

PACKAGE FOR CONTAINERS

CROSS-REFERENCED TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 63/394,392, filed on August 2, 2022.

INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

[0002] The disclosures of each of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 63/394,392, which was filed on August 2, 2022, and U.S. Design Patent Application No. 29/898,807, which was filed on August 1, 2023, are hereby incorporated by reference for all purposes as if presented herein in their entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0003] The present disclosure generally relates to packages or carrier cartons for holding and displaying containers. More specifically, the disclosure is directed to a carrier having features for at least partially retaining the containers in the package.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0004] In general, one aspect of the disclosure is directed to a carrier for at least partially holding a plurality of containers. The carrier can comprise a plurality of panels including a bottom panel, an outer side panel foldably connected to the bottom panel, a top panel foldably connected to the outer side panel, an inner side panel foldably connected to the top panel, a central panel foldably connected to the inner side panel, and an end flap foldably connected to the central panel. At least a first container receiver and a second container receiver extend in at least the bottom panel, each of the first container receiver and the second container receiver being for at least partially receiving a container of the plurality of containers. An inner opening can extend in the inner side panel for at least partially receiving a first flange of a first container at least partially received in the first container receiver, and a free edge of the end flap can be for engaging a second flange of a second container at least partially received in the second container receiver. The central panel can extend at least partially between the first container receiver and the second container receiver.

[0005] In another aspect, the disclosure is generally directed to a package comprising a carrier at least partially holding a plurality of containers. The carrier can comprise a plurality of panels comprising a bottom panel, an outer side panel foldably connected to the bottom panel, a top panel

foldably connected to the outer side panel, an inner side panel foldably connected to the top panel, a central panel foldably connected to the inner side panel, and an end flap foldably connected to the central panel. At least a first container receiver and a second container receiver can extend in at least the bottom panel, each of the first container receiver and the second container receiver at least partially receiving a respective container of the plurality of containers. An inner opening can extend in the inner side panel and can at least partially receive a first flange of a first container at least partially received in the first container receiver, and a free edge of the end flap can engage a second flange of a second container at least partially received in the second container receiver. The central panel can extend at least partially between the first container receiver and the second container receiver.

[0006] In another aspect, the disclosure is generally directed to a blank for forming a carrier for at least partially holding a plurality of containers. The blank can comprise a plurality of panels comprising a bottom panel, an outer side panel foldably connected to the bottom panel, a top panel foldably connected to the outer side panel, an inner side panel foldably connected to the top panel, a central panel foldably connected to the inner side panel, and an end flap foldably connected to the central panel. At least a first container receiver and a second container receiver can extend in at least the bottom panel, each of the first container receiver and the second container receiver being for at least partially receiving a respective container of the plurality of containers when the carrier is formed from the blank. An inner opening can extend in the inner side panel for at least partially receiving a first flange of a first container at least partially received in the first container receiver when the carrier is formed from the blank. A free edge of the end flap can be for engaging a second flange of a second container at least partially received in the second container receiver when the carrier is formed from the blank. The central panel can be for extending at least partially between the first container receiver and the second container receiver when the carrier is formed from the blank.

[0007] In another aspect, the disclosure is generally directed to a method of forming a package. The method can comprise obtaining a blank comprising a plurality of panels comprising a bottom panel, an outer side panel foldably connected to the bottom panel, a top panel foldably connected to the outer side panel, an inner side panel foldably connected to the top panel, a central panel foldably connected to the inner side panel, and an end flap foldably connected to the central panel. The blank further can comprise at least a first container receiver and a second container receiver extending in at least the bottom panel and an inner opening extending in the inner side panel. The method further can comprise engaging a plurality of containers with the blank so that each of the first container receiver and the second container receiver at least partially receives a respective first container and second container of the plurality of containers. Even further, the method can comprise forming a carrier by arranging the plurality of panels. The arranging the plurality of panels can comprise positioning the inner side panel so that the inner opening at least partially receives a first flange of the first container,

positioning the central panel to extend at least partially between the first container receiver and the second container receiver, and positioning the end flap so that a free edge of the end flap engages a second edge of the second container.

[0008] In another aspect, the disclosure is generally directed to a carrier for at least partially holding a plurality of containers. The carrier can comprise a plurality of panels including a bottom panel, a first outer side panel and a second outer side panel each foldably connected to the bottom panel, a first top panel and a second top panel foldably connected to the respective first outer side panel and second outer side panel, and a first inner side panel and a second inner side panel foldably connected to the respective first top panel and second top panel. A first inner opening in the first inner side panel can be for at least partially receiving a first flange of a first container of the plurality of containers, and a second inner opening in the second inner side panel is for at least partially receiving a second flange of a second container of the plurality of containers. At least a portion of the first inner side panel and the second inner side panel can extend from the respective first opening and second opening toward the bottom panel.

[0009] In another aspect, the disclosure is generally directed to a package comprising a carrier at least partially holding a plurality of containers. The carrier can comprise a plurality of panels comprising a bottom panel, a first outer side panel and a second outer side panel each foldably connected to the bottom panel, a first top panel and a second top panel foldably connected to the respective first outer side panel and second outer side panel, and a first inner side panel and a second inner side panel foldably connected to the respective first top panel and second top panel. A first inner opening in the first inner side panel can at least partially receive a first flange of a first container of the plurality of containers, and a second inner opening in the second inner side panel can at least partially receive a second flange of a second container of the plurality of containers. At least a portion of the first inner side panel and the second inner side panel can extend from the respective first inner opening and second inner opening toward the bottom panel.

