

[0001] **PLASMA-RESISTANT CERAMICS WITH CONTROLLED
ELECTRICAL RESISTIVITY**

[0002] The present application is related to a series of applications which have common inventorship with the present application. All of the applications listed below relate to the use of a yttrium-oxide comprising ceramic to provide a plasma-resistant surface which is useful in semiconductor processing apparatus. The related applications include U.S. Application No. 11/796,210, of Sun et al., filed April 27, 2007, titled: "Method of Reducing The Erosion Rate Of Semiconductor Processing Apparatus Exposed To Halogen-Containing Plasmas", which is currently pending; U.S. Application No. 11/796,211, of Sun et al., filed April 27, 2007, titled: "Method And Apparatus Which Reduce The Erosion Rate Of Surfaces Exposed To Halogen-Containing Plasmas", which is currently pending; U.S. Application No. 10/898,113 of Sun et al., filed July 22, 2004, titled: "Clean Dense Yttrium Oxide Coating Protecting Semiconductor Apparatus", which is currently pending; U.S. Application No. 10/918,232 of Sun et al., filed August 13, 2004, titled: "Gas Distribution Plate Fabricated From A Solid Yttrium Oxide-Comprising Substrate", which is currently pending; and U.S. Application No. 10/075,967 of Sun et al., filed February 14, 2002, titled: "Yttrium Oxide Based Surface Coating For Semiconductor IC Processing Vacuum Chambers", which issued as U.S. Patent No. 6,776,873 on August 17, 2004. Additional related applications filed, which are a divisional and a continuation application of above-listed applications, include: U.S. Application No. 11/595,484 of Wang et al., filed November 10, 2006, titled: "Cleaning Method Used In Removing Contaminants From The Surface Of An Oxide or Fluoride Comprising a Group III Metal", which is currently pending, and which is a divisional application of U.S. Application No. 10/898,113; and U.S. Application No. 11/592,905 of Wang et al., filed November 3, 2006, titled: "Cleaning Method Used In Removing Contaminants From A Solid Yttrium Oxide-Containing Substrate", which is currently pending, and which is a continuation application of U.S.

Application No. 10/918,232. The subject matter of all of these patents and applications is hereby incorporated by reference.

[0003]

BACKGROUND

[0004] 1. Field

[0005] Embodiments of the present invention relate to a specialized yttrium oxide-comprising ceramic which is mainly comprised of solid solution ceramic which is highly resistant to plasmas of the kind which are present in semiconductor processing apparatus.

[0006] 2. Background Art

[0007] This section describes background subject matter related to the disclosed embodiments of the present invention. There is no intention, either express or implied, that the background art discussed in this section legally constitutes prior art.

[0008] Corrosion (including erosion) resistance is a critical property for apparatus components and liners used in semiconductor processing chambers, where corrosive environments are present. Although corrosive plasmas are present in the majority of semiconductor processing environments, including plasma enhanced chemical vapor deposition (PECVD) and physical vapor deposition (PVD), the most corrosive plasma environments are those used for cleaning of processing apparatus and those used to etch semiconductor substrates. This is especially true where high-energy plasma is present and combined with chemical reactivity to act upon the surface of components present in the environment. The reduced chemical reactivity of an apparatus component surface or of a process chamber liner surface is an important property when corrosive gases, even in the absence of a plasma, are in contact with processing apparatus surfaces.

[0009] Process chamber liners and component apparatus present within the processing chambers used to fabricate electronic devices and micro-electro-mechanical systems (MEMS) are frequently constructed from aluminum and aluminum alloys. Surfaces of the process chamber and component apparatus (present within the chamber)

are frequently anodized to provide a degree of protection from the corrosive environment. However, the integrity of the anodization layer may be deteriorated by impurities in the aluminum or aluminum alloy, so that corrosion begins to occur early, shortening the life span of the protective coating. The plasma resistance properties of aluminum oxide are not positive in comparison with some other ceramic materials. As a result, ceramic coatings of various compositions have been used in place of the aluminum oxide layer mentioned above; and, in some instances, have been used over the surface of the anodized layer to improve the protection of the underlying aluminum-based materials.

[0010] Yttrium oxide is a ceramic material which has shown considerable promise in the protection of aluminum and aluminum alloy surfaces which are exposed to halogen-containing plasmas of the kind used in the fabrication of semiconductor devices. An yttrium oxide coating has been used and applied over an anodized surface of a high purity aluminum alloy process chamber surface, or a process component surface, to produce excellent corrosion protection (e.g. U.S. Patent No. 6,777,873 to Sun et al., mentioned above). The protective coating may be applied using a method such as spray coating, physical vapor deposition (PVD) or chemical vapor deposition (CVD) by way of example.

