May 4, 1965 R. J. SHELLEY 3,181,919

TUBULAR DISH-DISPENSING APPARATUS

Filed March 31, 1964 2 Sheets-Sheet 1

Fig. 1

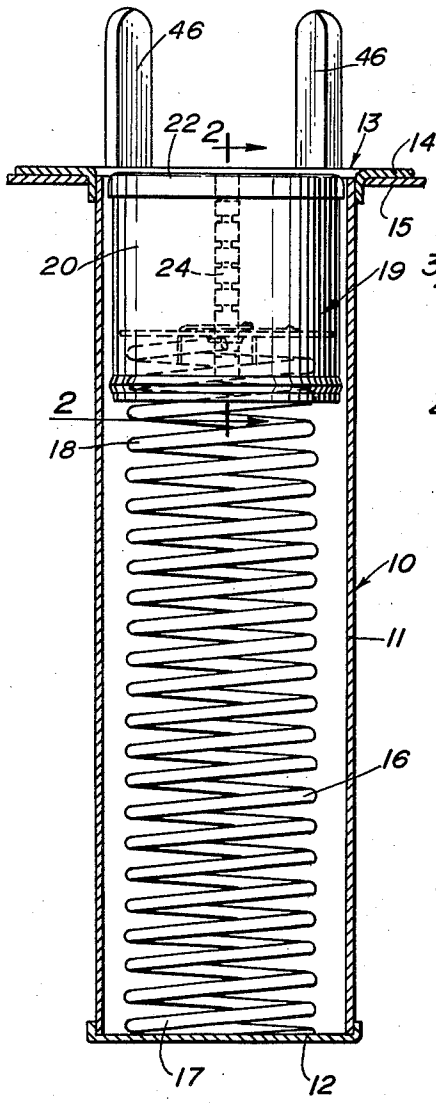


Fig. 2

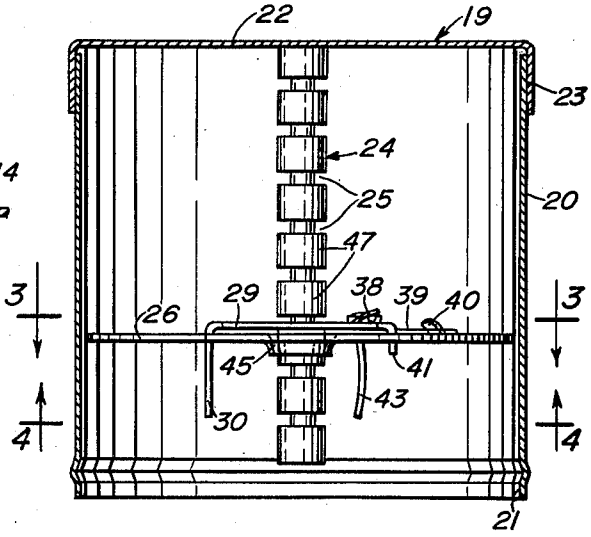
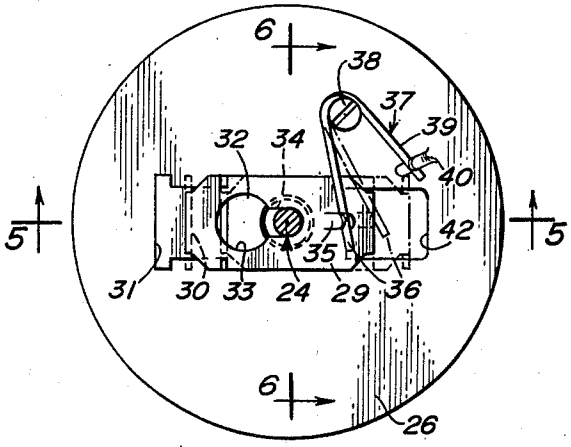


Fig. 3



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Filed March 31, 1964 2 Sheets-Sheet 2

