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DISPENSING CONTAINER FOR DISPLAYING ARTICLES ON A SURFACE

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3 Sheets-Sheet 1

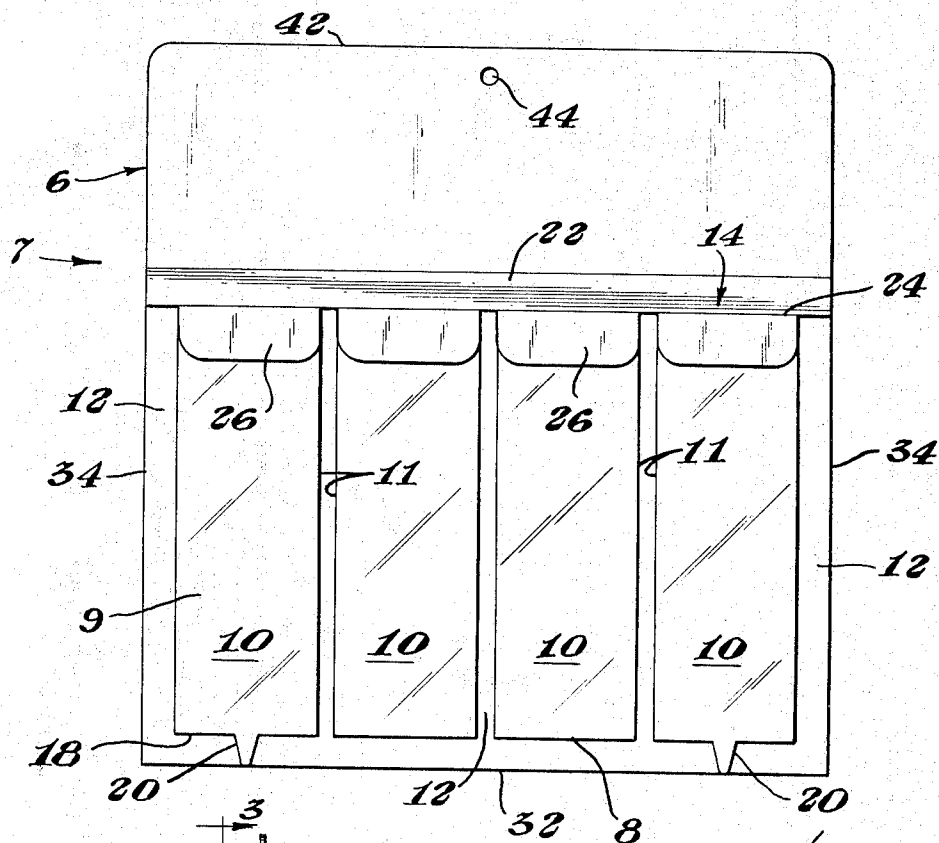


Fig. 1

