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FR-A- 1 327 914
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PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 1997, no. 10, 31 October 1997 (1997-10-31) -& JP 09, 156677, A, (FUJII SEAL CO LTD), 17 June 1997 (1997-06-17)

DESCRIPTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a resealable container, and in particular, a new and improved resealable container having a reclosable sealing layer which can be pulled back and reclosed against a top portion of the container.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Containers for food products such as cookies and other snacks typically include a frame surrounded by an outer wrapper. The frame acts as a tray to hold the food product and to protect the food-product from damage. One normally gains access to the contents of the container by opening one end of the wrapper, withdrawing the tray from the inside thereof, and then removing the food product from the tray. However, these containers generally do not provide a convenient opening and reclosing arrangement. For example, reclosing of the wrapper, once opened, generally includes simply folding or rolling the end down and clipping the end to keep the wrapper closed.

[0003] Redosable seals have been used for dispensing bags for wet tissue or disposable cleaning wipes. The label on these bags can be pulled back thereby exposing an opening, allowing access to the wet tissues or wipes inside. Typically, these dispensing bags are completely flexible, formed exclusively of a plastic or other suitable flexible material which closely surrounds the pack of wet tissues or wipes. Examples of these dispensing bags include U.S. Patent Nos. 4,840,270 and 6,026,953, US Design Patent No. D447,054 and US Publication No. 2002/0182359. However, such known dispensing bags are not well suited for containing food products as these containers fail to provide adequate protection for storing food products.

[0004] US3740238 discloses a stackable cookie package, comprising a thin resiliently flexible plastic tray defining at least two parallel open-topped longitudinally extending compartments, each of said compartments containing a longitudinal stack of cookies of uniform size and shape standing on the edge therein and projecting upwardly beyond said plastic tray, said tray and cookies being enclosed in a flexible plastic wrapper, each of said compartments comprising longitudinal sidewalls terminating at their lower edges in an elongate centrally located floor section, said floor surface, being proportioned stably to support a said package on a horizontal support surface, said sidewalls nestingly accommodating side edge portions of a longitudinal stack of cookies, said floor section comprising a base and spaced apart elongate longitudinal support means for spacing the lowermost edges of a longitudinal stack of cookies in a first upper package from the uppermost edge of cookies in a like lower package.

[0005] FR1327914 discloses a process for packaging food or the like in a hermetically sealed package formed of very thin metal, paperboard, other synthetic materials or other material which is acceptable for packaging foodstuffs. The container is covered with a lid formed of cardboard, metal or thin flexible material which has an opening. The container has a wrapper formed of heat-sealable plastic material which is sealed by forming weld lines using welding electrodes.

[0006] EP488967 discloses a container-dispenser for disposable products such as wipes and the like which has a hole for the removal of the products. A closure element in correspondence with the hole includes a fixed portion which surrounds the hole in a generally U-shaped configuration and a movable flap which is intended to cover the hole as a result of the sticking of an adhesive outer portion to the container envelope. The fixed portion and the movable flap are connected by tear lines such as lines of punching which tear when the container is first opened, providing proof of any tampering therewith.

[0007] JP09-156677 discloses a package with a repeatedly sealable cover label that is stuck detachably on the opening part formed on the package main body. When the cover label is peeled off, an opening piece removed from the main package body is formed by a break means.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] The purpose of the present invention is to provide a new and improved container for food products such as cookies and the like, which container provides adequate protection for the contents thereof, while concurrently facilitating opening of the container wrapper and resealing the seal to protect the contents thereof until the contents are fully consumed.

[0009] This purpose is achieved by providing a suitable container for such food products, in combination with an easily accessible opening seal formed in a surface other than an end surface, which seal can reclose the container during use.

[0010] A polygonal shaped food container comprising:

a frame defining the polygonal shape of the container, said container having a top, a bottom and sides connecting the top and bottom, the frame containing food products such as cookies and the like;

a wrapper surrounding said frame, said wrapper forming the top, sides and bottom of the container;

characterised in that

said top having a flap which can be pulled back to form an access opening sufficiently large to provide hand access to the food products contained within the frame; and

a sealing layer permanently adhered to the flap using an appropriate adhesive and having an adhesive applied to the surface of sealing layer which is in contact with the top so that said adhesive provides a removable seal between the sealing layer and the top, said sealing layer including a tab portion located near a side of the top which can be grasped by a user, said sealing layer being releasable when said tab portion is pulled in a direction away from said side to in turn pull and thereby release at least a portion of said sealing layer sealed to the top around said opening to provide the hand access to said top access opening and reclosable against said top to seal said opening when said sealing layer is moved back against the said top.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] The invention will now be described in detail with respect to preferred embodiments with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a resealable container in a closed configuration in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 2 is a perspective view of the container of Figure 1 in a partially opened configuration;