Fig. 4

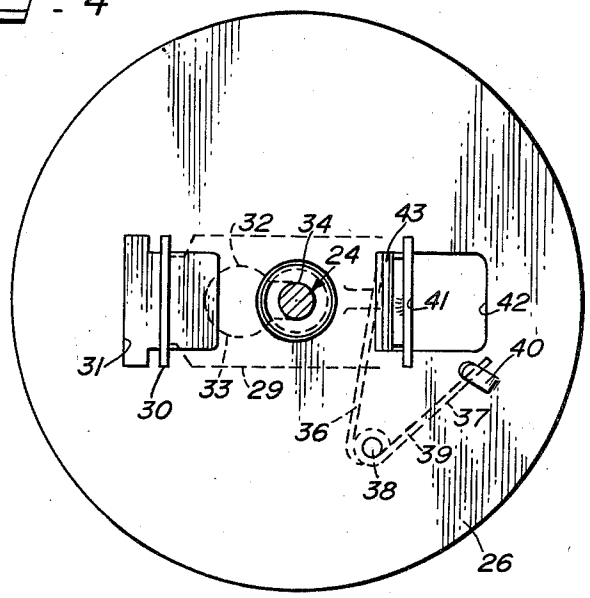


Fig. 5

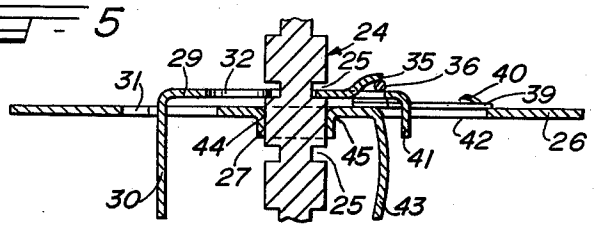
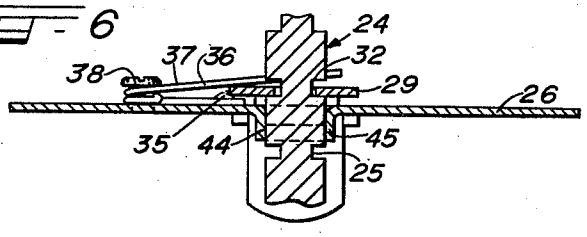


Fig. 6



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United States Patent Office 3,181,919 Patented May 4, 1965

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TUBULAR DISH-DISPENSING APPARATUS

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Filed Mar. 31, 1964, Ser. No. 356,121
8 Claims. (Cl. 312—71)

This invention relates to a tubular dish-dispensing apparatus of the type which is used in cafeterias, restaurants, hospitals, hotels, and like places, for supporting a stack of dishes or articles of dishware and maintaining them in a constantly elevated position to facilitate access thereto and removal of the dishes as and when needed.

Tubular dish-dispensing apparatus have been known and used heretofore and certain of such tubular dish-dispensing apparatus have embodied different forms including those which include a dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head arranged in the upper portion of the tubular housing and in which an elevating coil spring is arranged in the body of the tubular housing of the dish-dispensing unit and bears upwardly upon the dish-supporting head and is adjusted for pre-compression by manipulating a so-called spring pressure plate and suitable manually operable adjusting means which is accessible from the open top of the housing.

In addition, other forms of manually operable adjusting means have been employed for adjusting the compression of the elevating coil spring and such manually operable adjusting means have been accessible from the bottom of the tubular housing of the dish-dispensing unit.

However, it has been found that all of such prior tubular dish-dispensing apparatus embodying such manually operable spring adjusting means have been subject to a number of disadvantages including the fact that when the dish-dispensing unit is loaded with articles of dishware the resulting torsional twist of the elevating coil spring tends to rotate the so-called spring pressure plate with the result that the spring pressure plate becomes loose on the screw on which it is mounted with the result that the desired adjustment of the compression of the elevating coil spring is disturbed.

Accordingly, an object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved tubular dish-dispensing apparatus embodying a tubular housing having a dish-supporting and dish-dispensing unit or head movably mounted in the upper portion thereof and above the elevating coil spring and embodying a novel means for adjusting the height of the top wall or dish-dispensing platform of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head in such a manner that the position of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head and the top wall or platform thereof may be adjusted in the tubular housing and relative to the open top thereof in such a manner that the torsional twist of the elevating coil spring will in no way affect or disturb the desired adjusted position of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head or of the adjustable plate which is adjustably mounted therein.

