



US 20110000864A1

(19) **United States**
(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Moore

(10) **Pub. No.: US 2011/0000864 A1**
(43) **Pub. Date: Jan. 6, 2011**

(54) **COOKWARE HOLDER AND METHOD**

Publication Classification

(76) Inventor: **Lela K. Moore**, Santa Rosa, CA
(US)

(51) **Int. Cl.**
A47G 29/00 (2006.01)
B23P 11/00 (2006.01)

Correspondence Address:
EDWARD S. SHERMAN, ESQ.
3554 ROUND BARN BLVD., SUITE 303
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403 (US)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **211/85.29; 29/428**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

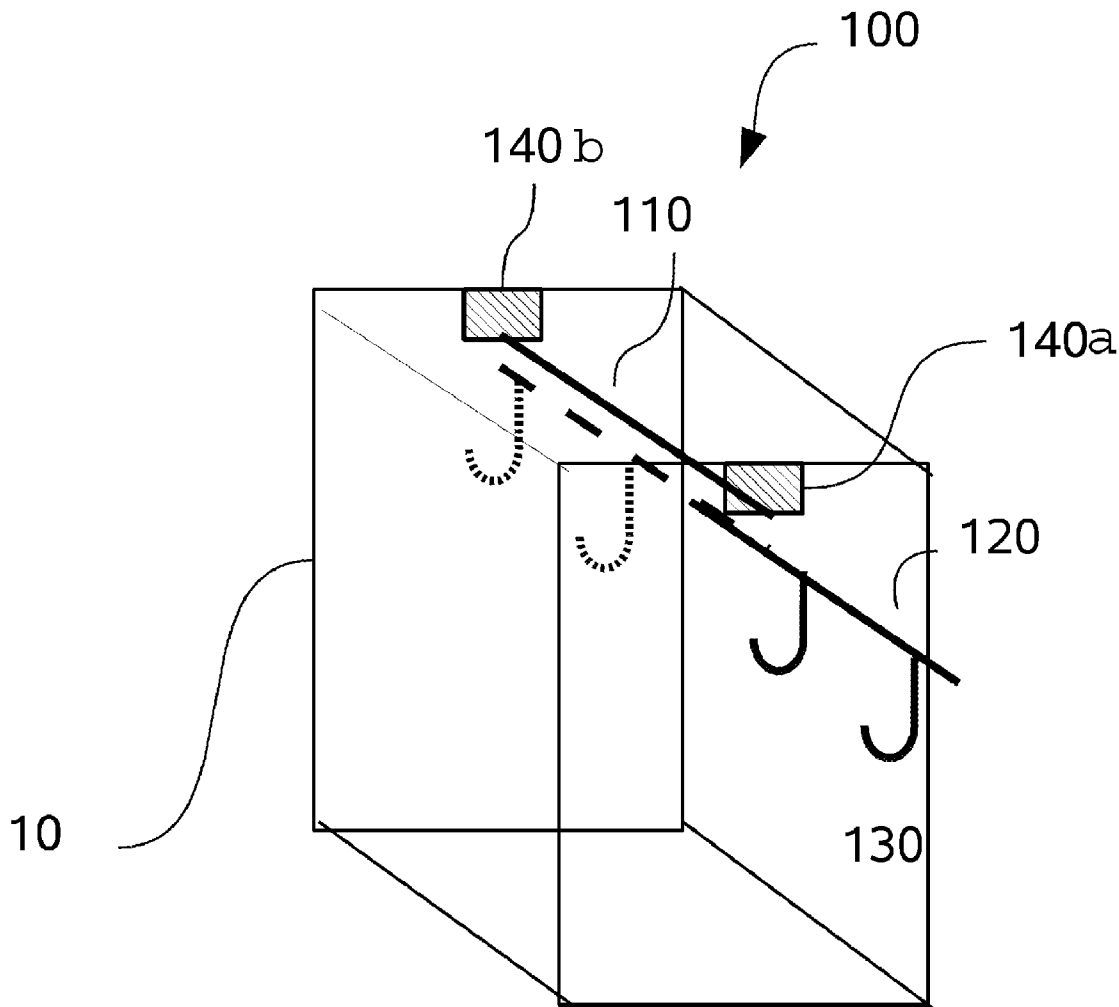
A cookware holder is supported in the upper end of a kitchen cabinet to hang a plurality of cookware items by their handles so that these items extend from the back to the front of the cabinet. The cookware is held on a plurality of hooks that descend from a laterally extending rail portion of the holder. This rail is extended outward from the front of the cabinet to dispose the cookware items outside the cabinet to facilitate access and storage thereof.