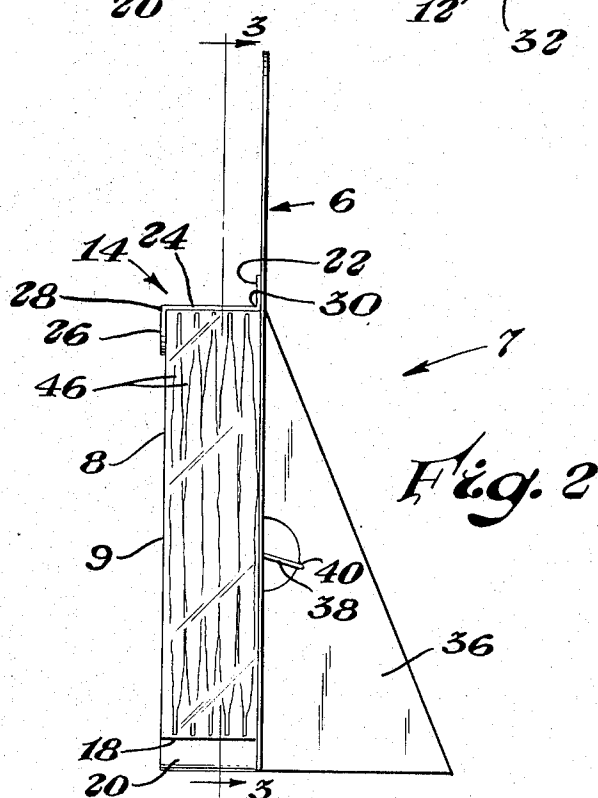


Fig. 2

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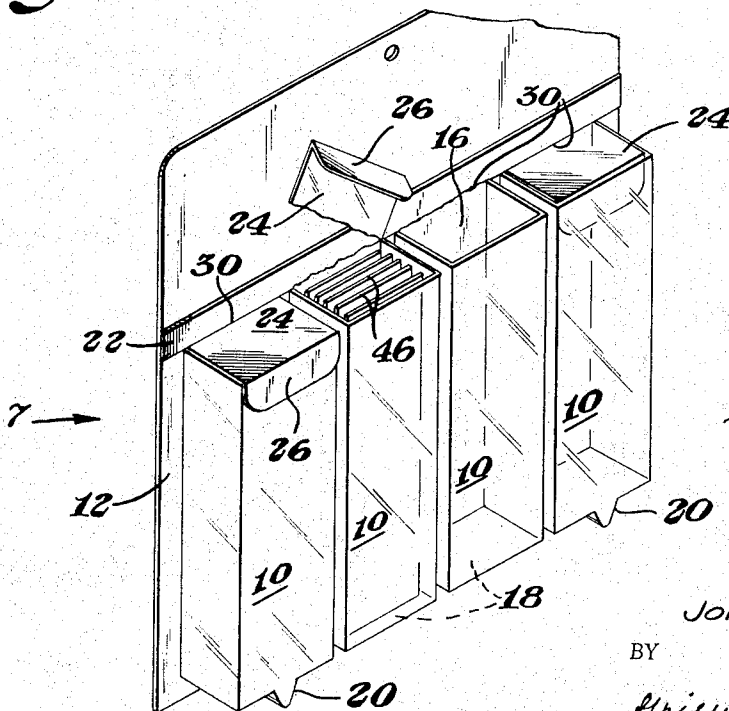
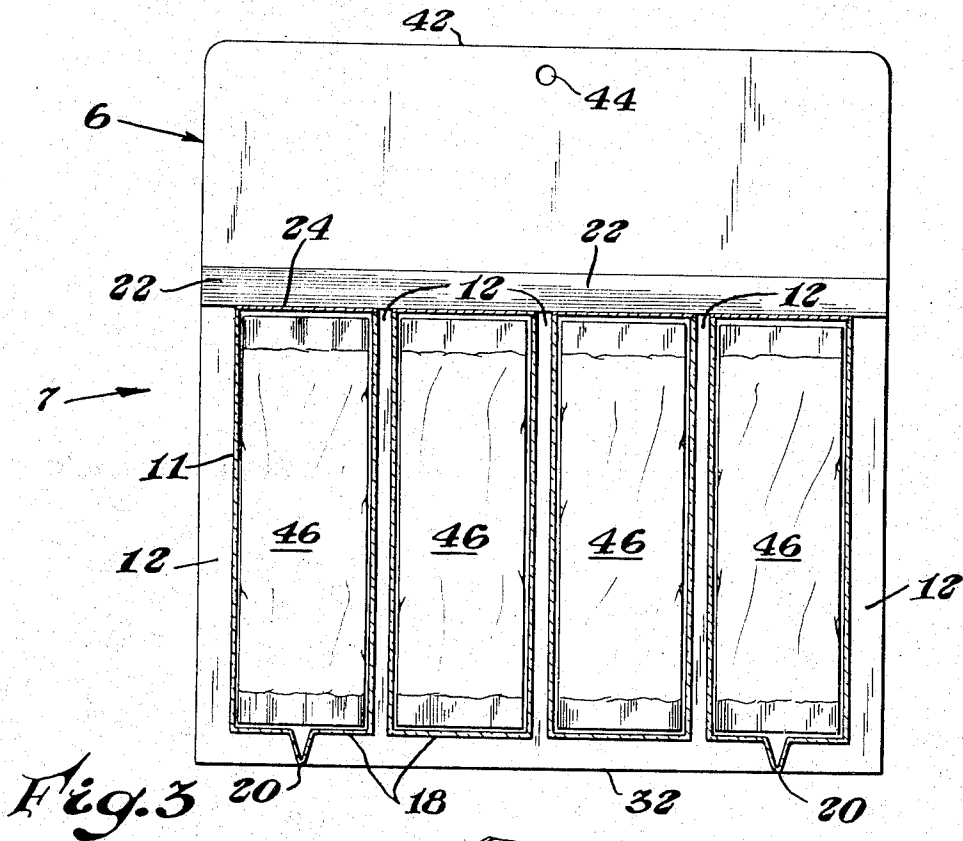
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1

