subjected to ultrasound, enhancing froth formation as it is delivered to a glass. The pour can drain the pack all at once, with ultrasound/foam applied by the press of a button when needed, or in multiple pours so long as carbon dioxide remains dissolved in the liquid.

Generally, available ultrasonic foam-producing methods require the user to learn a new delivery procedure, distant from a traditional tap pouring system where a glass is positioned and filled from underneath a dispense nozzle.

Summary of the invention

The present invention seeks to provide an alternative apparatus, method and system of beverage dispense for single serve volumes to a consumer. Single serve refers to a canned or bottled product, as distinct from a kegged beverage. The invention presents a useful alternative to replicate at least the appearance of draught dispense in a compact device that may be affordable for home or low-volume bar use.

In a broad aspect the apparatus of the invention is defined according to claim 1. A method according to the invention is defined at claim 14.

It is envisaged that the invention will provide an improved apparatus and accompanying method for forming a desirable head on a beverage and/or, indeed, a general novel dispense system replicating draught dispense in a compact device not necessarily applied only to beverages requiring head formation. In preferred forms the apparatus should be simple to use and does not require the user to perform multiple operations or, at least, minimises maintenance operations. The user may therefore be relatively unskilled and the process easily repeatable to ensure a consistent quality of serve.

The invention may take the form of a beverage dispense apparatus comprising a receiving feature or means, e.g. a cradle/holder/support/frame/clamp, for locating and supporting opposite ends of a beverage package, e.g. in an inverted configuration. In one form the receiving structure is configured to locate the beverage package above a delivery vessel, e.g. a pint glass, such that gravity assists dispense into said vessel.

(i) At the end of a first pour, the motor advances and the valve 13 is closed (no airflow A) which slows the liquid flow significantly. This allows the liquid to settle in a glass and a head to form.

(ii) After the liquid has settled, the motor retracts and the valve is reopened, allowing the remaining liquid to flow topping up the glass. This "two-part" pour is desirable to recreate dispense of some nitrogenated beverage products such as Guinness®.

(iii) Once the glass is removed from the cradle, the can may be ejected. This retracts the top assembly completely allowing any remaining liquid to evacuate and the can to be removed.

It will be apparent that features from the embodiments described herein can be interchangeable or replaced by equivalent features without departing from the scope of the invention.

The method and apparatus according to the present invention as hereinbefore described is advantageous because it is simple to use and can be manufactured in a number of guises using available materials. Ideally the unit will be compact and fit comfortably into a commercial bar type of environment. It provides not only a practical benefit in that the appearance and taste of the beer is enhanced, but also a uniqueness by virtue of the process that may catch the attention of the consumer. A form of the invention may be particularly developed for home use.

The invention can be summarised as an apparatus, system and method for dispensing beverage from a single serve beverage package, e.g. an aluminium can C, particularly for the purpose of forming a head on the beverage poured from said package, although a key objective is to replicate draught dispense in a compact device, minimising cost and quality issues, to be deployed easily. In operation the sealed package C is located and held in a receiving enclosure 11 where, firstly, a headspace end of the package is vented by a piercing element 14 and, secondly, a dispense end is opened for dispense by gravity into a drinking vessel G. An ultrasonic means acts on liquid flowing at the dispense end.