Another object of the invention is to provide a new and improved tubular dish-dispensing apparatus embodying a novel means for adjustably mounting the adjustable disc-like member or plate in the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head relative to the top wall or dish-supporting platform thereof in such a manner that the adjustable plate may be readily adjusted by removing the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head from the open top of the tubular housing without manipulating or adjusting any screw-threaded adjusting means.

Other and further objects of the present invention will be apparent from the following description and claims and are illustrated in the accompanying drawings, which, by way of illustration, show preferred embodiments of the present invention and the principles thereof and what

I now consider to be the best mode in which I have contemplated applying these principles. Other embodiments of the invention embodying the same or equivalent principles may be used and structural changes may be made as desired by those skilled in the art without departing from the present invention.

In the drawings:

FIG. 1 is a vertical sectional view of a tubular dish-supporting and dish-dispensing apparatus embodying a preferred form of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged vertical sectional view of the new dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head taken on line 2—2 in FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a top plan view of line 3—3 in FIG. 2 showing the adjustable plate and the manually operable latch mechanism for selectively latching the adjustable plate in a pre-selected adjusted position on and relative to the centrally arranged vertical supporting member or post which is embodied in the new dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head of the new tubular dish-dispensing unit;

FIG. 4 is a bottom plan view on line 4—4 of FIG. 2;

FIG. 5 is an enlarged transverse central sectional view on line 5—5 in FIG. 3; and

FIG. 6 is an enlarged transverse central sectional view on line 6—6 in FIG. 3.

A preferred embodiment of the new tubular dish-supporting and dish-dispensing apparatus is illustrated in the drawings, where it is generally indicated at 10, and comprises an elongated tubular housing 11 which may be made of suitable metal such, for example, as stainless steel. The tubular housing 11 has a closed bottom wall 12 and an open upper end portion or top 13 which is surrounded by a laterally extending flange 14 which is suitably fastened to the wall of the tubular housing 11 and is adapted to overlie the top wall 14 of a suitable supporting unit such, for example, as a counter top 15, or the like, so as to support the new dish-supporting and dish-dispensing unit 10 in position of use in a restaurant, cafeteria, or like place, or in a portable cart in which the new dish-supporting and dish-dispensing unit may be mounted for use.

An elevating coil spring 16, calibrated to suitable characteristics, is mounted in the tubular housing 11 and the lower end portion 17 thereof rests upon the bottom wall 12 of the tubular housing 11 whereas the upper end portion 18 thereof is adapted to project into the lower end portion of the tubular body or housing 20 of a dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19 which is movably and removably mounted in the upper portion of the tubular housing 11, for reasons which will be described hereinafter.

The tubular housing 20 of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19 may be made of any suitable material such, for example, as stainless steel, and has an open bottom 21 and a closed top wall 22 which provides a dish-supporting platform. This top wall and dish-supporting platform 22 has an annular peripheral flange 23 which extends down over the upper portion of the tubular housing 20 and is suitably fastened thereto.

A vertically extending supporting member or post 24 is arranged centrally within the body of the tubular housing 20 of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19 and has its upper end portion fastened to the bottom surface of the top wall or dish-supporting platform 22 in any suitable manner, as by welding, or the like. This centrally arranged supporting member or post 24 has a series of vertically spaced latching recesses or indentations in the form of annular latching grooves 25 formed therein, and spaced at suitable intervals therealong, for a purpose which will be explained presently, the spaced annular latching grooves 25 providing a corresponding

series of annular bodies 47 on the vertically extending supporting member or post 24.

An annular plate or disc-like member 26 is adjustably mounted on the vertical supporting member or post 24. within the tubular body 20 of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19, so that it is accessible from and through the open bottom 21 thereof, in a manner and for reasons which will be pointed out presently.