(21) Appl. No.: **12/827,327**

(22) Filed: **Jun. 30, 2010**

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 61/223,324, filed on Jul. 6, 2009.



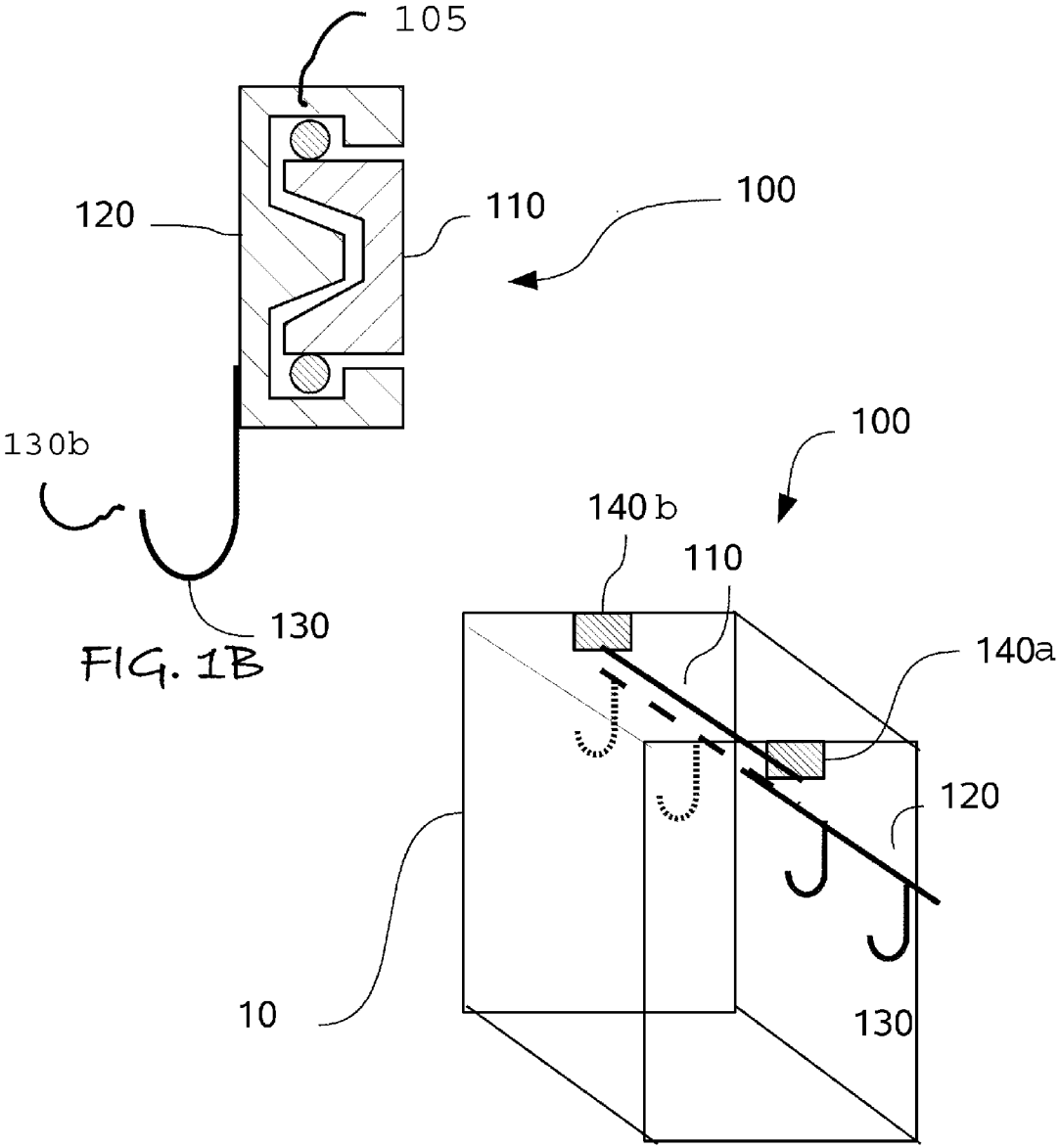