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DISPENSING CONTAINER FOR DISPLAYING
ARTICLES ON A SURFACEJohn P. Repko, Midland, Mich., assignor to The Dow
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DelawareFiled Sept. 12, 1966, Ser. No. 578,556
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A disposable dispensing container comprising a backing having one or more pockets secured thereto for display of unit packages. Several types of covers for the pockets are disclosed.

This invention relates to dispensing containers used for displaying a number of individual articles and for dispensing the articles singly or several at a time. More particularly, this invention relates to dispensing containers for displaying several individually packaged or unitized articles including such consumer goods as thin sausages, jerked beef, pepperoni, bags of peanuts, etc., on a surface and arranged more or less parallel to the surface.

Prior dispensers for individual portion packages have typically been in the form of a staple board where individual packages are attached in overlapping rows, shingle fashion. The disadvantages of such dispensers are notorious. Pulling on the packages to remove them often tips the board over, the board usually having an easel support. The packages, when removed, more often than not are mutilated, and torn parts thereof are left on the board. A waste of material is involved in such staple board dispensers as extra package length is usually required to provide a staple area, and paper or plastic overwraps are often necessary to prevent shifting of the packages during shipment.

It is an object of this invention to provide a disposable dispensing container for the display of individual packages against a surface in which packages are held to the surface by the structure of the container without the need of staples or extra lengths of individual package material. It is also an object of this invention to provide a disposable dispensing container from which individual packages may be dispensed singly or in groups by the use of little or no force against the container, with no tearing of the packages, and little or no danger of tipping the container. Another object is to provide a dispensing container for individual packages in which the packages are held against a display surface throughout their length, in which the packages are prevented from shifting during shipping and storage without the use of an overwrap. It is also an object of this invention to provide a dispensing container in which the articles which are removed last are protected from dust. It is yet another object of this invention to provide a container in which there is no need for an extra easel support.

Further objects and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the following description in which:

FIGURE 1 is a front elevational view of a dispensing container illustrating the principles of the present invention.

FIGURE 2 is a side elevational view thereof.

FIGURE 3 is a cross-sectional view thereof taken along line 3—3 of FIGURE 2.

FIGURE 4 is a fragmentary isometric view of the container of FIGURE 1 with portions thereof broken away to show the container in use.

FIGURE 5 is an isometric view of a modified container of the invention with portions thereof broken away to show the container in use.

2

Referring more particularly to FIGURES 1 through 3, the container comprises a backing 6 having a bottom-most edge 32, and top edge 42, and side edges 34, a plastic film or sheet 8 attached to the backing 6 and a cover member 14. The backing 6 is a flat substantially rigid sheet of paperboard, cardboard, plastic or other similar material. The plastic sheet 8 has pockets 10 formed therein, the pockets being open at their upper ends and closed at their bottom ends by bottom wall 18.