Figure 3 is a perspective view of a frame of the container of Figures 1 and 2;

Figure 4a is a perspective view of a resealable food container having tamper-evident tape extending along a portion of a top of the container with the container depicted in a sealed configuration;

Figure 4b is a perspective view of the container of Figure 4a with the tamper-evident tape partially withdrawn;

Figure 5a is a perspective view of a resealable container with a tamper-evident removable film where the container is depicted in an unopened configuration;

Figure 5b is a perspective view of the container of Figure 5a depicted in a partially opened configuration;

Figure 6 is a perspective view of a resealable container having a tamper-evident membrane sleeve encircling the container;

Figure 7 is a perspective view of a resealable container having a tamper-evident scored seal tape extending along a portion of a top of the container;

Figure 8 is a perspective view of a resealable food container having a tamper-evident overwrap surrounding the container;

Figure 9 is a perspective view of a polygonal shaped resealable food container in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 10 is a perspective view of a different polygonal shaped resealable food container;

Figure 11 is a perspective view of a frame for a resealable food container in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 12 is a perspective view of another frame for a resealable food container; and

Figure 13 is a perspective view of another different frame for a resealable food container.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

[0012] Referring now to the drawings, like numbers represent like elements throughout the several views.

[0013] Referring now specifically to Figures 1 and 2, resealable container 10 includes a wrapper 11 which forms top 12, bottom 13, opposing sides 14a and 14b, and opposing ends 15a and 15b. The top 12 has a flap 16 with a tapered end 17. The flap 16, when pulled back from the container 10, forms an opening 18.

[0014] A sealing layer 20 is affixed to the flap 16. The sealing layer 20 is permanently affixed to the flap 16 using an appropriate adhesive. The sealing layer 20 covers a substantial portion of the top 12 extending from the proximity of end 15b to the proximity of end 15a.

[0015] Tab 22 extends or projects past corner 24. As a result, tab 22 can be grasped from above and below by ones fingers and/or thumb thereby the tab 22 is easily accessible for one to pull.

[0016] Adhesive 26 is applied to the surface of sealing layer 20 which is in contact with top 12. The adhesive 26 provides a removable seal between the sealing layer 20 and top 12.

[0017] Container 10 is transformed from a closed configuration depicted in Figure 1 to a partially opened configuration depicted in Figure 2 by grasping the tab 22 between ones fingers and/or thumb and pulling back on the sealing layer 20 to gain access to opening 18. Once container 10 is opened, one can remove individual food product contained inside the container 10 through opening 18.

[0018] Wrapper 11 surrounds a frame 30 which forms a tray for the contents of the food to be placed. Referring to Figure 3, the frame 30 is composed of a rigid material which forms the shape of the container 10. Suitable rigid material includes plastics and cardboard. Frame 30 includes ends 31a and 31b a divider 32 which divides the frame 30 into a first section 34 and a second section 36.

[0019] Frame 30 can be any polygonal shape such as the rectangular shape depicted in Figure 3. Accordingly, the rectangularly shaped frame 30 forms a rectangularly shaped container 10. Alternately, different polygonal shaped frames will form containers having the corresponding polygonal shape.

[0020] In various further embodiments, one or more tamper-evident structures are provided in an effort to indicate whether the container 10 has been previously opened or in some manner been tampered with.

[0021] Referring to Figures 4a and 4b, in one form, the tamper-evident structure includes tamper-evident tape 42 which is applied along two portions of the perimeter 45 where the sealing layer 20 contacts the top 12. The tamper-evident tape 42 must be removed prior to or at the same time the sealing layer 20 is pulled back for the first time. Once the tamper-evident tape 42 is peeled back from the wrapper 11, indicia 44 from the tamper-evident tape 42 remains on the top 20 as evidence that the tamper-evident tape 42 had been previously removed. For example, the indicia of lettering "OPENED" 46 in Figure 4b evidences that the tamper-evident tape 42 has been removed.