[0010] In another aspect, the disclosure is generally directed to a method of forming a package. The method can comprise obtaining a blank comprising a plurality of panels comprising a bottom panel, a first outer side panel and second outer side panel each foldably connected to the bottom panel, a first top panel and a second top panel foldably connected to the respective first outer side panel and second outer side panel, and a first inner side panel and a second inner side panel foldably connected to the respective first top panel and second top panel. The blank further can comprising at least a first inner opening extending in the first inner side panel and a second inner opening extending in the second inner side panel. The method further can comprise engaging a plurality of containers with the blank, the plurality of containers comprising at least a first container and a second container, and forming a carrier by arranging the plurality of panels. The arranging the plurality of panels can comprise positioning the first inner side panel so that the first inner opening at least partially receives

a first flange of the first container and so that at least a portion of the first inner side panel extends from the first inner opening toward the bottom panel, and positioning the second inner side panel so that the second inner opening at least partially receives a second flange of the second container and so that at least a portion of the second inner side panel extends from the second inner opening toward the bottom panel.

[0011] Those skilled in the art will appreciate the above stated advantages and other advantages and benefits of various additional embodiments reading the following detailed description of the embodiments with reference to the below-listed drawing figures.

[0012] According to common practice, the various features of the drawings discussed below are not necessarily drawn to scale. Dimensions of various features and elements in the drawings may be expanded or reduced to more clearly illustrate the embodiments of the disclosure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] Fig. 1 is an exterior plan view of a blank for forming a package according to embodiments of the disclosure.

[0014] Figs. 2A-2C are views showing the erection of the package according to embodiments of the disclosure.

[0015] Fig. 3 is a perspective view of the package according to embodiments of the disclosure.

[0016] Figs. 4A and 4B are detail views of the package of Fig. 3.

[0017] Fig. 5 is a plan view of a blank for forming a package according to further embodiments of the disclosure.

[0018] Fig. 6 is a perspective view of the package formed from the blank of Fig. 5 according to embodiments of the disclosure.

[0019] Fig. 7 is a schematic view of a portion of the carrier of Fig. 6 showing retaining tabs engaging a retaining aperture according to embodiments of the disclosure.

[0020] Corresponding parts are designated by corresponding reference numbers throughout the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

[0021] The present disclosure generally relates to constructs, sleeves, cartons, or the like, and packages for holding and displaying articles such as containers, jars, bottles, cans, etc. The articles can be used for packaging food and beverage products, for example. The articles can be made from materials suitable in composition for packaging the particular food or beverage item, and the materials

include, but are not limited to, plastics such as PET, LDPE, LLDPE, HDPE, PP, PS, PVC, EVOH, and Nylon; and the like; aluminum and/or other metals; glass; or any combination thereof.

[0022] Carriers according to the present disclosure can accommodate articles of numerous different shapes. For the purpose of illustration and not for the purpose of limiting the scope of the disclosure, the following detailed description describes food or beverage product containers (e.g., plastic containers) at least partially disposed within the carrier embodiments. In this specification, the terms “lower,” “bottom,” “upper,” “top,” “front,” “forward,” “back,” “rear,” “rearward,” “inner,” “outer,” “interior,” and “exterior” indicate orientations determined in relation to fully erected and upright packages. As described herein, carriers can be formed from blanks with multiple panels, portions, tabs, and/or flaps, which may be designated herein in terms relative to one another, e.g., “first,” “second,” “third,” etc., in sequential or nonsequential reference, without departing from the disclosure.

[0023] Fig. 1 is a plan view of an exterior side 3 of a blank 8 used to form a carrier 1 (Fig. 3) according to embodiments of the disclosure. The carrier 1 can be attached to containers C to form a package 2. In embodiments, the containers C are illustrated as beverage containers (e.g., plastic bottles or other suitable containers) having a top portion T with a ring or flange F, but other containers may be retained by the carrier 1 without departing from the disclosure. In the illustrated embodiment, the carrier 201 is sized to house six containers C in a single layer in a 3x2 arrangement, but it is understood that the carrier 201 may be sized and shaped to hold containers of a different or same quantity in different row/column arrangements (e.g., 1x6, 2x6, 4x6, 3x8, 3x4, 2x9, 3x6, etc.), or just a single article.

[0024] The blank 8 has a longitudinal axis L1 and a lateral axis L2. The blank 8 comprises a bottom panel 11 foldably connected to a first outer side panel 13 along a first lateral fold line 15, and a second outer side panel 17 is foldably connected to the bottom panel 11 along a second lateral fold line 19. A first top panel 21 is foldably connected to the first outer side panel 13 along a lateral fold line 23, and a second top panel 25 is foldably connected to the second outer side panel 17 along a lateral fold line 27. A first inner side panel 29 is foldably connected to the first top panel 21 along a lateral fold line 31, and a second inner side panel 33 is foldably connected to the second top panel 25 along a lateral fold line 35. A central panel 43 is foldably connected to the first inner side panel 29 along a lateral fold line 57, and an end flap 45 is foldably connected to the central panel 43 along a lateral fold line 59.

[0025] As shown in Fig. 1, a row of first outer openings 41a extend in the first outer side panel 13, a row of first inner openings 41b extend in the first inner side panel 29, a row of second outer openings 42a extend in the second outer side panel 17, and a row of second inner side openings 42b extend in the second inner side panel 33. In embodiments, the outer openings 41a, 42a and the inner

openings 41b, 42b can be shaped to at least partially receive a top portion T of respective containers C when the blank 8 is formed into the carrier 1. As shown in Fig. 2B-4B, each pair of openings 41a, 41b and 42a, 42b engages, contacts, and/or retains a respective one of the containers C. In the illustrated embodiments, each of the first outer openings 41a can have a lateral first outer engagement edge 47a of the first outer side panel 13, each of the first inner openings 41b can have a lateral first inner engagement edge 47b of the first inner side panel 29, each of the second outer openings 42a can have a lateral second outer engagement edge 48a of the second outer side panel 17, and each of the second inner openings 42b can have a lateral second inner engagement edge 48b of the second inner side panel 33. As shown in Fig. 1, the engagement edges 47a, 47b, 48a, 48b can extend along a respective widened portion of the respective openings 41a, 41b, 42a, 42b for engaging and/or contacting under the flange F of the respective containers C. In embodiments, the openings 41a, 42a, 41b, 42b can interrupt the respective lateral fold lines 23, 27, 31, 35. The outer and inner openings 41a, 42a, 41b, 42b could be otherwise shaped, arranged, and/or configured without departing from the scope of the disclosure.