In the preferred embodiment, each pocket 10 has a front wall 9 and side walls 11. The pockets can instead have other lateral cross-sections, such as triangular or semicircular, for example, if desired. The vertical dimension of a pocket is not substantially greater than the vertical dimension of a unit package 46, to dispose the upper end of a package 46 within easy fingertip reach of the upper end of the pocket when the lower end of the package is resting against the bottom wall 18, as shown in FIGURES 2—4. The vertical dimension of the unitized articles is determined by the position in which it is desired to display them. In the preferred embodiment, the unitized articles are displayed with their longest dimension in a vertical position. Bottom wall 18 includes an extension preferably formed integrally therewith of its own plastic film material, which extension extends downwardly beyond the bottom wall 18 to provide one or more supports 20 for at least some of the pockets 10. The width of a support 20 is less than the width of a pocket 10 between side walls 11 to permit the contents to be supported by the bottom wall 18 of the pocket 10. While in the preferred embodiment, supports 20 extend from the backing to the front wall 9 of the pockets 10, the supports can be disposed in other ways, provided that bottom wall 18 is of sufficient area and so disposed as to support the contents within easy fingertip reach of the top of the pocket. For example, the supports can be formed to terminate at a point between the front panel and the backing. The pockets 10 are preferably partially surrounded by flat flanges 12 of the plastic sheet material and are attached to the backing at the flanges.

Suitable plastic sheet materials for the pockets and flanges include ethyl cellulose, cellulose acetate, cellulose acetate propionate, cellulose acetate butyrate, polyolefins such as polyethylene and polypropylene, arylvinyl polymers such as polystyrene, acrylic polymers such as polymethyl methacrylate, vinyl halide polymers such as polyvinyl fluoride and polyvinyl chloride, and polycarbonates, among other polymers and combinations of polymers. The pockets may be formed by any obvious well known process. For example, the plastic sheet material may have cavities formed therein by vacuum forming, the cavities being cut laterally to form pairs of open-ended pockets.

In forming the pockets in the plastic sheet material, sufficient plastic material is used to provide flanges adjacent to the side walls of said pockets. The plastic sheet material can be attached to the backing at the flanges by adhesives, pressure sensitive tape or staples, or the flanges may be attached by heat sealing to a backing which has been coated with a compatible thermoplastic resin.

The cover member may be made from paperboard, cardboard, plastic, etc. The cover member 14 comprises a back panel 22 which can be attached to the backing by adhesive, pressure sensitive tape or staples, for example. The back panel 22 is foldably attached to lids 24 along score lines 30, the lids being arranged to fit over and completely cover the open ends of the pockets 10, as best shown in FIGURES 2 and 4. The lids 24 preferably have tabs 26 foldably attached to their outer edges along fold lines 28. The lids 24 are folded downward across the open ends of pockets 10, as shown in FIGURE 2, and tabs 26 can be removably secured to the upper

3

portions of the front walls 9 of the pockets 10 by pressure sensitive adhesive, pressure sensitive tape, or the like. Obviously, tabs 26 can also be folded inside pockets 10 as shown in FIGURE 4 to removably secure lids 24 over the open end of the pocket without adhesive. When the container is in use, one or more pockets can be opened through detaching of tab 26 and lifting the lid 24 by folding along score line 30. The pocket may be re-closed by folding the lid 24 down along the line 30, or the lid may be removed by tearing along that line. The covers of the remaining pockets can be left closed until the contents of the open pockets have been dispensed. The contents of the closed pockets are thus protected from dust while on display.

Plastic film 8 is positioned on backing 6 so that the lower extremities of supports 20 are in a plane with the bottommost edge of the backing 32, as shown in FIGURE 2. In this position, the container is supported in a vertical position by the supports 20 and the bottom edge of the backing 32. The container may also be supported by a wing 36 secured to the rear side of the backing. Wing 36 can be held in position by a locking tab 38 which is fitted into a notch 40 on the wing forming an easel-type support. In general, it will be more economical to omit the easel-type support, thereby eliminating the necessity for wing 36 and tab 38.