[0022] Referring to Figures 5a and 5b, in an alternative tamper-evident structure, container 50 includes a film 52 disposed under the sealing layer 20. The film 52 may be plastic or foil and includes a film tab 54 which one pulls to remove the film 52. In use, one opens the container 50 as container 10 and then removes and discards the removable film 52 to gain access to the food contents contained within the container 50. To reseal the container 50, sealing layer 20 is moved back to a flat position as depicted in Figure 5a.

[0023] Referring now to Figure 6, in an alternative tamper evident structure, container 60 includes a membrane sleeve 62 which is shrink wrapped around the wrapper 11. A pair of parallel perforations 64 are scored in the membrane sleeve 62 which allow one to tear open the membrane along the perforations 64. After the membrane sleeve 62 has been removed, the membrane sleeve 62 is discarded. Then, one opens the container 60 as container 10 as previously described.

[0024] Referring now to Figure 7, in yet another tamper-evident structure includes scored seal tape 72 which is placed along two portions of the perimeter 75 where the sealing layer 20 contacts the top 12. When the sealing layer 20 is pulled back from the top

12 for the first time, portion 74 of the scored seal tape 72 remains on top 12 thereby indicating that the seal layer 20 previously has been removed from the container 70.

[0025] Referring now to Figure 8, in yet another tamper-evident structure, container 80 includes an overwrap 82 which completely surrounds the wrapper 11. To gain access to the food product in container 80, one breaks open and discards overwrap 82. Then, one opens the container 80 as container 10 by pulling back on tab 22 to withdraw sealing layer 20 from the top 12.

[0026] In an alternative embodiment, rather than a rectangular container, the container may be in the form of any polygonal shaped container although rectangular which includes square is the preferred polygonal shape. As previously discussed, the polygonal shape of the container takes its form from the frame which is covered by a wrapper. For example, referring to Figure 9, container 90 is a triangular shaped polygonal container formed by wrapper 91 surrounding frame 92. In an alternative polygonal shape depicted, Figure 10 depicts container 100 in the shape of a hexagon defined by wrapper 101 which surrounds frame 102. As in the embodiment of Figures 1 and 2, one gains access to the contents of containers 90,100 by pulling back on tabs 94,104 of sealing layer 96,106, respectively.

[0027] In other alternative embodiments, other frames other than frame 30 which has a single divider 32, extending longitudinally along the length of the frame 30 can be used to form resealable containers. For example, referring to Figure 11, frame 110 includes a plurality of dividers 112 which extend transversely across the width of the frame 110. Alternatively, frame 120 includes a plurality of dividers 122 extending transversely across the frame 120 (Figure 12) and frame 130 (Figure 13) does not include a divider at all. Selection of a particular frame depends on the desired use. Further, the various frames may include ends such as frames 30, 110 and 120 which have ends 31a,31b, 111a,111b, 121a,121b; or the frame may be opened at the ends such as frame 130 with opened ends 131a,131b.

[0028] The present invention offers numerous features and advantages over previous food containers. For example, in one form, the present invention includes a tab element which extends beyond a corner of a top or side of the container which makes the tab easily accessible for being grasped and for withdrawing a sealing layer from the container.

[0029] An additional feature of the present invention is provided by a resealable sealing layer which can be pulled back and then resealable against a top portion of the container. This configuration makes it possible to gain easy access to the food product within the container without having to open the end of the container, withdraw a tray containing the food product, remove the food product from the tray, return the tray back to the container, and close off the end of the bag.

[0030] A further feature of one form of the present invention is provided by a tamper-evident structure which indicates whether the container has been previously opened or otherwise tampered. This tamper-evident structure allows a consumer to know whether the container has been previously opened. Further, the tamper-evident structure helps ensure that the contents are fresh by indicating whether the container has been previously opened.

[0031] Although the invention has been described in detail with respect to the preferred embodiments thereof, it will be apparent to one of ordinary skilled in the art that the invention is capable of numerous modifications and variations within the scope of the invention.