[0011] A film of Al_2O_3 , or Al_2O_3 and Y_2O_3 has been formed on an inner wall surface of a processing chamber and on those exposed surfaces of the members within the chamber which require a high corrosion resistance and insulating property. In an exemplary application, a base material of the chamber may be a ceramic material (Al_2O_3 , SiO_2 , AlN , etc.), aluminum, or stainless steel, or other metal or metal alloy, which has a sprayed film over the base material. The film may be made of a compound of a III-B element of the periodic table, such as Y_2O_3 . The film may substantially comprise Al_2O_3 and Y_2O_3 . A sprayed film of yttrium-aluminum-garnet (YAG) has also been mentioned. Examples of a sprayed film thickness range from 50 μm to 300 μm .

[0012]

SUMMARY

[0013] Specialty sintered ceramic materials have been developed which resist corrosion under semiconductor processing conditions which employ a halogen-containing plasma. The specialty materials have been modified to have improved plasma resistance and tailored mechanical properties in comparison with the sintered ceramic materials previously used for semiconductor processing apparatus. The electrical properties of the sintered ceramic materials have been adjusted so that the electrical resistivity properties of the materials (which have an effect in a plasma processing chamber) meet the requirements of critical chamber components. These electrical resistivity property requirements were previously met only by materials which exhibited low plasma resistance properties. The present specialty materials (which offer various combinations of plasma resistance, mechanical properties, and electrical resistivity properties) are sufficiently similar to those of semiconductor processing apparatus previously used. One advantage of the similar electrical properties is that it is not necessary to change the process recipes or general processing conditions which are currently in use in semiconductor device fabrication.

[0014] The specialty sintered ceramic material used to fabricate semiconductor processing chamber components may be applied over an underlying material using thermal/flame spraying or plasma spraying, physical vapor deposition (such as sputtering from a target comprised of the specialty sintered ceramic material) or chemical vapor deposition, by way of example. In the alternative, the sintered ceramic material may be used to fabricate a solid component using a molding process, for example, when this is preferable to use of a coating.

[0015] The sintered ceramic materials of interest comprise a yttrium oxide-based solid solutions. In one embodiment, the electrical resistivity of the sintered, yttrium oxide-comprising ceramic material is altered. In one exemplary embodiment technique, other oxides are added to the yttrium oxide, and the mixture is sintered. The positive

ions of the other oxides have a different valence from the Y^{3+} ion, to form a Y vacancy, leading to a decrease of electrical resistivity. Examples of such other oxides include CeO_2 , TiO_2 , ZrO_2 , HfO_2 , and Nb_2O_5 , by way of example and not by way of limitation. In an alternative exemplary embodiment technique, other oxides are added to the yttrium oxide and the mixture is sintered. The positive ions of the other oxide show the same valence as the Y^{3+} ion, but possess a significantly different ion radius than the Y^{3+} ion. The precursor mixture is sintered in a reductive atmosphere. This results in an O vacancy, which also decreases electrical resistivity. Examples of oxides which show the same valence as the Y^{3+} ion, but possess a significantly different ion radius include Nd_2O_3 , Sm_2O_3 , Sc_2O_3 , Yb_2O_3 , Er_2O_3 , Ho_2O_3 and Dy_2O_3 , by way of example and not by way of limitation.

[0016] One of the major components in a semiconductor processing chamber which requires a lower resistivity than is typical for yttrium-comprising sintered ceramics is the electrostatic chuck. The electrostatic chuck designers recommend that the resistivity of the dielectric surface of the electrostatic chuck fall within a range from about 10^9 to 10^{11} $\Omega\cdot\text{cm}$ under semiconductor processing conditions, to reduce the possibility of plasma arcing at the electrostatic chuck. This resistivity range is equivalent to a conductivity within a range from about 10^{-9} to 10^{-7} S/m. This is a considerably lower resistivity than bulk Si_3N_4 , for example, which exhibits a conductivity 10^{-13} S/m. For other corrosion resistant surfaces where plasma arcing might be a problem, such as lift pins, a resistivity in the range of that required for an electrostatic chuck is helpful. For corrosion resistant surfaces such as process chamber liners, the resistivity may be higher, possible as high as or exceeding about 10^{14} $\Omega\cdot\text{cm}$ and still be acceptable.