FIG. 1A

FIG. 2B

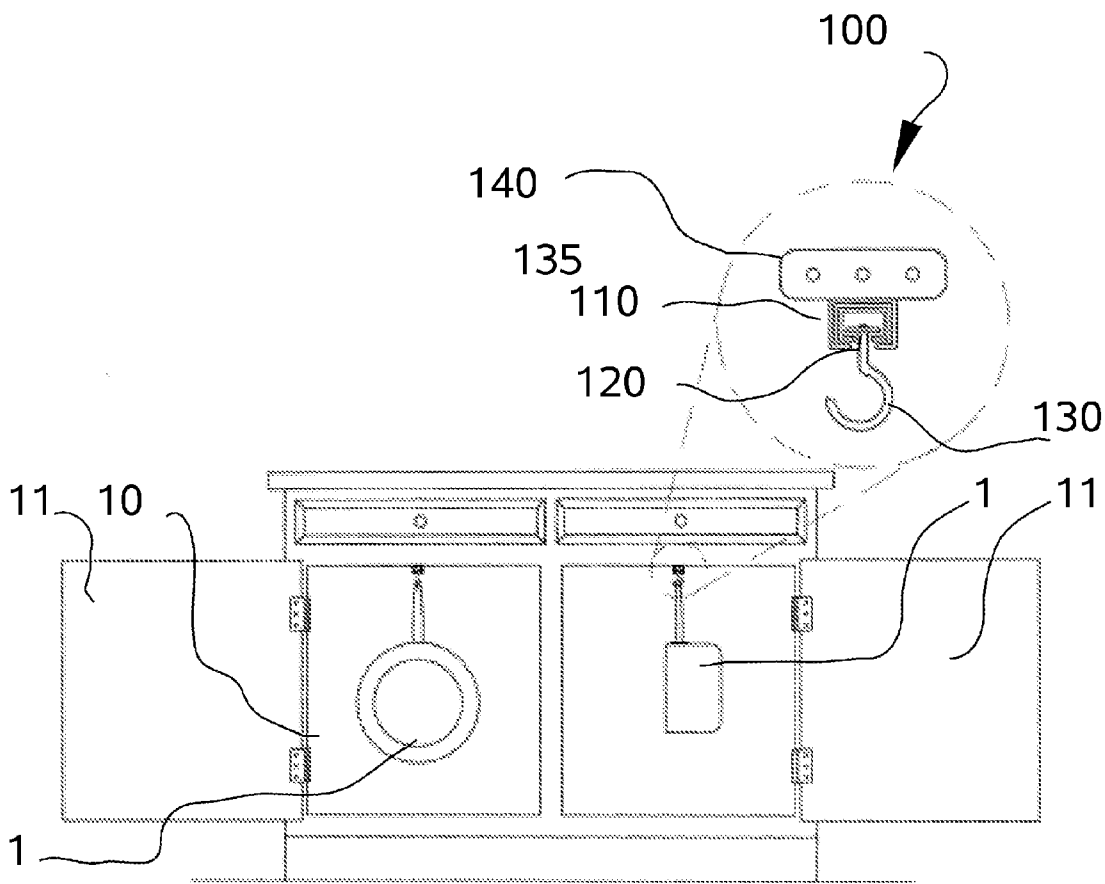
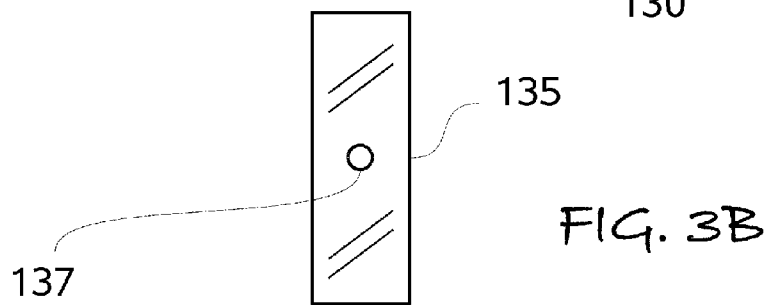
