

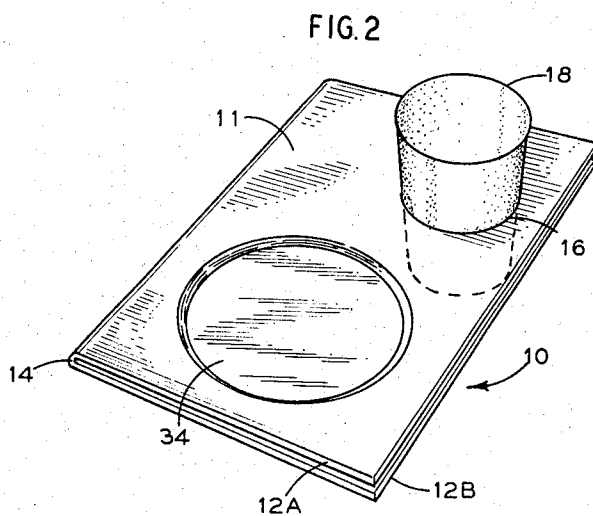
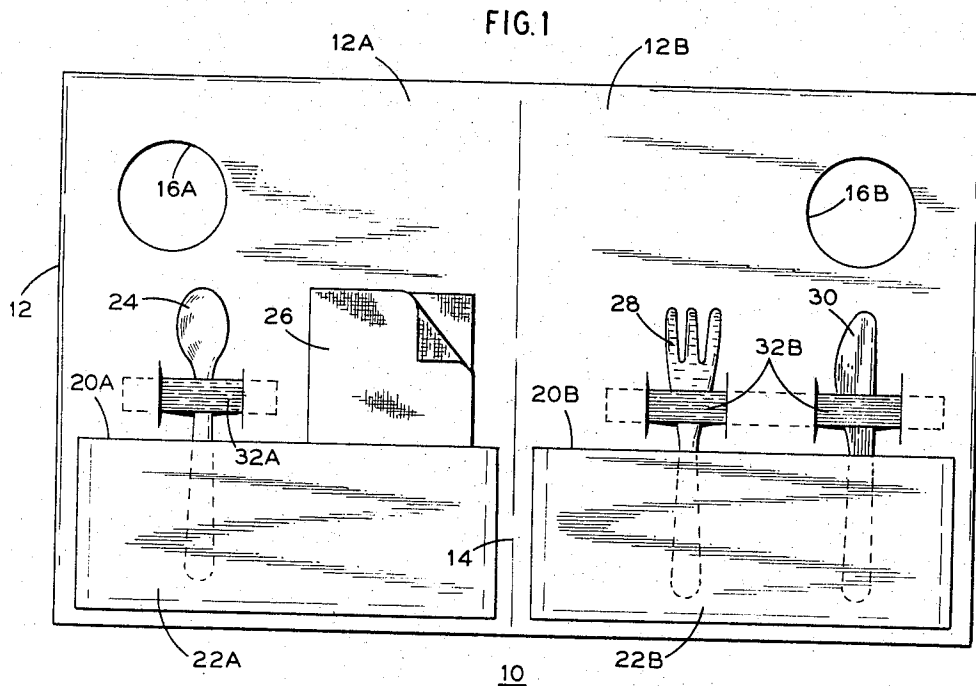
April 9, 1968

X. P. HILLIARD

3,376,974

COMBINATION CARRYING TRAY, PLACEMAT AND UTENSIL HOLDER

Filed July 12, 1966



INVENTOR.

Xenia P. Hilliard

BY

Carl P. Spier

ATTORNEY

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COMBINATION CARRYING TRAY, PLACEMAT AND UTENSIL HOLDER

Xenia P. Hilliard, Rte. 1, Box 174,
Shepherdstown, W. Va. 25443
Filed July 12, 1966, Ser. No. 564,651
4 Claims. (Cl. 206-72)

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

There is disclosed a combination carrying tray, placemat and utensil holder. The device comprises a rigid flat element, divided into two sections, which is folded. Each of the elements has a pocket for holding a napkin and eating utensils. An elastic band is fixed to each surface for retaining the position of the utensils. In addition, there is an opening in the sections which are aligned in the folded position for holding a drinking cup.

This invention pertains to a food carrying tray which includes means for storing eating utensils and which can be used also as a placemat or even as a lap supported table surface.

At many church or fraternal organization picnics the food is served cafeteria style. A person picks up a plate at the start of the line. The food is put on the plate as the person moves along the line. At the end of the line the person picks up eating utensils and a cup of a drink such as coffee. The person must then juggle the plate, the utensils and the cup as he searches out a place to eat. Quite often he must eat while supporting the plate on his lap. Even when tables are available, they may not be covered with a table cloth. Then the person must put his plate, cup and utensils on a bare table.