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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Patent documents cited in the description

- [US4840270A \[0003\]](#)
- [US6026953A \[0003\]](#)
- [USD447054S \[0003\]](#)
- [US20020182359A \[0003\]](#)

- US3740238A [0004]
- FR1327914 [0005]
- EP488967A [0006]
- JP9156677A [0007]

PATENTKRAV

1. Polygonalt formet fødevarebeholder (10), der omfatter:

5 en ramme (30), som definerer beholderens (10) polygonale form, hvilken beholder (10) har en overside (12), en bund (13) og sider (14a, 14b, 15a, 15b), der forbinder oversiden (12) og bunden (13), idet rammen (30) indeholder fødevareprodukter, såsom småkager og lignende;

10 et omslag (11), der omgiver rammen (30), hvilket omslag (11) danner oversiden (12), siderne (14a, 14b, 15a, 15b) og bunden (13) af beholderen;

kendetegnet ved, at

15 oversiden (12) har en flap (16), som kan trækkes tilbage for at danne en adgangsåbning (18), som er tilstrækkeligt stor til at tilvejebringe en håndstor adgang til de fødevareprodukter, der er indeholdt i rammen (30); og

et forseglingslag (20), der er permanent klæbet til flappen (16) ved hjælp
20 af et passende klæbemiddel, og som har et klæbemiddel (26) påført på den overflade af forseglingslaget (20), der er i kontakt med oversiden (12), således at klæbemidlet (26) tilvejebringer en aftagelig forsegling mellem forseglingslaget (20) og oversiden (12), hvilket forseglingslag (20) indbefatter en fligdel (22), der er beliggende nær en side af oversiden (12), og som en bruger kan tage fat i,
25 hvilket forseglingslag (20) kan frigøres, når fligdelen (22) trækkes i en retning væk fra siden for skiftevis at trække og derved frigøre mindst en del af forseglingslaget (20), der er forseglet til oversiden (12) rundt om åbningen (18), for at tilvejebringe den håndstore adgang til adgangsåbningen (18) i oversiden, og kan lukkes igen ved kontakt med oversiden (12) for at forsegle åbningen (18),
30 når forseglingslaget (20) føres tilbage i kontakt med oversiden (12).

2. Polygonalt formet fødevarebeholder (10) ifølge krav 1, hvor fligdelen (22) rager ud over et hjørne (24) af oversiden (12).

3. Polygonalt formet fødevarebeholder (10) ifølge krav 1, der endvidere omfatter manipulationsvisende midler.

4. Polygonalt formet fødevarebeholder (10) ifølge krav 1, hvor fligdelen (22)
5 er fri i forhold til resten af beholderen (10), således at der kan tages fat i den ovenfra og nedefra for at åbne beholderen (10).

5. Polygonalt formet fødevarebeholder (10) ifølge krav 1, hvor forseglingslaget (20) i det væsentlige dækker hele oversiden (12).