[0026] In embodiments, one or more cuts may be included in each of the transverse fold lines 15, 19, 23, 27, 31, 35, 57, 59. In exemplary embodiments, the transverse fold lines 15, 19, 23, 27, 31, 35, 57, 59 are cut/crease lines in which the cuts facilitate folding of the blank 8 at the fold lines. Any number of cuts may be formed in any of the fold lines, and the number and length of the cuts may be selected according to, for example, the gauge and/or the stiffness of the material used to form the blank 8. The fold lines 15, 19, 23, 27, 31, 35, 57, 59 may be formed by other methods (e.g., crease lines without cuts) without departing from the disclosure.

[0027] As shown in Fig. 1, the bottom panel 11 can include a plurality of container receivers or container receiver patterns 71, 73 in a respective first row 75 and second row 77. In embodiments, each container receiver pattern 71, 73 can be shaped and sized to receive a top portion T, including a flange F, of one of the containers C (Fig. 2A) when the carrier 1 and the package 2 are formed. As shown in Fig. 1, each of the container receiver patterns 71, 73 can at least partially define a bottom aperture 79 and brace flaps 81 each foldably connected to the bottom panel 11 along respective longitudinal fold lines 83. In embodiments, each of the brace flaps 81 can be separable from the bottom panel 11 along two cuts 85 or any suitable number of cuts and can extend along at least a portion of the respective bottom apertures 79. In embodiments, each of the brace flaps 81 further can have a longitudinal edge 87 for engaging and/or contacting under the flanges F of the respective containers C. Any of the container receiver patterns 71, 73 could be omitted or could be otherwise shaped, arranged, positions, and/or configured without departing from the disclosure.

[0028] In the illustrated embodiments, the blank 8 can include handle or gripping features. For example, the handle features can include handle openings 91 extending in the bottom panel 11 and handle flaps 93 extending in the central panel 43. As shown in Fig. 1, the handle panels 93 are foldably connected to the central panel 43 along respective longitudinal fold lines 95 and are separable from the central panel 43 along cut or tear lines 97 (e.g., cut lines with one or more nicks). As shown in Fig. 4, the handle flaps 93 are aligned with and can fold through the handle openings 91 to form a handle (e.g., finger holes) when the carrier 1 is formed from the blank 8. Any of the handle features could be omitted or could be otherwise shaped, arranged, configured, and/or positioned without departing from the scope of the disclosure. Further, the blank 8 could be otherwise shaped, arranged, and/or configured without departing from the scope of the disclosure.

[0029] Referring to Figs. 2A-2C, an exemplary method of forming the blank 8 into the carrier 1 and package 2 is described in the following. In exemplary embodiments, the blank 8 can be formed into the carrier 1 by inserting the containers C through a respective container receiver patterns 71, 73. Upon inserting a container C into a respective pattern 75, 77, the brace flaps 81 are upwardly folded as the top of the container C moves upward relative to the bottom panel 11 through the respective bottom apertures 79. The containers C can be inserted into the respective container receiver patterns 71 in a first row, and the containers C can be inserted into the respective container receiver patterns 73 in a second row. As shown in Figs. 2A, 2B, 4A, and 4B, the free edges 87 of the brace flaps 81 can engage and/or contact the underside of the flange F of the respective containers C. As shown in Figs. 2A and 2B, the second outer side panel 17 can be upwardly folded relative to the bottom panel 11 at fold line 19, and the second top panel 25 can be folded relative to the second outer side panel 17 at fold line 27 so the top panel 25 is placed over the tops of the containers C and can be in face-to-face contact with the flat tops of the containers. In embodiments, the second inner side panel 33 can be folded downwardly along the fold line 35, and the top portions T of the containers C in the second row can be at least partially received in the openings 42a, 42b in the respective side panels 17, 33 so that the engagement edges 48a, 48b of the side panels 17, 33 extending along the respective openings 42a, 42b engage and/or contact under the flanges F of the containers C (Figs. 2B-3 and 4B).

[0030] As shown in Fig. 2C, the first outer side panel 13 can be upwardly folded relative to the bottom panel 11 at fold line 15, and the first top panel 21 can be folded relative to the first outer side panel 13 at fold line 23 so the top panel 21 is placed over the tops of the containers C and can be in face-to-face contact with the flat tops of the containers. The first inner side panel 29 can be folded downwardly along the fold line 31, and the top portions T of the containers in the first row can be at least partially received in the openings 41a, 41b in the respective side panels 13, 29 so that the engagement edges 47a, 47b of the side panels 13, 29 extending along the respective openings 41a, 41b engage and/or contact under the flanges F of the containers C (Figs. 2C-4A). As shown in Figs. 2C and 3, the central panel 43 can be positioned along the bottom panel 11 between the inner side panels

29, 33 (e.g., so that the central panel 43 overlaps and/or is in face-to-face contact with the bottom panel 11). Also as shown in Figs. 2C, 3, and 4B, the end flap 45 is folded upwardly relative to the central panel 43 along fold line 59 so that the end flap 45 extends from the central panel 43 and/or the bottom panel 11 upwardly to the second inner openings 42b in the second inner side panel 33 to engage and/or contact under the flanges F of the containers C in the second row. For example, the laterally-extending outer edge 46 of the end flap 45 engages under the flanges F of the containers in the second row adjacent to the second inner engagement edges 48b of the second inner side panel 33 extending along the respective second inner openings 42b (Figs. 2C and 4B). In embodiments, the end flap 45 can overlap and/or can be in face-to-face contact with the second inner side panel 33. In the illustrated embodiments, the brace flaps 81 of the first container receivers 71 can extend between the side panels 13, 29 and can be spaced apart from the side panels 13, 29, and the brace flaps 81 of the second container receivers 73 can extend between the side panels 17, 33 and can be spaced apart from the side panels 17, 33.