The present invention embodies a novel means for adjustably mounting the adjustable disc-like or plate member 26 upon the vertically extending supporting member or post 24 and to this end an adjustable latch plate member 29 is slidably mounted upon the upper surface of the adjustable plate 26 and has a depending combination guide flange and handle portion 30 which projects downwardly through and works in a slot 31 which is formed in and extends diametrically across the adjustable plate 26. The slidable latch plate member 29 has a bayonet-shaped latching slot 32 formed therein which includes an outer and relatively large end portion 33 and an inner and relatively narrower end portion 34, as best shown in FIGS. 3 and 4 of the drawings. The slidable latch plate member 29 also has an upwardly extending abutment member or portion 35 formed thereon and which is adapted to engage against one arm 36 of a resetting spring 37 which is anchored, as by a screw 38, on the upper surface of the adjustable plate 26, the spring 37 having another arm 39 which bears against a stop lug 40 formed in the upper surface of the adjustable plate 26 (FIG. 3).

The slidable latch plate member 29 has a second depending guide arm 41 which works in and projects downwardly through a second guide slot 42 formed in the adjustable plate member 26 (FIGS. 4 and 5).

A finger grip member 43 is formed on the lower surface of the adjustable plate member 26, as by striking a portion of the metal downwardly therefrom, and the adjustable plate 26 has an annular centrally arranged opening 44 therein for the reception of the vertically extending member or post 24, this centrally arranged opening 44 being defined by an annular flange 45 which is formed centrally in the adjustable plate 26 and extends below the latter.

Suitable dish-guiding members 46 are mounted on and project upwardly from the top flange 14 of the tubular dish-dispensing housing 11.

In the use of the new tubular dish-supporting and dish-dispensing unit 10 the parts may be assembled, as shown in FIG. 1 of the drawings, with the upper end portion of the coil spring 16 projecting into the tubular body 20 of the tubular dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head 19 through the open lower end 21 thereof; it being understood that the coil spring 16 is calibrated to support a predetermined load of articles of dishware, and as to other desired characteristics, as is well understood in the art.

When the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19 is thus mounted in position of use in the tubular housing 11 the weight thereof and the weight of a stack of articles of dishware supported on the top wall or dish-supporting platform 22 of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19 bear downwardly, through the adjustable plate 26, on the upper end portion of the coil spring 16 which acts to maintain the top wall or dish-supporting platform 22 of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19, and a stack of dishes supported thereby, in a pre-selected position relative to the open upper end portion 13 of the tubular housing 11 with the dishes arranged between the dish-guiding members 46 so as to be readily accessible and removable as and when needed.

It is frequently desirable in the use of dish-supporting and dish-dispensing units, of the general character to which the present invention relates, that it be made possible to adjust the position of the top wall or dish-supporting platform 22 of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19 relative to the open upper end portion 13 of the tubular housing 11, due to variations in the nesting of the articles of dishware, variations in the weight of articles of dishware of the same general shape and design, and for other reasons, and to accomplish this result the present invention provides the novel construction of the tubular dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19 hereinbefore described.

Thus, it will be noted that in the use of the present invention the adjustable disc-like or plate member 26 may be adjusted at any desired height or vertical position, on and relative to the vertical supporting member or post 24 between the open lower end portion 21 and the top wall or dish-supporting platform 22 of the tubular dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19, and this is accomplished as follows:

The slidable latch plate member 29 is normally urged, by the resetting spring 37, into the position in which it is shown in full lines in FIG. 3 and in which position the marginal edge portions of the relatively narrow portion 34 of the bayonet latching slot 32–34, extend into or are received within one of the annular latching grooves 25 in the vertical supporting member or post 24 with the result that the adjustable plate 26 is held against vertical movement upon and relative to the vertically-extending supporting member or post 24 by reason of the fact that those portions of the adjustable plate member 26 which provide the marginal wall around the relatively narrow portion 34 of the bayonet latching slot 32–34 is thus disposed between two adjacent ones of the spaced annular bodies 47 which define the upper and lower limits of the annular latching grooves 25, thereby restraining the adjustable plate 26 from and against vertical movement upon and relative to the vertical supporting member or post 24.