Unitized articles or individual packages 46 are disposed in a single vertical layer within the pockets 10, so that the lower end of each package rests against the bottom wall 18 of the pocket and the upper end of each package is disposed near the upper end of the pocket 10. In the illustrated embodiment, the smallest dimension of the packages is roughly perpendicular to the backing. Wide, shallow packages 46 can be arranged in layers parallel to the backing as shown in FIGURE 2. Generally elongated packages of other lateral cross sections can be disposed as desired.

The packages can be printed, the printing being visible through a pocket 10 when formed of transparent material. One or both of the backing 6 and the plastic sheet 8 can have printing thereon, such as advertising matter and price. Likewise, the cover member can be printed. The plastic sheet can also be opaque or translucent but not transparent, if desired.

In filling the container 7, the unit packages are preferably arranged in the pockets 10 before the plastic sheet 8 is secured to the backing. If desired, the articles can be inserted into the pockets after the sheet and backing are attached, and the lids 24 closed after the articles are inserted.

A typical container made according to the principles of the present invention, as described above, had four pockets, the pockets, supports and flanges being vacuum formed from a single 10 mil transparent polystyrene sheet. The sheet thickness was decreased to about 7.5 mils in the pocket portions by such forming. The pockets were secured to the backing by heat sealing the flanges to a thermoplastic resin coated paperboard backing. Paperboard cover members were attached to the backing by adhesive. Each pocket was packed with six individual portion one-ounce packages. A second container made according to the principles of the invention, had four pockets, the pockets, supports and flange areas being made from transparent ethyl cellulose sheet. The sheet thickness was about 7.5 mils in the pocket portions. The flanges and paperboard cover members were secured to a paperboard backing by adhesive. Each pocket was packed with six individual portion packages, the upper ends of the unitized articles being about 0.1 inch from the upper ends of the pockets. The containers and packages performed as described herein.

FIGURE 5 illustrates container 49, showing a modification of the present invention in which the cover member is formed either from the backing itself or from the plastic sheet material forming the pockets and flanges.

4

Referring more particularly to FIGURE 5, the modified container 49 comprises a backing 48 having a bottommost edge 82, a top edge 86 and opposite sides 84, and pockets 54 and 60, supports 64 and flanges 52 integrally formed from plastic sheet 50. The pockets 54 and 60 are secured to the backing at flanges 52 in the same manner as described above, with respect to the embodiment illustrated in FIGURES 1-4. The backing, pockets, flanges, and supports may be of the same materials as their respective counterparts as described with respect to the embodiment discussed above. Round pocket 54 is formed with a closed continuous separating line 58 about its upper end, said line defining a lid 56. Separating line 58 can be a perforated line, partial cut line, tearstrip, etc. The lid 56 is formed from the plastic sheet 50 at the upper end of the round pocket 54. The separating line 58 can be separated by cutting or tearing, for example, along a portion of its length, and the lid folded upward along the remaining, unseparated portion of the separating line 58, providing access to the contents of the pocket 54. Pocket 54 is reclosable by folding lid 56 downward along the unseparated portion of line 58. Lid 56 can be removed from the round pocket 54 by tearing the separating line 58 along its entire length.