[0031] In embodiments, the carrier 1 formed from the blank 8 retains the containers C securely when the package 2 is grasped and carried. Further, in exemplary embodiments, the retention edges/features 46, 47a, 47b, 48a, 48b, 87 of the carrier 1 are held tight underneath the flanges F of the containers C so that the containers are held in the carrier without the need for the application of glue or other adhesive to any of the panels or flaps of the blank 8. For example, when the package 2 is carried (e.g., at the handle features), the weight of the containers C can press downwardly on the edges 47a, 48a, 47b, 48b of the side panels 13, 17, 29, 33 extending along the respective openings 41a, 42a, 41b, 42b and on the laterally-extending edge 46 of the end flap 45, which can help press the central panel 43 against the bottom panel 11 and help retain the carrier 1 in the erected configuration without the use of glue. Stated another way, the weight of the containers C can reinforce the engagement of the panels and flaps of the carrier to retain the carrier in its erect configuration. In addition, the brace flaps 81 can help retain the containers C by engaging under the flange F.

[0032] In embodiments, the handle features can be actuated (e.g., for lifting and carrying the package 2) by folding the handle flaps 93 downwardly from the central panel 43 along the fold lines 95 and through the handle openings 91 in the bottom panel 11. As the handle flaps 93 are folded out of the plane of the central panel 42, the handle flaps 93 can separate from the central panel along the cut or tear lines 97. In exemplary embodiments, the downwardly folded handle flaps 93 can engage one or more edges of the bottom panel 11 extending along the handle openings 91, which can help retain the carrier 1 in the erected configuration (e.g., can help lock the central panel 43 to the bottom panel 11). For example, the engagement between the handle flaps 93 and the bottom panel 11 at the handle openings 91 can resist relative movement between the central panel 43 and the bottom panel 11 to help retain the carrier in its erected configuration.

[0033] Fig. 5 shows a blank 208 for forming a carrier 201 of a package 202 (Fig. 6) according to a second embodiment of the disclosure. The second embodiment is generally similar to the prior embodiments, except for variations noted and variations that will be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art. Accordingly, similar or identical features of the embodiments have been given like or similar reference numbers. In the second embodiment, the blank 208 can be similar to the blank 8 of the first embodiment except that the blank 208 includes two rows 275, 277 of six container receiver patterns 71, 73 (e.g., has a 6x2 arrangement). Alternatively, the blank 208 could have any suitable number and/or arrangement of container receiver patterns. As shown in Fig. 5, the blank 208 includes a corresponding number of each of the openings 41a, 41b, 42a, 42b in the respective side panels 13, 29, 17, 33 to the number of container receivers 71, 73. It is noted that, while the blank 208 is longer in the direction L2 than in the direction L1, the L2 direction is referred to as the lateral direction and the L1 direction is referred to as the longitudinal direction in the second embodiment to be consistent with other embodiments in the disclosure.

[0034] In the illustrated embodiments, the blank 208 can include retention features for helping to retain the carrier 201 in its erected configuration (Fig. 6). For example, a plurality of retaining apertures 51 are defined in the bottom panel 11 (e.g., in line with the handle openings 91) and a plurality of retaining tabs 52 can be foldably connected to the central panel 43 along respective longitudinal fold lines 53. In embodiments, the retaining tabs 52 can be arranged in pairs that are aligned with the respective retaining apertures 51 along respective longitudinal axes. As shown in Fig. 5, the retaining tabs 52 can be separable from the central panel 43 along curved tear or cut lines 54, and the retaining tabs 52 in each pair of retaining tabs 52 can be separable from one another along longitudinal cut or tear lines 55 (e.g., cut lines with one or more nicks). The blank 208 could be otherwise shaped, arranged, and/or configured without departing from the scope of the disclosure.

[0035] Fig. 6 is a perspective view of a package 202 including the carrier 201 formed from the blank 208 and a plurality of containers C. In embodiments, the carrier 201 can be erected to form the package 202 in a similar or identical manner as the prior embodiments. The retention features can be engaged in the carrier 201 during and/or subsequent to the erecting of the carrier 201. For example, once the central panel 43 and the bottom panel 11 are overlapped, the retaining tabs 52 can be folded downwardly along the respective longitudinal fold lines 53 into the retaining apertures 51 in the bottom panel 11 (e.g., as shown schematically in Fig. 7). In embodiments, the engaged retention features (e.g., with the retention tabs 52 at least partially received in the retention openings 51) can help retain the carrier 201 in its erected configuration, such as by resisting relative movement between the central panel 43 and the bottom panel 11 (e.g., to help resist separation of the panels). The carrier 201 and/or the package 202 could be otherwise formed without departing from the disclosure.