In order to adjust the position of the adjustable disc-like member or plate 26 upon and relatively to the vertically extending supporting member or post 24, and thereby adjust the height of the top wall or dish-supporting platform 22 of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19 relative to the open upper end portion 13 of the tubular housing 11, it is merely necessary to tilt the tubular housing 11 so as to slide the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19 partially out of the open upper end portion 13 of the tubular housing 11 so that the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19 may be manually grasped and removed as a unit from the tubular housing 11. The dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19 may then be inverted and the finger grip handle members 30 and 43 manually grasped and pressure exerted on the finger grip member 30 so as to slide the slidable latch plate member 29 upon and relative to the adjustable plate member 26 (left to right, FIG. 3) so as to move the marginal edge portions of relatively large and generally circular portion 33 of the latching slot 32 from full to dotted line position (FIG. 3), whereupon the adjustable plate 26 and the attached slidable latch plate member 29 and associated parts may be moved axially along and relative to the vertically extending supporting member or post 24 into any desired adjusted position and vertical height thereon, since the relatively large circular portion 33 of the latching slot 32 is adapted to receive the portions 47 of the vertically extending supporting member 24 which define its maximum diameter.

Thus, it will be noted that if it is desired to adjust the adjustable plate 26 on and relative to the vertical extending supporting member or post 24 so as to raise the height of the top wall or dish-supporting platform 22 of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19 relative to the open upper end portion 13 of the tubular housing 11, this may be accomplished by adjusting the adjustable plate 26 downwardly upon and relative to the vertically extending supporting member or post 24, thereby causing the top wall or dish-supporting platform 22 of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit 19

to ride relatively higher in the tubular housing **11** and relative to the open upper end portion **13** thereof.

On the other hand, if it is desired to adjust the adjustable plate **26** so that the top wall or dish-supporting platform **22** of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit **19** is lowered relatively to the open upper end portion **13** of the tubular housing **11**, this may be accomplished by adjusting the position of the adjustable plate **26** upwardly upon and relative to the vertical extending supporting member or post **24** whereupon when the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit **19** and the top wall or dish-supporting platform **22** thereof will be disposed relatively higher in the tubular housing **20** of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit **19**, and thereby cause the top wall or dish-supporting platform **22** of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit **19** to ride relatively lower in the tubular housing **11** relative to the open upper end portion **13** of the tubular housing **11**.

It will be noted that in the use of the present invention the novel construction of the latching means, including the slidable latch plate member **29**, and associated parts, are firmly held in a pre-selected adjusting position upon the vertically extending supporting member or post **24** in one of the annular latching grooves **25**, without the need for or use of any screw-threaded adjusting means so that any torsional twist which may be imparted to the elevating coil spring **16**, as a result of the weight of a load of articles of dishware stacked on the top wall or dish-supporting platform **22** of the dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit **19**, has no tendency to and cannot vary the desired adjusted position of the adjustable plate **26** upon and relative to the vertically extending supporting member or post **24**.

It will thus be seen from the foregoing description, considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, that the present invention provides a new and improved dish-supporting and dish-dispensing apparatus having the desirable advantages and characteristics and accomplishing its intended objects including those hereinbefore pointed out and others which are inherent in the invention.

I claim:

1. A dish-dispensing apparatus comprising a tubular housing having a closed bottom wall and an open upper end portion, a coil spring arranged in the said tubular housing and having the lower end portion thereof resting upon the said bottom wall of said tubular housing, and a dish-dispensing and dish-supporting head unit arranged in the upper end portion of the said tubular housing and resting upon the said upper end portion of the said coil spring, said dish-dispensing and dish-supporting head unit comprising a tubular body having an open lower end portion adapted to receive the said upper end portion of the sail coil spring and having a closed top wall providing a dish-supporting platform, a vertically extending supporting member arranged centrally within the said tubular housing of the said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit and having its upper end portion attached to the said top wall or dish-supporting platform thereof, said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member having a series of vertically spaced annular latching recesses in the form of a series of vertically spaced annular latching grooves formed at vertically spaced intervals in the said vertically extending supporting member, an adjustable plate member arranged within the said tubular housing of the said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit and adjustable vertically therein relative to and upon the said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member, means including a manually operable latch plate member slidably mounted upon the said adjustable plate member, upon the upper surface thereof, and including a latching portion selectively engageable in any one of the said latching recesses in the said centrally arranged vertically supporting member for latching the said adjustable plate member in a pre-selected position upon said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member between the said open lower end portion of the said tubular housing of the said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit and the said top wall or dish-supporting platform thereof, and the said manually operable latch plate member having a latching slot formed therein and including a portion adapted to receive the said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member at its maximum diameter and the said latching slot having a reduced portion adapted to receive those portions of the said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member which define the marginal edge portions of the said spaced annular latching grooves therein.

