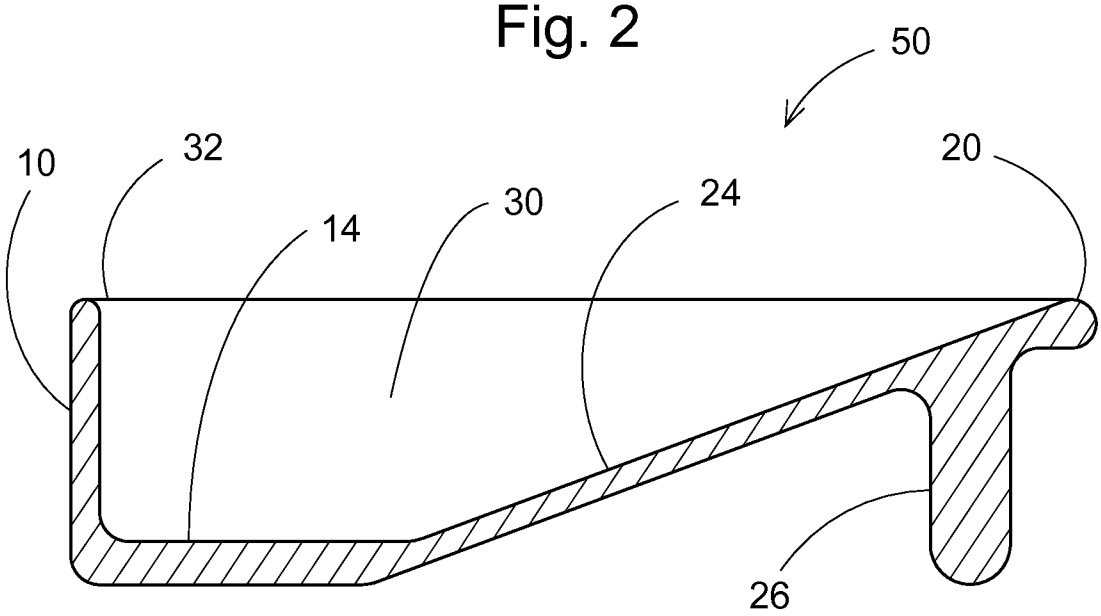


Fig. 1

Fig. 2



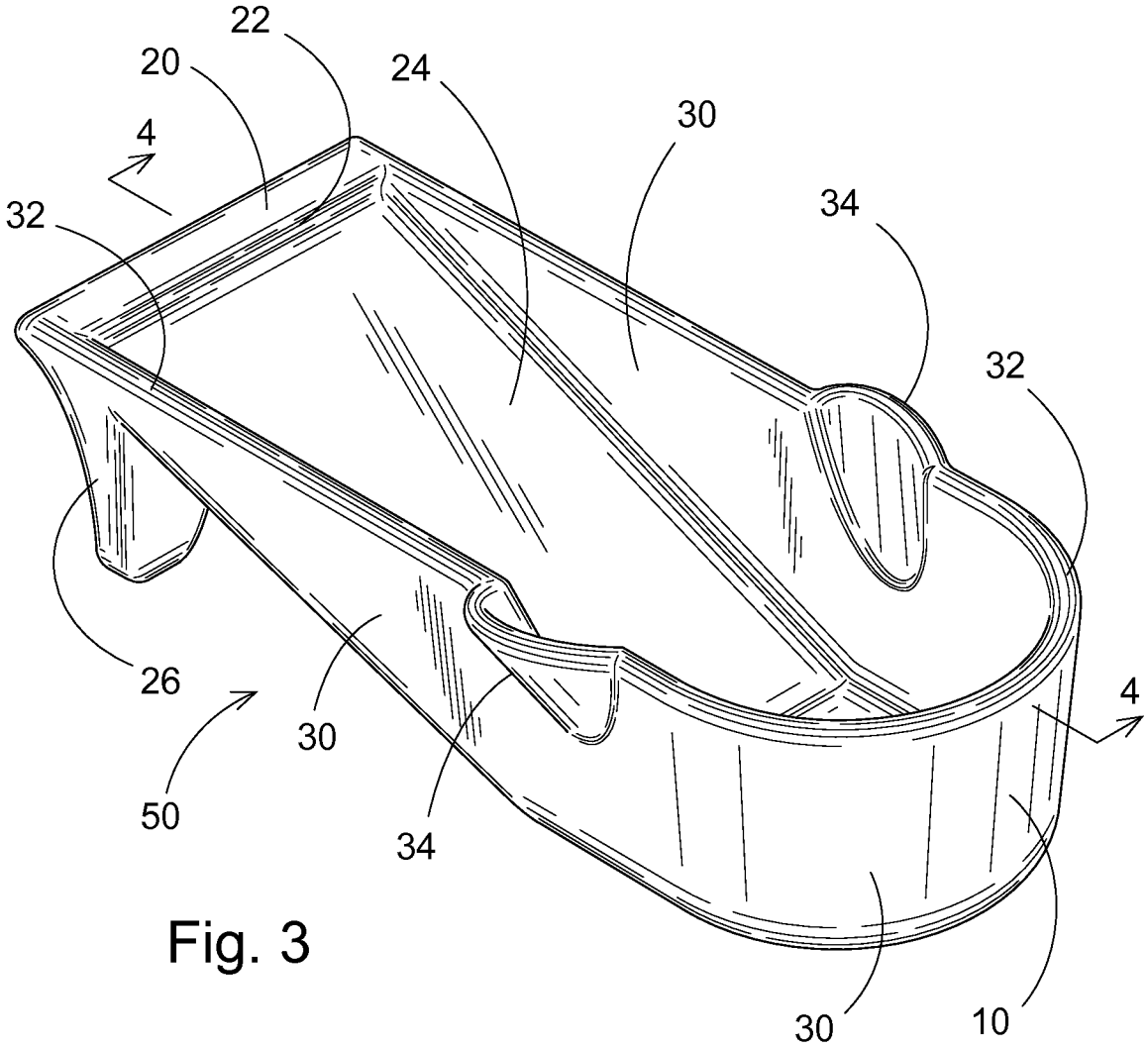
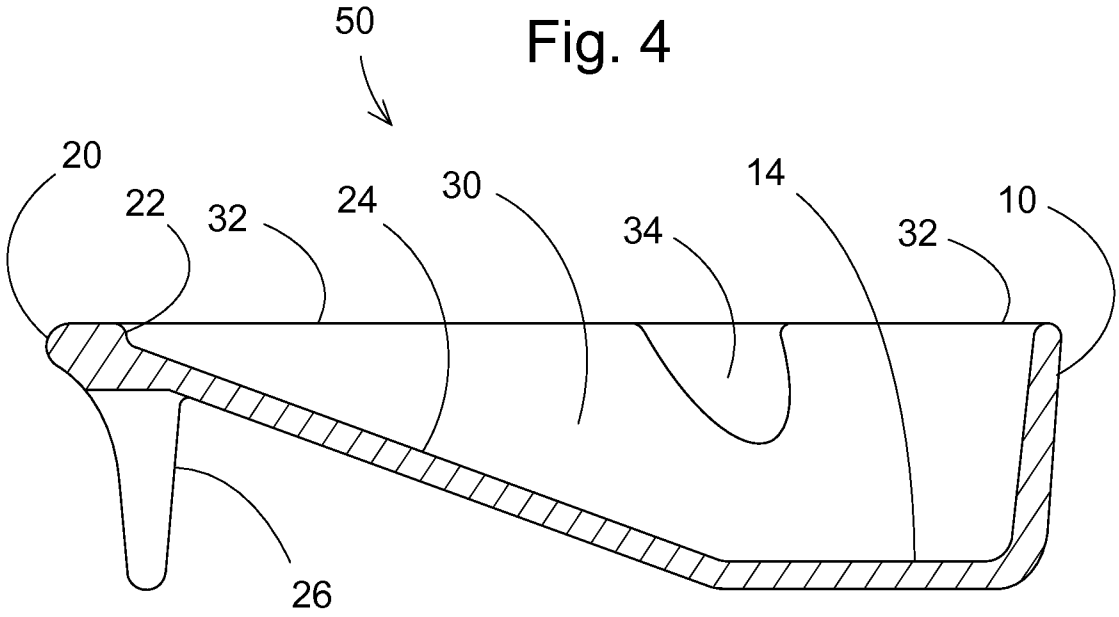

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Fig. 3

Fig. 4


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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US 14/72243

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC(8) - A47G 19/02, 19/06, 19/22, 19/30 (2015.01)
CPC - A47G 23/06, 2400/06
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC(8) - A47G 19/02, 19/06, 19/22, 19/30 (2015.01)
CPC - A47G 23/06, 2400/06

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
CPC - A47G 19/02, 19/06, 19/22, 19/2283, 19/30, 21/001

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
Patbase; Google Patents; Google Scholar; Google Web; Espacenet; Search Terms: base, bottom, coffee*, cookie*, dair*, dip*, dunk*, floor*, inclin*, milk*, plate*, serv*, slant*, slop*, soak*, tray*

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X --- Y	GB 2265816 A (Cox) 13 October 1993 (13.10.1993), Figs. 1-3; pg. 2, ln. 5-15, pg. 4, ln. 23 - pg. 5, ln. 3	1-3 and 5-6 --- 7
X	US 2012/0312823 A1 (Wilmers et al.) 13 December 2012 (13.12.2012), Figs. 1-3	1 and 3-5
Y	US 2009/0285941 A1 (Reyes) 19 November 2009 (19.11.2009), para [0006]	7
A	US 2012/0325831 A1 (Wilmers et al.) 27 December 2012 (27.12.2012), Figs. 1-3	1-7
A	US 2,207,417 A (Smith) 09 July 1940 (09.07.1940), Figs. 1-4	1-7

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☐

* Special categories of cited documents:
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
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"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
23 February 2015 (23.02.2015)	18 MAR 2015

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US	Authorized officer:
Mail Stop PCT, Attn: ISA/US, Commissioner for Patents P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450 Facsimile No. 571-273-3201	Lee W. Young PCT Helpdesk: 571-272-4300 PCT OSP: 571-272-7774