- [0036] In exemplary embodiments, the clip-style carriers of the disclosed embodiments can provide increased stability, resistance, and strength, as well as a comfortable and reliable carry experience. The carriers can be adapted to be suitable for multiple bottle types, sizes, and configurations. The carriers and packages can be formed/assembled manually and/or by machine. In embodiments, the structure of the carriers can be shaped around the top portions T of the containers C (e.g., the bottle heads) to facilitate increasing the rigidity of the packages. In exemplary embodiments, the two clipping methods (e.g., the brace flaps 81 in combination with the openings 41a, 42a, 41b, 42b in the side panels 13, 17, 29, 33) can help strengthen the packages and can get stronger as they engage with the containers C when the package is picked up via the finger holes (handle features). In embodiments, the structure of the carrier allows the package to be assembled without needing glue.
- [0037] The carriers of any of the illustrated or non-illustrated embodiments of the disclosure could have other features (e.g., dispenser features, handle features, reinforcement features, etc.) without departing from the disclosure. Also, the carriers could be otherwise shaped, arranged, and/or configured and the carriers could be configured to hold articles other than beverage containers C without departing from the disclosure.
- [0038] Any of the features of the various embodiments of the disclosure can be combined with, replaced by, or otherwise configured with other features of other embodiments of the disclosure without departing from the scope of this disclosure. The carrier styles and panel configurations described above are included by way of example.
- [0039] In general, the blanks may be constructed from paperboard having a caliper so that it is heavier and more rigid than ordinary paper. The blanks can also be constructed of other materials, such as cardboard, or any other material having properties suitable for enabling the package to function at least generally as described above.
- [0040] The blanks can be coated with, for example, a clay coating. The clay coating may then be printed over with product, advertising, and other information or images. The blanks may then be coated with a varnish to protect information printed on the blanks. The blanks may also be coated with, for example, a moisture barrier layer, on either or both sides of the blanks. The blanks can also be laminated to or coated with one or more sheet-like materials at selected panels or panel sections.
- [0041] The above embodiments may be described as having one or panels adhered together by glue. The term “glue” is intended to encompass all manner of adhesives commonly used to secure paperboard carton panels in place.
- [0042] The term “line” as used herein includes not only straight lines, but also other types of lines such as curved, curvilinear or angularly displaced lines.

[0043] In accordance with the exemplary embodiments, a fold line can be any substantially linear, although not necessarily straight, form of weakening that facilitates folding therealong. More specifically, but not for the purpose of narrowing the scope of the present disclosure, fold lines include: a score line, such as lines formed with a blunt scoring knife, or the like, which creates a crushed or depressed portion in the material along the desired line of weakness; a cut that extends partially into a material along the desired line of weakness, and/or a series of cuts that extend partially into and/or completely through the material along the desired line of weakness; and various combinations of these features. In situations where cutting is used to create a fold line, typically the cutting will not be overly extensive in a manner that might cause a reasonable user to incorrectly consider the fold line to be a tear line.

[0044] The foregoing description of the disclosure illustrates and describes various embodiments of the present disclosure. As various changes could be made in the above construction without departing from the scope of the disclosure, it is intended that all matter contained in the above description or shown in the accompanying drawings shall be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense. Furthermore, the scope of the present disclosure covers various modifications, combinations, alterations, etc., of the above-described embodiments that are within the scope of the claims. Additionally, the disclosure shows and describes only selected embodiments, but other combinations, modifications, and environments are within the scope of the disclosure as expressed herein, commensurate with the above teachings, and/or within the skill or knowledge of the relevant art. Furthermore, certain features and characteristics of each embodiment may be selectively interchanged and applied to other illustrated and non-illustrated embodiments of the disclosure without departing from the scope of the disclosure.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A carrier for at least partially holding a plurality of containers, the carrier comprising:
 - a plurality of panels comprising a bottom panel, an outer side panel foldably connected to the bottom panel, a top panel foldably connected to the outer side panel, an inner side panel foldably connected to the top panel, a central panel foldably connected to the inner side panel, and an end flap foldably connected to the central panel;
 - at least a first container receiver and a second container receiver extending in at least the bottom panel, each of the first container receiver and the second container receiver being for at least partially receiving a respective container of the plurality of containers;
 - an inner opening extending in the inner side panel for at least partially receiving a first flange of a first container at least partially received in the first container receiver; and
 - a free edge of the end flap being for engaging a second flange of a second container at least partially received in the second container receiver, wherein the central panel extends at least partially between the first container receiver and the second container receiver.
2. The carrier of claim 1, wherein the inner side panel is a first inner side panel and the inner opening is a first inner opening, and wherein the plurality of panels further comprises a second inner side panel, a second inner opening extending in the second inner side panel for at least partially receiving the second flange of the second container.
3. The carrier of claim 2, wherein the end flap and the second inner side panel are at least partially overlapped.
4. The carrier of claim 2, wherein the first inner side panel comprises a first inner engagement edge extending along the first inner opening and the second inner side panel comprises a second inner engagement edge extending along the second inner opening, the first inner engagement edge and the second inner engagement edge being for engaging the respective first flange and second flange of the respective first container and second container.
5. The carrier of claim 2, wherein at least a portion of the first inner side panel extends from the first inner opening to the bottom panel and at least a portion of the second inner side panel extends from the second inner opening to the bottom panel.
6. The carrier of claim 2, wherein the first container receiver comprises a first brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, the second container receiver comprises a second brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, the first brace flap and the second brace flap being for engaging the respective first flange and second flange of the respective first container and second container.

7. The carrier of claim 1, wherein an outer opening extends in the outer side panel for at least partially receiving the first flange of the first container, and wherein the inner side panel comprises an inner engagement edge extending along the inner opening and the outer side panel comprises an outer engagement edge extending along the outer opening, the inner engagement edge and the outer engagement edge being for engaging the first flange of the first container.
8. The carrier of claim 7, wherein the first container receiver comprises at least two brace flaps, each brace flap of the at least two brace flaps being for engaging the first flange of the first container.
9. The carrier of claim 8, wherein each of the brace flaps of the at least two brace flaps is foldably connected to the bottom panels on opposite sides of the first container receiver from one another.
10. The carrier of claim 8, wherein the brace flaps of the at least two brace flaps are spaced apart from inner side panel and the outer side panel.
11. The carrier of claim 7, wherein at least a portion of the inner side panel extends from the inner engagement edge to the bottom panel and at least a portion of the outer side panel extends from the outer engagement edge to the bottom panel.
12. The carrier of claim 1, wherein the outer side panel is a first outer side panel, the top panel is a first top panel, and the inner side panel is a first inner side panel, wherein the plurality of panels further comprises a second outer side panel foldably connected to the bottom panel, a second top panel foldably connected to the second outer side panel, and a second inner side panel foldably connected to the top panel.
13. The carrier of claim 12, wherein the inner opening is a first inner opening, a second inner opening extends in the second inner panel for at least partially receiving the second flange of the second container, a first outer opening extends in the first outer panel for at least partially receiving the first flange of the first container, and a second outer opening extends in the second outer panel for at least partially receiving the second flange of the second container.
14. The carrier of claim 13, wherein at least a portion of each of the first inner side panel, the second inner side panel, the first outer side panel, and the second outer side panel extends from the bottom panel to the respective first inner opening, second inner opening, first outer opening, and second outer opening.