Pockets 60 are open at their upper ends. Backing 48 has inverted-U-shaped separating lines 66 therein, the bottom ends of separating lines 66 being connected by fold lines 67 along the back of pockets 60. A separating line 66 can continue along fold line 67 instead of terminating at the ends thereof. It is understood that when a flange extends upwards from and beyond a pocket a separating line and a fold line are also provided in the flange. The areas of backing 48 defined by lines 66 and 67 provide cover members 68, dividing them into lids 72 of sufficient area to cover the open upper ends of pockets 60, and tabs 74. The modified package can be assembled by disposing individual portion packages 76 in the round pockets 54 before the plastic sheet material is secured to the backing. Other individual portion packages 78 can be disposed in pockets 60 before or after the sheet is secured to the backing. Cover members 68 are separated from backing 48 by cutting or tearing along lines 66 and folding the cover members 68 downward along lines 67 so that lids 72 cover the upper ends of pockets 60. Cover members 68 are folded along lines 70 to dispose tabs 74 against the plastic sheet material of pockets 60 as shown in FIGURE 5. Tabs 74 are preferably removably secured to pocket 60 by means such as pressure sensitive adhesive. Tabs 74 can also be tucked inside the pockets. When it is desired to open a pocket 60, tab 74 is detached and the cover folded upward along line 67 or separated from the backing along line 66, when line 66 is continued along line 67. If desired, pockets 54 and 60 have other lateral cross-sections, such as triangular, for example. It is preferred, however, that the lids 56 and 72 have the same configuration as their respective pockets 54 and 60.

The modified invention can be supported in a vertical position by supports 64 and the bottom edge 82 of the backing. In addition, the backing and flanges can have a plurality of vertical fold lines 80 between the pockets 54 and 60 so that the backing and flanges can be folded along lines 80 into a generally tubular configuration. The backing can be secured in the tubular form by a pair of interlocking tabs 88, foldably joined to opposite sides 84 of the backing. When the backing is so folded and secured, the container is stabilized against tipping in any direction.

Other means of supporting the container will be obvious to those skilled in the art. Such methods could include pressure sensitive adhesive covered by removable tape strips disposed on the rear of the backing to permit securing the backing against a wall or a hole 44 disposed near the top of the backing to permit hanging the container from a nail. Two containers can be foldably joined

along the top edges 42, 86 of their backings to form a teepee or inverted-V-shaped display container. In another embodiment plastic sheet members with pockets and supports can be secured to both sides of a single backing.

While certain representative embodiments and details have been shown for the purpose of illustrating the invention and the modification thereof, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes or modifications can be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of this invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A package for dispensing unitized articles in varying numbers, the package comprising:

- (a) a backing;
 - (b) a pocket of plastic sheet secured thereto, the pocket being open at the upper end thereof, the pocket having a bottom wall and a side wall, the pocket having a flange extending outwardly at least partially about the periphery thereof, the pocket being secured to the backing at the flange;
 - (c) a cover member permitting access to the pocket, said cover member including a portion of the backing adjacent the upper end of the pocket, said portion of the backing being defined by a fold line in the backing adjacent and parallel to the open upper end of the pocket and a separating line in the backing extending upward from the fold line and terminating at each end thereof, whereby when the backing is separated along the separating line and folded along the fold line, the portion defined by said lines covers said open end, said cover member being foldably disposed over the upper end of the pocket; and
 - (d) a plurality of unitized articles disposed in the pocket, the lower end of each article being disposed against the bottom wall of the pocket with the vertical dimension of the pocket not being substantially greater than the vertical dimension of the unitized articles so that the upper end of each article is disposed within finger-tip reach of the upper end of the pocket.
2. The package of claim 1 wherein the separating line is continued along the fold line so that when the

backing is separated along the separating line, the portion of the backing defined by said lines can be removed from the backing.

3. A package for dispensing unitized articles in varying numbers, the package comprising:

- (a) a backing;
- (b) a plurality of pockets of plastic sheet secured thereto, the pockets being open at the upper ends thereof, each pocket having a bottom wall and a side wall, each pocket having a flange extending outwardly at least partially about the periphery thereof, each pocket being secured to the backing at the flange;
- (c) separate cover members permitting access to each pocket, each of said cover members including a portion of the backing immediately adjacent the upper end of a pocket, each of said cover members being separately foldably disposed over the upper end of a pocket; and
- (d) a plurality of unitized articles disposed in each pocket, the lower end of each article being disposed against the bottom wall of a pocket with the vertical dimension of the pocket not being substantially greater than the vertical dimension of the unitized articles disposed therein so that the upper end of each article is disposed within fingertip reach of the upper end of the pocket.

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