DRAWINGS

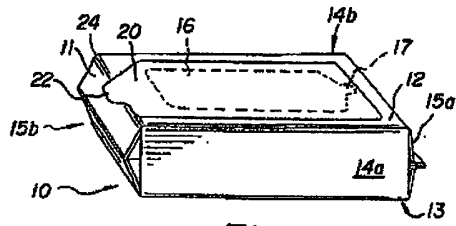


Fig. 1

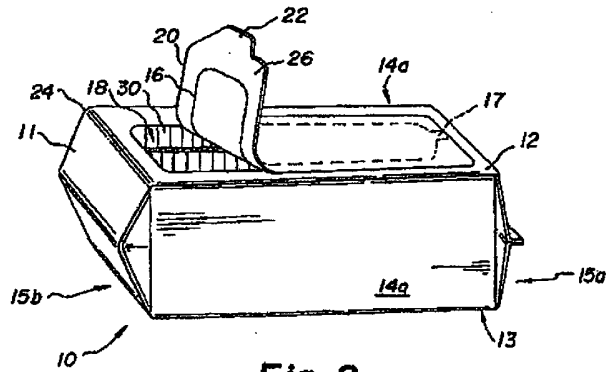


Fig. 2

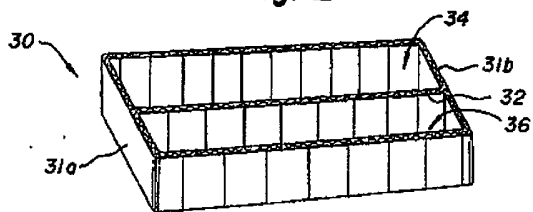
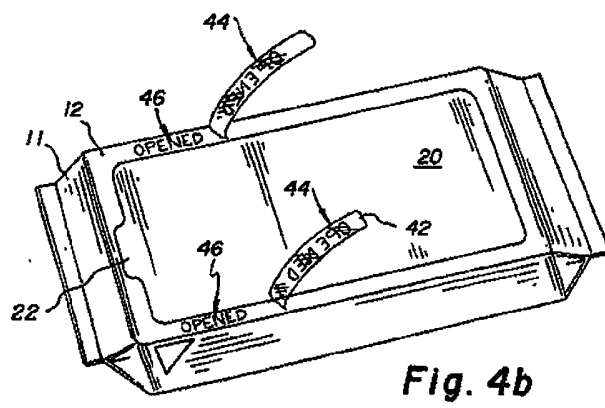
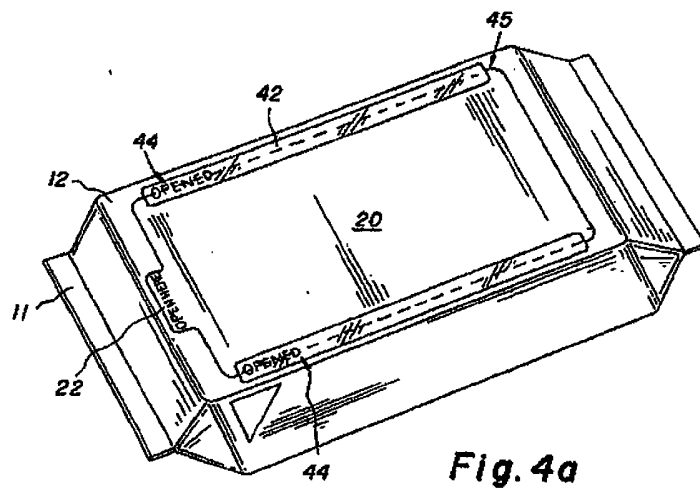


Fig. 3



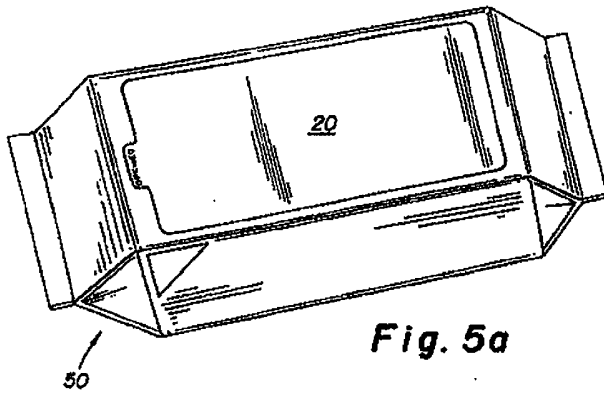


Fig. 5a

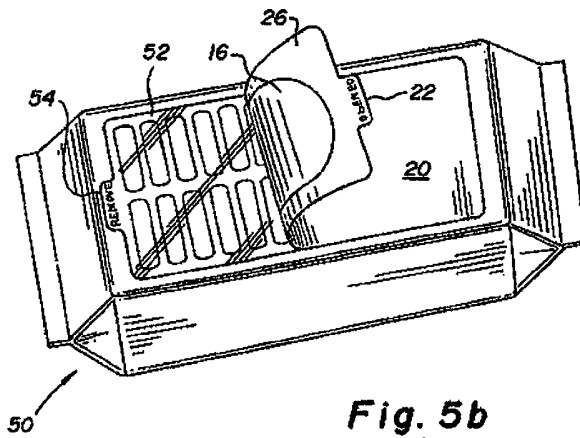
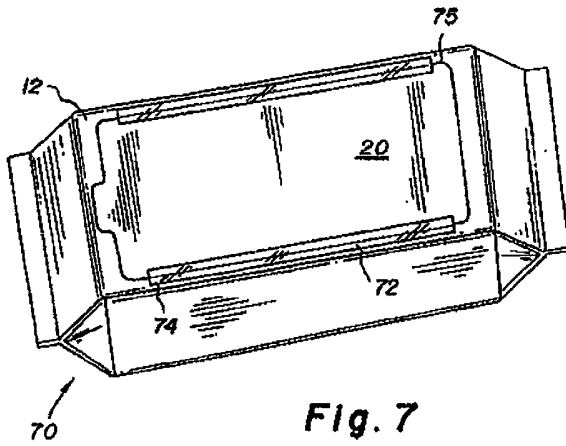
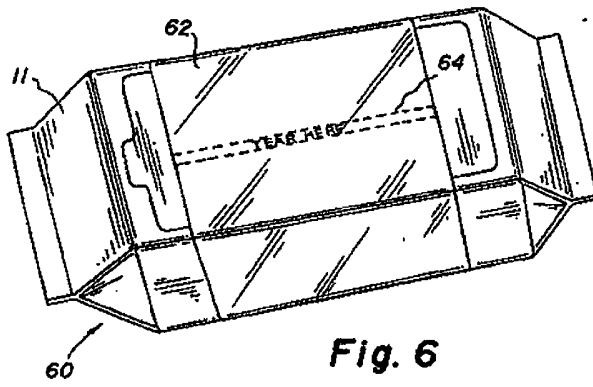