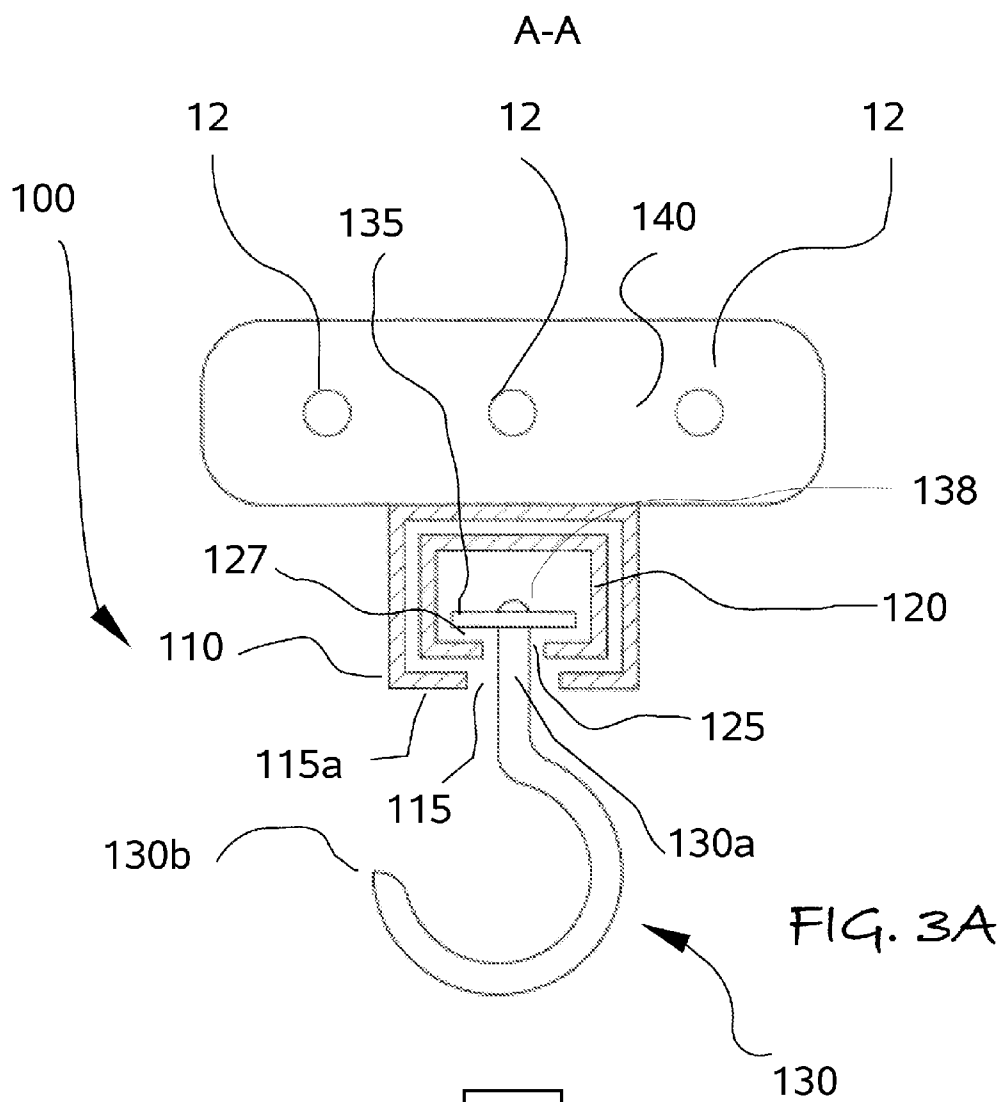
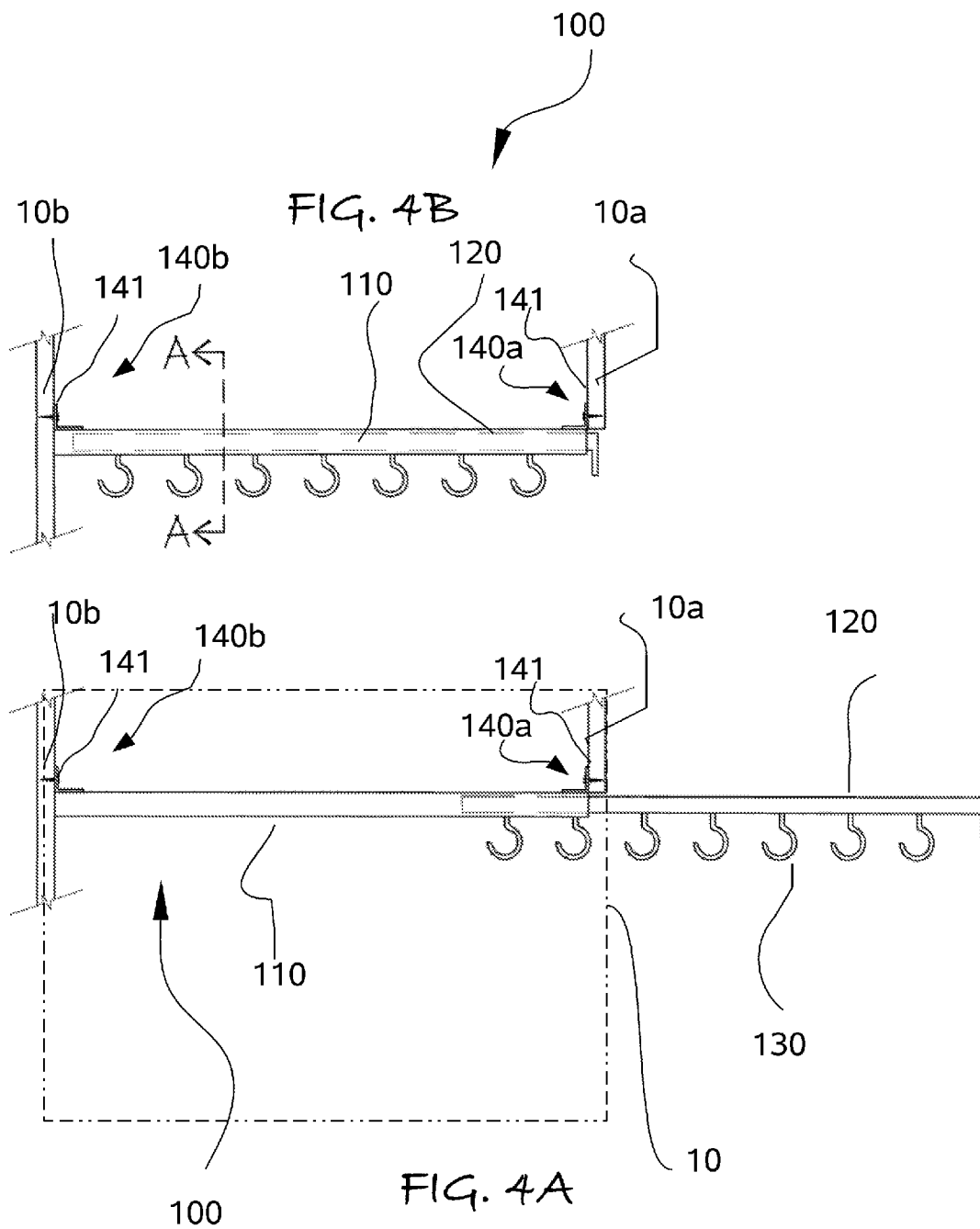