15. The carrier of claim 12, wherein the first container receiver comprises a first brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, the second container receiver comprises a second brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, the first brace flap and the second brace flap being for engaging the respective first flange and second flange of the respective first container and second container.

16. The carrier of claim 15, wherein the first brace flap is spaced apart from the first inner side panel and the first outer side panel, and the second brace flap is spaced apart from the second inner side panel and the second outer side panel.

17. The carrier of claim 1, further comprising a handle at least partially defined in the central panel and the bottom panel.

18. The carrier of claim 17, wherein the handle comprises a handle flap foldably connected to the central panel and a handle opening at least partially defined in the bottom panel, and wherein the handle flap is at least partially received through the handle opening.

19. The carrier of claim 1, further comprising a retaining tab foldably connected to the central panel and a retaining aperture at least partially defined in the bottom panel, the retaining tab being at least partially received through the retaining aperture for resisting relative movement between the central panel and the bottom panel.

20. A package comprising a carrier at least partially holding a plurality of containers, the carrier comprising:

- a plurality of panels comprising a bottom panel, an outer side panel foldably connected to the bottom panel, a top panel foldably connected to the outer side panel, an inner side panel foldably connected to the top panel, a central panel foldably connected to the inner side panel, and an end flap foldably connected to the central panel;

- at least a first container receiver and a second container receiver extending in at least the bottom panel, each of the first container receiver and the second container receiver at least partially receiving a respective container of the plurality of containers;

- an inner opening extending in the inner side panel and at least partially receiving a first flange of a first container at least partially received in the first container receiver; and

- a free edge of the end flap engaging a second flange of a second container at least partially received in the second container receiver, wherein the central panel extends at least partially between the first container receiver and the second container receiver.

21. The package of claim 20, wherein the inner side panel is a first inner side panel and the inner opening is a first inner opening, and wherein the plurality of panels further comprises a second inner side panel, a second inner opening extending in the second inner side panel at least partially receiving the second flange of the second container.
22. The package of claim 21, wherein the end flap and the second inner side panel are at least partially overlapped.
23. The package of claim 21, wherein the first inner side panel comprises a first inner engagement edge extending along the first inner opening and the second inner side panel comprises a second inner engagement edge extending along the second inner opening, the first inner engagement edge and the second inner engagement edge engaging the respective first flange and second flange of the respective first container and second container.
24. The package of claim 21, wherein the first container receiver comprises a first brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, the second container receiver comprises a second brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, the first brace flap and the second brace flap engaging the respective first flange and second flange of the respective first container and second container.
25. The package of claim 20, wherein an outer opening extends in the outer side panel and at least partially receives the first flange of the first container, and wherein the inner side panel comprises an inner engagement edge extending along the inner opening and the outer side panel comprises an outer engagement edge extending along the outer opening, the inner engagement edge and the outer engagement edge engaging the first flange of the first container.
26. The package of claim 25, wherein the first container receiver comprises at least two brace flaps, and each brace flap of the at least two brace flaps is foldably connected to the bottom panels on opposite sides of the first container receiver from one another, each of the brace flaps engaging the first flange of the first container.
27. The package of claim 20, wherein the outer side panel is a first outer side panel, the top panel is a first top panel, and the inner side panel is a first inner side panel, wherein the plurality of panels further comprises a second outer side panel foldably connected to the bottom panel, a second top panel foldably connected to the second outer side panel, and a second inner side panel foldably connected to the top panel, and wherein the first top panel extends at least partially over the first container and the second top panel extends at least partially over the second container.

28. The package of claim 27, wherein the inner opening is a first inner opening, a second inner opening in the second inner panel at least partially receiving the second flange of the second container, a first outer opening in the first outer panel at least partially receiving the first flange of the first container, and a second outer opening in the second outer panel at least partially receiving the second flange of the second container.

29. The package of claim 27, wherein the first container receiver comprises a first brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, the second container receiver comprises a second brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, the first brace flap and the second brace flap engaging the respective first flange and second flange of the respective first container and second container.

30. A blank for forming a carrier for at least partially holding a plurality of containers, the blank comprising:

a plurality of panels comprising a bottom panel, an outer side panel foldably connected to the bottom panel, a top panel foldably connected to the outer side panel, an inner side panel foldably connected to the top panel, a central panel foldably connected to the inner side panel, and an end flap foldably connected to the central panel;

at least a first container receiver and a second container receiver extending in at least the bottom panel, each of the first container receiver and the second container receiver being for at least partially receiving a respective container of the plurality of containers when the carrier is formed from the blank;

an inner opening extending in the inner side panel for at least partially receiving a first flange of a first container at least partially received in the first container receiver when the carrier is formed from the blank; and

a free edge of the end flap being for engaging a second flange of a second container at least partially received in the second container receiver when the carrier is formed from the blank, wherein the central panel is for extending at least partially between the first container receiver and the second container receiver when the carrier is formed from the blank.