Fig. 5b



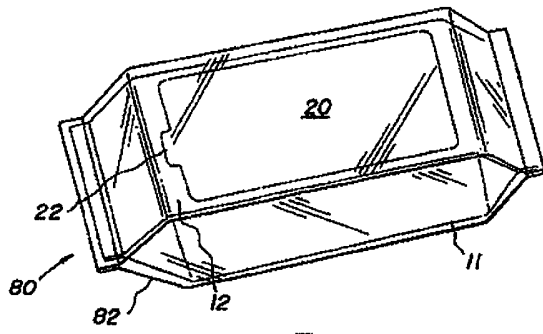


Fig. 8

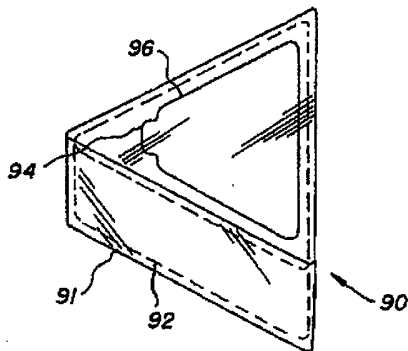


Fig. 9

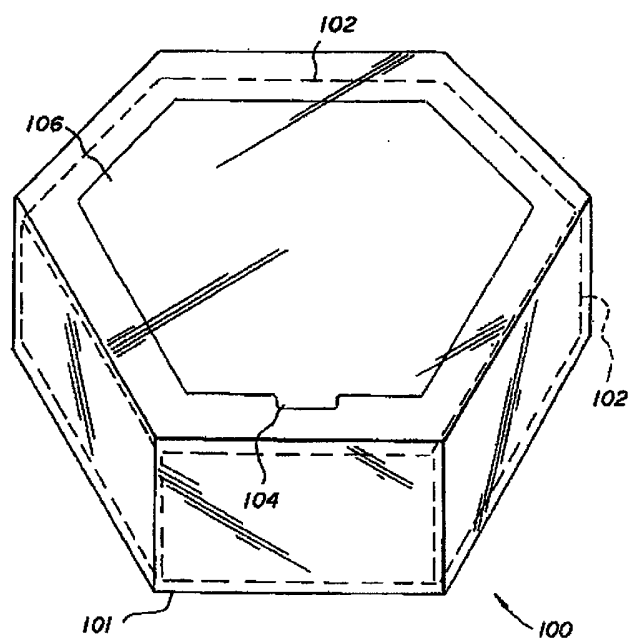


Fig. 10

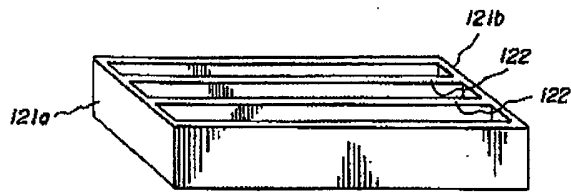


Fig. 12

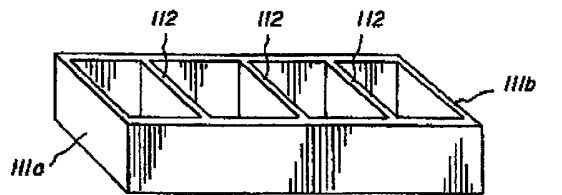


Fig. 11

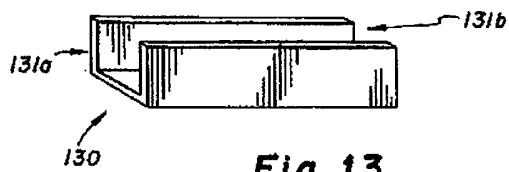


Fig. 13