FIG. 2A





COOKWARE HOLDER AND METHOD

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application claims priority to the US provisional patent application of the same title that was filed on Jul. 1, 2009, having application Ser. No. 61/223,324, which is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to means for holding and storing cookware, such as pots and pans, in a kitchen.

[0003] Prior methods of storing cookware involve rack that hangs from the ceiling or wall, as well as placing hooks on the inside of cabinet doors, as well as stacking cookware on shelves or in deep drawers.

[0004] It is difficult to retrieve items when cookware is stacked, as well as find the desired cookware item, as it can be obscured in the stack by the larger items.

[0005] Many consumers either lack the space for overhead or wall storage, or finds it interferes with their movement in a small kitchen. Other consumers, who might have such space simply cannot reach a ceiling height rack without assistive device, or feel doing so is unsafe. Other consumers avoid such racks because they prefer a clean, clutter free look to their kitchen, and thus prefer that all such utensils are hidden when not in use.

[0006] Further, using hanging hooks on the inside of a cabinet door provides only limited storage capacity, and makes it harder to view an entire cookware collection at once to select the best utensil for the tasks at hand. Hence, it is not a significant improvement over stacking but for the few utensils most frequently used in the kitchen

[0007] It is therefore a first object of the present invention to provide an improved and convenient method and device for the storage of cookware at a low height so that it is readily accessible for all potential users in a household, restaurant or institution.

[0008] It is a further object of the invention to provide such a method and device that efficiently uses space, and in particular cabinet space for the storage of the cookware.

[0009] It is a further object of the invention to provide such a method and device that can, if desired, readily hide cookware when not in use, but make an entire collection quickly accessible and readily visible from multiple vantage points.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0010] In the present invention, the first object is achieved by providing a process for storing and retrieving cookware from a cabinet comprising the steps of providing a cabinet that has at least a portion of a back wall and a face frame around the opening thereof, providing one or more pots or pans having a handle with a hanging hole thereon, providing a cookware holder that includes a first fixed rail having a distal end and a proximal end, a second laterally extending rail, a plurality of hooks having a substantially straight shank end that is coupled to said second laterally extending rail, and a curved returning end extending from the shank end to terminate in a generally upward pointing tip disposed below the shank end, a first bracket coupled to the distal end of said first fixed rail, a second bracket coupled to the proximal end of said first fixed rail wherein the attachment of the said first and second bracket to supporting surfaces vertical disposes said

first fixed rail and said second laterally extending rail, wherein the second laterally rail extending slidingly engages said first fixed rail for linear motion along the common axis there between so as to be capable of extending outward beyond the proximal end thereof to laterally translate said plurality of hooks from a first stored position to a second accessible position, attaching the first bracket to a position proximate the back wall of the cabinet and the second bracket to the face frame of the cabinet to dispose the first fixed rail above the cabinet opening in a vertical orientation, attaching one or more pots in hanging engagement on one of said plurality of hooks by the hanging hole thereof.

[0011] A second aspect of the invention is characterized by a cookware holder comprising a first fixed rail having a distal end and a proximal end, a second laterally extending rail, a plurality of hooks having a substantially straight shank end that is coupled to said second laterally extending rail, and a curved returning end extending from the shank end to terminate in a generally upward pointing tip disposed below the shank end, a first bracket coupled to the distal end of said first fixed rail, a second bracket coupled to the proximal end of said first fixed rail wherein the attachment of the said first and second bracket to supporting surfaces horizontally disposes said first fixed rail and said second laterally extending rail inside an enclosure, wherein the second laterally rail extending slidingly engages said first fixed rail for linear motion along the common axis there between so as to be capable of extending outward beyond the proximal end thereof to laterally translate said plurality of hooks from a first stored position to a second accessible position outside an enclosure.