31. The blank of claim 30, wherein the inner side panel is a first inner side panel and the inner opening is a first inner opening, and wherein the plurality of panels further comprises a second inner side panel, a second inner opening extending in the second inner side panel for at least partially receiving the second flange of the second container when the carrier is formed from the blank.

32. The blank of claim 31, wherein the first inner side panel comprises a first inner engagement edge extending along the first inner opening and the second inner side panel comprises a second inner engagement edge extending along the second inner opening, the first inner engagement edge and the

second inner engagement edge being for engaging the respective first flange and second flange of the respective first container and second container when the carrier is formed from the blank.

33. The blank of claim 31, wherein the first container receiver comprises a first brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, the second container receiver comprises a second brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, the first brace flap and the second brace flap being for engaging the respective first flange and second flange of the respective first container and second container when the carrier is formed from the blank.

34. The blank of claim 30, wherein an outer opening extends in the outer side panel for at least partially receiving the first flange of the first container when the carrier is formed from the blank, and wherein the inner side panel comprises an inner engagement edge extending along the inner opening and the outer side panel comprises an outer engagement edge extending along the outer opening, the inner engagement edge and the outer engagement edge being for engaging the first flange of the first container when the carrier is formed from the blank.

35. The blank of claim 34, wherein the first container receiver comprises at least two brace flaps, each brace flap of the at least two brace flaps being for engaging the first flange of the first container when the carrier is formed from the blank.

36. The blank of claim 35, wherein each of the brace flaps of the at least two brace flaps is foldably connected to the bottom panels on opposite sides of the first container receiver from one another.

37. The blank of claim 30, wherein the outer side panel is a first outer side panel, the top panel is a first top panel, and the inner side panel is a first inner side panel, wherein the plurality of panels further comprises a second outer side panel foldably connected to the bottom panel, a second top panel foldably connected to the second outer side panel, and a second inner side panel foldably connected to the top panel.

38. The blank of claim 37, wherein the inner opening is a first inner opening, a second inner opening extends in the second inner panel for at least partially receiving the second flange of the second container when the carrier is formed from the blank, a first outer opening extends in the first outer panel for at least partially receiving the first flange of the first container when the carrier is formed from the blank, and a second outer opening extends in the second outer panel for at least partially receiving the second flange of the second container when the carrier is formed from the blank.

39. The blank of claim 37, wherein the first container receiver comprises a first brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, the second container receiver comprises a second brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, the first brace flap and the second brace flap being for engaging the respective first flange and second flange of the respective first container and second container when the carrier is formed from the blank.

40. The blank of claim 30, further comprising a handle flap foldably connected to the central panel and a handle opening at least partially defined in the bottom panel, wherein the handle flap is for being at least partially received through the handle opening when the carrier is formed from the blank.

41. The blank of claim 30, further comprising a retaining tab foldably connected to the central panel and a retaining aperture at least partially defined in the bottom panel, wherein the retaining tab is for being at least partially received through the retaining aperture for resisting relative movement between the central panel and the bottom panel when the carrier is formed from the blank.

42. A method of forming a package, the method comprising:

obtaining a blank comprising a plurality of panels comprising a bottom panel, an outer side panel foldably connected to the bottom panel, a top panel foldably connected to the outer side panel, an inner side panel foldably connected to the top panel, a central panel foldably connected to the inner side panel, and an end flap foldably connected to the central panel, the blank further comprising at least a first container receiver and a second container receiver extending in at least the bottom panel and an inner opening extending in the inner side panel;

engaging a plurality of containers with the blank so that each of the first container receiver and the second container receiver at least partially receives a respective first container and second container of the plurality of containers; and

forming a carrier by arranging the plurality of panels, the arranging the plurality of panels comprising positioning the inner side panel so that the inner opening at least partially receives a first flange of the first container, positioning the central panel to extend at least partially between the first container receiver and the second container receiver, and positioning the end flap so that a free edge of the end flap engages a second edge of the second container.

43. The method of claim 42, wherein the inner side panel is a first inner side panel and the inner opening is a first inner opening, wherein the plurality of panels further comprises a second inner side panel a second inner opening extends in the second inner side panel, and wherein the arranging the plurality of panels further comprises positioning the second inner side panel so that the second inner opening at least partially receives the second flange of the second container.

44. The method of claim 43, wherein the positioning the end flap further comprises at least partially overlapping the end flap and the second inner side panel.

45. The method of claim 43, wherein the first container receiver comprises a first brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, the second container receiver comprises a second brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, and wherein the engaging the plurality of containers with the blank comprises engaging the first brace flap and the second brace flap with the respective first flange and second flange of the respective first container and second container.

46. The method of claim 42, wherein an outer opening extends in the outer side panel and the first container receiver comprises at least two brace flaps foldably connected to the bottom panel, and wherein the arranging the plurality of panels further comprises positioning the outer side panel so that the outer opening at least partially receives the first flange of the first container, and the engaging the plurality of containers with the blank comprises engaging the at least two brace flaps with the first flange of the first container.

47. The method of claim 42, wherein the blank further comprises a handle flap foldably connected to the central panel and a handle opening at least partially defined in the bottom panel, and wherein the method further comprises at least partially overlapping the central panel and the bottom panel so that the handle flap is at least partially aligned with the handle opening.

48. The method of claim 42, further comprising a retaining tab foldably connected to the central panel and a retaining aperture at least partially defined in the bottom panel, wherein the method further comprises folding the retaining tab relative to the central panel so that the retaining tab is at least partially received through the retaining aperture for resisting relative movement between the central panel and the bottom panel.