It is an object of the invention to provide an improved carrying tray or picnic placemat which removes all of the above-mentioned inconveniences.

Generally, the invention contemplates a food and utensil carrying tray which comprises a rigid flat element for supporting a plate or the like. Fixed to the element are means for providing a pocket to hold utensils.

A feature of the invention is the provision of an opening in the element to accommodate a drinking cup.

Another feature of the invention contemplates that the element is folded into two sections with opposed faces. In at least one of the opposed faces is means for holding the eating utensils.

Other objects, features and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following detailed description when read with the accompanying drawing which shows, by way of example and not limitation, the now preferred embodiment of the invention.

In the drawing:

FIG. 1 shows a plan view of the carrying tray in its open state; and

FIG. 2 shows a perspective view of the carrying tray in its folded state for carrying a plate and a drinking cup.

Referring now to FIG. 1, the carrying tray 10 is shown comprising a rigid flat element 12. The element 12 can be made of cardboard or the like. The cardboard is preferably covered with a layer of material which is substantially impervious to liquids. Element 12 is divided into two sections 12A and 12B by a fold line 14. Thus, the element 12 can be folded as shown in FIG. 2.

Each of the sections 12A and 12B is provided with an opening 16A and 16B respectively. The openings 16A and 16B are so disposed in the sections 12A and 12B that when the element 12 is folded, the openings are

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aligned to provide a common opening for accommodating a drinking cup 18.

In each of the opposed inner faces of the sections 12A and 12B is a pocket 20A and 20B. The pockets are obtained by affixing sheetlike elements 22A and 22B to the inner faces of sections 12A and 12B. For example, element 22A can be affixed to section 12A by gluing along three of its edges.

Eating utensils, such as spoon 24, napkin 26, fork 28 and knife 30, are held by the pockets. In order to prevent the sliding about of the utensils, it is preferable to fix bands 32 of an elastomer to the inner faces of the sections 12.

Initially, the carrying tray 10 is opened. A knife, a fork and a spoon are slipped under their appropriate bands with their handle portions being slid into the associated pockets. The napkin is also slid into its pocket. The tray 10 is then folded.

A plurality of so assembled and folded trays may be then stacked at the start of a feeding line. A person can then pick up a tray and pass along the line. A plate (not shown) is loaded with food and put on the top 11 of the tray 10. The person, when he picks up a full drinking cup 18, need only place it in opening 16. Thus, the person can carry his food, drink and utensils in one hand. In order to prevent sliding of the plate on the top 11 of the tray, it is desirable to emboss a depression 34 in the top 11.

When the person has reached his eating place, he removes the plate from the top 11 and the cup 18 from the opening 16. He then opens the tray 10, exposing the eating utensils which he removes. If the eating place is a table, he leaves the tray open and places his plate and cup on the inner faces. The tray now becomes a placemat. If the person must eat from his lap, he can refold the tray and return the cup to the opening and the plate to the top of the tray. The tray now becomes a lap-supported eating surface.

Such a tray can be utilized as part of a "one-shot" throw away combination with a paper drinking cup, a paper plate and inexpensive eating utensils. Alternately, the tray can be part of a reusable combination with better quality cups, plates and utensils.

It should be noted that the tray is ideally suited for advertising purposes. For example, a mortician could have printed on the tray appropriate advertising text and then donate the trays to a church for its picnics.

While only one embodiment of the invention has been shown and described in detail, there will now be obvious to those skilled in the art many modifications and variations which satisfy many or all of the objects of the invention but which do not depart from the spirit thereof as defined by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A food and utensil carrying tray comprising a rigid flat element, said element including two sections connected by a foldline so that when said element is folded said sections face each other in opposed relationship, means for providing a pocket to hold eating utensils in at least one of the opposed section faces, and each of said sections being provided with an opening, said openings being oriented within their respective sections so that when said element is folded said openings are aligned to accept a liquid container.

2. The carrying tray of claim 1 wherein one of said sections is embossed to accept the base portion of a plate.

3. A food and utensil carrying tray comprising a rigid flat element, said element including two sections connected by a foldline so that when said element is folded said sections face each other in opposed relationship,

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means for providing a pocket to hold eating utensils in at least one of the opposed section faces, a band means on the face of at least one of said opposed sections, the ends of said band means being fixed to said face so that an eating utensil can be held between said band means and the face of said section and also by said pocket providing means and at least one of said sections is embossed to accept the base portion of a plate.

4. The carrying tray of claim 3 wherein each of said sections is provided with an opening, said openings being oriented within their respective sections so that when said element is folded said openings are aligned to accept a liquid container.

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MARTHA L. RICE, *Primary Examiner.*