[0012] The above and other objects, effects, features, and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent from the following description of the embodiments thereof taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] FIG. 1A is a perspective view of a first embodiment of the invention. FIG. 1B is a cross-sectional elevation of the rail structure in FIG. 1 transverse to the direction of rail travel.

[0014] FIG. 2A is a front elevation view of another embodiment of the invention in which FIG. 2B is an enlarged view of the smaller circled portion of FIG. 2A.

[0015] FIG. 3A is a more detailed view of the enlarged portion shown in FIG. 2B, corresponding to section A-A in FIG. 4A. FIG. 3B is a plan view of the plate in FIG. 3A.

[0016] FIGS. 4A and 4B show in side cross-sectional elevations the stored and extended positions respectively for the sliding rail with respect to the cabinet and supporting structure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0017] Referring to FIGS. 1 through 4, wherein like reference numerals refer to like components in the various views, there is illustrated therein a new and improved Cookware Holder, generally denominated **100** herein.

[0018] In accordance with the present invention, FIG. 1 illustrates a first embodiment of the Cookware Holder **100** in which a fixed rail member **110** is attached to a cabinet interior **10** via front **140a** and rear **140b** mounting brackets **140**. A laterally extending rail member **120** engages the fixed rail member **110** in lateral sliding engagement therewith enabling it to be withdrawn from within the cabinet **10**. A plurality of

hooks **130** are coupled to descend from the laterally extending rail member **120** so pots and pans, and related cookware vessels and article can hang there from in a conventional manner by the handles, via the holes provided for receiving the open end **130b** of hook **130**.

[0019] Optionally, depending on the type of fixed and sliding rails deployed and the weight of cookware to be hung, rotary bearings **105** are optionally disposed between the fixed **110** and extending **120** rail members, as shown in FIG. 1B

[0020] Thus, another aspect of the invention is a process for storage and retrieving cookware from a cabinet **10**. First, the cookware holder **100** is installed in the upper end of the cabinet **10** in suspension from both the back and front. Then the user hangs pots or pan **1** by their handles on the hooks **130**, spacing them from the back to the front of the cabinet. Installation of pots and pans can be done after the user extends the sliding portion **120** of the cookware holder to same position used retrieve pots or pans (FIG. 4A). The sliding rail **120** is then slid back into the cabinet **10** on the fixed rail **110** (FIG. 4B) so that all the pots and pans **1** are in the cabinet **10** where they can be hidden by closing door **11** until user needs to open the cabinet door **11** to make a selection. Thus for under countertop based cabinets, when the sliding rail **120** is extended beyond the face of the cabinet **10**, the user has all the pots and pans **1** at or below waist height for convenient removal where they can all be easily inspected to choose the appropriate cookware vessel.

[0021] FIGS. 2-4 illustrate a more preferred embodiments of the invention in which the fixed rail member **110** is a tube, and the sliding rail member **120** is disposed within and surrounded by the now tubular fixed rail member **110**. More preferably, as illustrated, the fixed rail member **110** has a lower longitudinal slot **115**. As this slots **115** is at the bottom side **115a** thereof, the shank end **130a** of hooks **130** can be attached to the bottom of the inner tubular rail sliding member **120** so that it passes through slot **115** through so that that the open handle receiving end **130b** of hook **130** points upward.

[0022] More preferably, and also shown in FIG. 2-4, when the fixed rail **110** and laterally extending rails **120**, are both tubular members, the laterally extending rail **120** is preferably disposed within the fixed rail **110** and also has a lower longitudinal slot **125**. Thus, hooks **130** extend through both the laterally extending tubular rail **120** and the fixed tubular rail **110**, as their respective slots **125** and **115** are co-aligned with the shank **130a** of the hooks **130**. This disposes the open end **130b** of the hooks **130** pointing upwards to receive and support a conventional cookware handle by the hole disposed thereon.

[0023] Preferably, the inner **120** and outer **110** tubular rails have the same shape, but can have different shapes, and may include bearings and other members to reduce the sliding friction there between, if warranted by the size or length of the holder **100** or the pots **1** to be hung thereon.