49. A carrier for at least partially holding a plurality of containers, the carrier comprising:

a plurality of panels comprising a bottom panel, a first outer side panel and a second outer side panel each foldably connected to the bottom panel, a first top panel and a second top panel foldably connected to the respective first outer side panel and second outer side panel, and a first inner side panel and a second inner side panel foldably connected to the respective first top panel and second top panel;

a first inner opening extending in the first inner side panel being for at least partially receiving a first flange of a first container of the plurality of containers; and

a second inner opening in the second inner side panel being for at least partially receiving a second flange of a second container of the plurality of containers;

wherein at least a portion of the first inner side panel and the second inner side panel extends from the respective first inner opening and second inner opening toward the bottom panel.

50. The carrier of claim 49, wherein each of the first inner side panel and the second inner side panel contacts the bottom panel.

51. The carrier of claim 49, further comprising a first bottom aperture in the bottom panel for at least partially receiving a top portion of the first container, a first brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel adjacent the first bottom aperture, a second bottom aperture in the bottom panel for at least partially receiving a top portion of the second container, and a second brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel adjacent the second bottom aperture, wherein the first brace flap and the second brace flap are for engaging the respective first flange and second flange of the respective first container and second container.

52. The carrier of claim 49, further comprising a first outer opening extending in the first outer panel for at least partially receiving the first flange of the first container and a second outer opening extending in the second outer panel for at least partially receiving the second flange of the second container.

53. The carrier of claim 52, further comprising a first brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel and a second brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, wherein the first brace flap and the second brace flap are for engaging the respective first flange and second flange of the respective first container and second container.

54. The carrier of claim 49, wherein the plurality of panels further comprises a central panel foldably connected to the first inner side panel and an end flap foldably connected to the central panel, and wherein the end flap extends from the bottom panel to the second inner opening in the second inner side panel for engaging the second flange of the second container.

55. The carrier of claim 54, wherein the central panel and the bottom panel are at least partially overlapped, and the end flap and the second inner side panel are at least partially overlapped.

56. The carrier of claim 54, further comprising a handle extending in the central panel and the bottom panel.

57. A package comprising a carrier at least partially holding a plurality of containers, the carrier comprising:

a plurality of panels comprising a bottom panel, a first outer side panel and a second outer side panel each foldably connected to the bottom panel, a first top panel and a second top panel foldably connected to the respective first outer side panel and second outer side panel, and a first inner side panel and a second inner side panel foldably connected to the respective first top panel and second top panel;

a first inner opening in the first inner side panel at least partially receiving a first flange of a first container of the plurality of containers; and

a second inner opening in the second inner side panel at least partially receiving a second flange of a second container of the plurality of containers;

wherein at least a portion of the first inner side panel and the second inner side panel extends from the respective first inner opening and second inner opening toward the bottom panel.

58. The package of claim 57, further comprising a first bottom aperture in the bottom panel at least partially receiving a top portion of the first container, a first brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel adjacent the first bottom aperture, a second bottom aperture in the bottom panel at least partially receiving a top portion of the second container, and a second brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel adjacent the second bottom aperture, wherein the first brace flap and the second brace flap engage the respective first flange and second flange of the respective first container and second container.

59. The package of claim 57, further comprising a first outer opening extending in the first outer panel at least partially receiving the first flange of the first container and a second outer opening extending in the second outer panel at least partially receiving the second flange of the second container.

60. The package of claim 59, further comprising a first brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel and a second brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel, wherein the first brace flap and the second brace flap engage the respective first flange and second flange of the respective first container and second container.

61. The package of claim 57, wherein the plurality of panels further comprises a central panel foldably connected to the first inner side panel and an end flap foldably connected to the central panel, and wherein the end flap extends from the bottom panel to the second inner opening in the second inner side panel and the end flap engages the second flange of the second container.

62. The package of claim 61, wherein the central panel and the bottom panel are at least partially overlapped, and the end flap and the second inner side panel are at least partially overlapped.

63. A method of forming a package, the method comprising:

obtaining a blank comprising a plurality of panels comprising a bottom panel, a first outer side panel and second outer side panel each foldably connected to the bottom panel, a first top panel and a second top panel foldably connected to the respective first outer side panel and second outer side panel, and a first inner side panel and a second inner side panel foldably connected to the respective first top panel and second top panel, the blank further comprising at least a first inner opening extending in the first inner side panel and a second inner opening extending in the second inner side panel;

engaging a plurality of containers with the blank, the plurality of containers comprising at least a first container and a second container; and

forming a carrier by arranging the plurality of panels, the arranging the plurality of panels comprising positioning the first inner side panel so that the first inner opening at least partially receives a first flange of the first container and so that at least a portion of the first inner side panel extends from the first inner opening toward the bottom panel, and positioning the second inner side panel so that the second inner opening at least partially receives a second flange of the second container and so that at least a portion of the second inner side panel extends from the second inner opening toward the bottom panel.

64. The method of claim 63, wherein the engaging the plurality of containers with the blank comprises at least partially receiving at least a portion of the first container through a first bottom aperture in the bottom panel so that a first brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel adjacent the first aperture engages the first flange of the first container and at least partially receiving at least a portion of the second container through a second bottom aperture in the bottom panel so that a second brace flap foldably connected to the bottom panel adjacent the second aperture engages the second flange of the second container.

65. The method of claim 63, wherein the blank further comprises a first outer opening in the first outer panel and a second outer opening in the second outer panel, and wherein the method further comprises positioning the first outer side panel so that the first outer opening at least partially receives the first flange of the first container and positioning the second outer side panel so that the second outer opening at least partially receives the second flange of the second container.

66. The method of claim 63, wherein the plurality of panels further comprises a central panel foldably connected to the first inner side panel and an end flap foldably connected to the central panel, and wherein the arranging the plurality of panels further comprises positioning the end flap to extend from the bottom panel to the second inner opening in the second inner side panel so that the end flap engages the second flange of the second container.

67. The method of claim 66, wherein the arranging the plurality of panels further comprises positioning the central panel and the end flap to at least partially overlap the respective bottom panel and second inner side panel.