2. A dish-dispensing apparatus comprising a tubular housing having a closed bottom wall and an open upper end portion, a coil spring arranged in the said tubular housing and having the lower end portion thereof resting upon the said bottom wall of said tubular housing, and a dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit arranged in the upper end portion of the said tubular housing and resting upon the said upper end portion of the said coil spring, said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit comprising a tubular body having an open lower end portion adapted to receive the said upper end portion of the said coil spring and having a closed top wall providing a dish-supporting platform, a vertically extending supporting member arranged centrally within the said tubular housing of the said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit and having its upper end portion attached to the said top wall or dish-supporting platform thereof, said centrally arranged extending vertically supporting member, and an adjustable plate member arranged within the said tubular housing of the said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit and adjustable vertically therein relative to and upon the said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member, means including a manually operable latch plate member slidably mounted upon the said adjustable plate member, upon the upper surface thereof, and including a latching portion selectively engageable in any one of the said latching recesses in the said centrally arranged vertically supporting member for latching the said adjustable plate member in a pre-selected position upon the said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member between said open lower end portion of the said tubular housing of the said dish-dispensing and dish-supporting head unit and the said top wall or dish-supporting platform thereof, the said latch plate member having a latching slot formed therein including a portion adapted to receive those portions of the said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member of a reduced diameter and which are formed by the said annular latching grooves therein, the said annular adjustable plate member having a guide slot formed therein, and the said slidable latch plate member having a finger grip handle member projecting downwardly therefrom through the said guide slot in the said adjustable plate member to enable the said slidable latch plate member to be manipulated on the said adjustable plate member from a position below the said adjustable plate member.

3. A dish-dispensing apparatus comprising a tubular housing having a closed bottom wall and an open upper end portion, a coil spring arranged in the said tubular housing and having the lower end portion thereof resting upon the said bottom wall of said tubular housing, and a dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit arranged in the upper end portion of the said tubular housing and resting upon the said upper end portion of the said coil spring, said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit comprising a tubular body having an open lower end portion adapted to receive the said upper end portion of the said coil spring and having a closed top wall providing a dish-supporting platform, a vertically extending supporting

member arranged centrally within the said tubular housing of the said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit and having its upper end portion attached to the said top wall or dish-supporting platform thereof, said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member having a series of vertically spaced latching recesses formed therein in the form of annular latching grooves formed at vertically spaced intervals in the said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member, an adjustable plate member arranged within the said tubular housing of the said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit and adjustable vertically therein relative to and upon the said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member, means including a manually operable latch member movably mounted upon the said adjustable plate member and including a latching portion selectively engageable in any one of the said latching recesses in the said centrally arranged vertically supporting member for latching the said adjustable plate member in a preselected position upon said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member between the said open lower end portion of the said tubular housing of the said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit and the said top wall or dish-supporting platform thereof, the said latching means including a latch plate member slidably mounted on the said adjustable plate member, upon the upper surface thereof, and having a latching slot formed therein, the said latching slot including a portion adapted to receive those portions of the said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member of a reduced diameter which are formed by the said annular latching grooves therein, the said annular adjustable plate member having a guide slot formed therein, the said slidable latch plate member having a finger grip handle member projecting downwardly therefrom through the said guide slot in the said adjustable plate to enable the said slidable latch plate member to be manipulated upon and from a position below the said adjustable plate member, and the said latching means including a resetting spring normally urging the said slidable latch plate member into latching engagement with one of the said annular latching grooves in the said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member.