[0024] It is also preferable that hooks **130** are attached at the shank end **130a** to a plate **135** that is supported by a track **127** in the extending rail member **120**. This plate **135** is preferably dimensioned perpendicular to the track **127** to be much longer than the track width to laterally space the hooks **130** apart at a predetermined minimum distance. It should thus be appreciated that in some embodiments of the invention, different length plates **145** may be deployed on the sliding rail **120** to space pots and pans **1** apart varying distance that correspond

to their respective depths, thus either minimizing contact and/or enable nesting for optimized use of the interior space of the cabinet **10**.

[0025] It should be appreciated that in the embodiment shown in FIGS. 1 and 2 hooks **130** and the hook support members can be configured to permit hook rotation with respect to the laterally extending rail member **120**. This is easily accomplished in the embodiment shown in FIGS. 3A and 3B, in which the hook support member is in the form of plate **135** have a circular hole **137** for receiving the shank **130a** of the hooks **130**. The shank end **130a** terminates above this hole **137** with an end retaining face **138** having an outer diameter larger than the hole diameter.

[0026] As shown in FIGS. 4A and 4B, the brackets **140** also preferably have a vertical portion **141** that is attached to the vertical back side of the cabinet **10a** and above the face frame **10b** of the cabinet **10** via a plurality of screws **12**.

[0027] It should be appreciated that while FIG. 1-4 illustrate currently preferred embodiments, other alternative embodiment include different rail shapes, with such variations in which at least one of the fixed **110** or sliding **120** tubular rails has a shape that is square, round or oval, and the like.

[0028] While the invention has been described in connection with a preferred embodiment, it is not intended to limit the scope of the invention to the particular form set forth, but on the contrary, it is intended to cover such alternatives, modifications, and equivalents as may be within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

I claim:

- 1) A process for storing and retrieving cookware from a cabinet, the process comprising the steps of:
 - a) providing a cabinet that has at least a portion of a back wall and a face frame around the opening thereof,
 - b) providing one or more pots or pans having a handle with a hanging hole thereon,
 - c) providing a cookware holder that includes:
 - i) a first fixed rail having a distal end and a proximal end,
 - ii) a second laterally extending rail,
 - iii) a plurality of hooks having a substantially straight shank end that is coupled to said second laterally extending rail, and a curved returning end extending from the shank end to terminate in a generally upward pointing tip disposed below the shank end,
 - iv) a first bracket coupled to the distal end of said first fixed rail,
 - v) a second bracket coupled to the proximal end of said first fixed rail wherein the attachment of the said first and second bracket to supporting surfaces vertical disposes said first fixed rail and said second laterally extending rail,
 - vi) wherein the second laterally rail extending slidingly engages said first fixed rail for linear motion along the common axis there between so as to be capable of extending outward beyond the proximal end thereof to laterally translate said plurality of hooks from a first stored position to a second accessible position,
 - d) attaching the first bracket to a position proximate the back wall of the cabinet and the second bracket to the face frame of the cabinet to dispose the first fixed rail above the cabinet opening in a vertical orientation,
 - e) attaching one or more pots in hanging engagement on one of said plurality of hooks by the hanging hole thereof.

- 2) A cookware holder comprising:
- a) a first fixed rail having a distal end and a proximal end,
 - b) a second laterally extending rail,
 - c) a plurality of hooks having a substantially straight shank end that is coupled to said second laterally extending rail, and a curved returning end extending from the shank end to terminate in a generally upward pointing tip disposed below the shank end,
 - d) a first bracket coupled to the distal end of said first fixed rail,
 - e) a second bracket coupled to the proximal end of said first fixed rail wherein the attachment of the said first and

second bracket to supporting surfaces horizontally disposes said first fixed rail and said second laterally extending rail inside an enclosure,

f) wherein the second laterally rail extending slidingly engages said first fixed rail for linear motion along the common axis there between so as to be capable of extending outward beyond the proximal end thereof to laterally translate said plurality of hooks from a first stored position to a second accessible position outside an enclosure.

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