4. A dish-dispensing apparatus comprising a tubular housing having a closed bottom wall and an open upper end portion, a coil spring arranged in the said tubular housing and having the lower end portion thereof resting upon the said bottom wall of said tubular housing, and a dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit arranged in the upper end portion of the said tubular housing and resting upon the said upper end portion of the said coil spring, said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit comprising a tubular body having an open lower end portion adapted to receive the said upper end portion of the said coil spring and having a closed top wall providing a dish-supporting platform, a vertically extending supporting member arranged centrally within the said tubular housing of the said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit and having its upper end portion attached to the said top wall or dish-supporting platform thereof, said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member having a series of vertically spaced latching recesses formed therein in the form of annular latching grooves formed at vertically spaced intervals in the said centrally arranged extending vertically supporting member, an adjustable plate member arranged within the said tubular housing of the said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit and adjustable vertically therein relative to and upon the said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member, means including a manually operable latch member movably mounted upon the said adjustable plate member and including a latching portion selectively engageable in any one of the said latching recesses in the said centrally arranged vertically supporting member for latching the said adjustable plate member in a preselected position upon said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member between the said open lower end portion of the said tubular housing of the said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit and the said top wall or dish-supporting platform thereof, the said manually operable latch member having a latching slot formed therein and the said latching slot including a portion adapted to receive those portions of the said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member of a reduced diameter which are formed by the said annular latching grooves therein, the said adjustable plate member having a guide slot therein, the said manually operable latch member having a finger grip handle member projecting downwardly therefrom through the said guide slot in the said adjustable plate member to enable the said manually operable latch member to be manipulated upon and from a position below the said adjustable plate member, the said adjustable plate member having a second and relatively stationary finger grip handle member carried by the said adjustable plate member and extending below the latter and adapted to be manually gripped as an incident to the manual gripping of the said first-named finger grip handle member on the said manually operable latch member to enable the manually operable latch member to be moved into and out of latching engagement with the said vertically extending supporting member.

5. A dish-dispensing apparatus comprising a tubular housing having a closed bottom wall and an open upper end portion, a coil spring arranged in the said tubular housing, and a dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit removably mounted in the upper end portion of the said tubular housing and resting upon the said upper end portion of the said coil spring, said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit comprising a tubular body having an open lower end portion adapted to receive the said upper end portion of the said coil spring and having a top wall providing a dish-supporting platform, a vertically extending supporting member secured centrally within the said tubular housing of the said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit, said vertically extending supporting member having a series of vertically spaced latching recesses therein, an adjustable disc-like member transversely arranged within the said tubular housing of the said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit and adjustable vertically therein relative to and upon the said centrally arranged vertically extending supporting member, means including a manually transversely slidable operable latch member movably mounted upon the said adjustable member and including a latching portion selectively engageable in any one of the said latching recesses in the said vertically supporting member for latching the said adjustable member in a preselected position upon said vertically extending supporting member between the said open lower end portion of the said tubular housing of the said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit and the top wall or dish-supporting platform thereof, and handle means carried by the said manually operable latch member and extending below the said adjustable member for manipulating the said manually operable latch member upon and relative to the said adjustable plate member from below the said adjustable member when the said dish-supporting and dish-dispensing head unit is removed from the said tubular housing through the said open upper end portion thereof.

6. A dish-dispensing apparatus as defined in claim 5 in which the said latching recesses in the said vertically extending supporting member are in the form of a series of vertically spaced annular grooves formed in the said vertically extending supporting member.

7. A dish-dispensing apparatus as defined in claim 5 wherein the vertically extending supporting member is attached to the top wall of the dish-supporting member, and said vertically adjustable member comprises a plate

with the latch member mounted thereon, the handle means of the latch member extending below said adjustable plate member.

8. A dish-dispensing apparatus as defined in claim 7 which includes additional handle means carried by the said adjustable member and extending below the latter and adapted to be manually grasped with the said handle means carried by said manually operable latch member as an incident to manual operation of said manully operable latch member.

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