[0017] At least one solid solution forms the major molar % of sintered ceramic materials which are useful as electrically modified corrosion-resistant materials. When there are two oxides used to form a solid solution, these oxides typically comprise

yttrium oxide in combination with another oxide, which is typically selected from the group consisting of zirconium oxide, cerium oxide, hafnium oxide, niobium oxide, and combinations thereof. Use of other oxides such as scandium oxide, neodymium oxide, samarium oxide, ytterbium oxide, erbium oxide, and cerium oxide (and other lanthanide series element oxides) is considered to be acceptable in some instances.

[0018] When there are more than two oxides used to form the one or more solid solutions, these oxides typically comprise yttrium oxide, zirconium oxide, and at least one other oxide, which is typically selected from the group consisting of hafnium oxide, scandium oxide, neodymium oxide, niobium oxide, samarium oxide, ytterbium oxide, erbium oxide, cerium oxide, and combinations thereof. The use of other lanthanide series elements is also possible in particular instances. When the sintered ceramics comprise multi solid solution phases, typically there are two phases or three phases. In addition to the at least one solid solution-phase, there may be other phases within the sintered ceramic which are compounds or elemental metals.

[0019] By way of example, and not by way or limitation, with respect to sintered ceramics which make use of two precursor oxides, experiments have confirmed that a sintered ceramic comprising a solid solution, where yttrium oxide is present over a range from about 40 molar % to less than 100 molar %, and zirconium oxide is present over a range from more than 0 molar % to about 60 molar %, produces a sintered oxide having a resistivity which is in the range from about 10^7 to about $10^{15} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ at room temperature. Resistivity over the same range is expected to be obtained from a combination of precursor oxides where yttrium oxide is present over a range from more than 0 molar % to less than 100 molar %, and cerium oxide is present over a range from greater than 0 molar % up to less than 10 molar %. Resistivity over a range from about 10^9 to about $10^{11} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ is also expected to be obtained from a combination of precursor oxides where yttrium oxide is present over a range from more than 0 molar % to less than 100 mole %, and hafnium oxide is present over a range from more than 0 molar %

up to less than 100 molar %. Sintered ceramic exhibiting a resistivity over a range of about 10^9 to about $10^{15} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ is also expected to be obtained from a combination of precursor oxides where yttrium oxide is present over a range from about 48 molar % to less than 100 mole %, and niobium oxide is present over a range from greater than 0 % up to about 52 molar %.

[0020] By way of example, and not by way of limitation, with respect to sintered ceramics which make use of more than two precursor oxides, in one embodiment, a sintered ceramic will exhibit a resistivity over a range of about 10^7 to about $10^{15} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ when the sintered ceramic comprises a solid solution, and where the sintered ceramic material is formed from oxides where: yttrium oxide is present over a range from about 40 molar % to less than 100 molar %; zirconium oxide is present over a range from more than 0 molar % to about 50 molar %; and, scandium oxide is present over a range from more than about 0 molar % up to less than 100 molar %.

[0021] In another embodiment, a sintered ceramic will exhibit an electrical resistivity over a range of about 10^7 to about $10^{15} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ when the sintered ceramic comprises a solid solution, and the sintered ceramic material is fabricated from oxides where: yttrium oxide is present over a range from about 40 molar % to less than 10 molar %; zirconium oxide is present over a range from more than 0 molar % to about 50 molar %, and hafnium oxide is present over a range from more than about 0 molar % up to less than 100 molar %.

[0022] In yet another embodiment, a sintered ceramic will exhibit a resistivity over a range of about 10^7 to about $10^{15} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ when the sintered ceramic comprises a solid solution, and the sintered ceramic material is fabricated from oxides where: yttrium oxide is present over a range from about 40 molar % to less than 100 molar %; zirconium oxide is present over a range from more than 0 molar % to about 45 molar %; and, niobium oxide is present over a range from more than about 0 molar % up to about 80 molar %.

[0023] In one embodiment, the sintered ceramic material contains three phases, which include: a first phase solid solution comprising Y_2O_3 - ZrO_2 - Nb_2O_5 which makes up from about 60 molar % to about 90 molar % of the sintered ceramic material; a second phase of Y_3NbO_7 which makes up from about 5 molar % to about 30 molar % of the sintered ceramic material; and, a third phase of Nb in elemental form, which makes up from about 1 molar % to about 10 molar % of the sintered ceramic material.

[0024] In another embodiment of the sintered ceramic material which contains three phases, yttrium oxide is present over a range from about 60 molar % to about 75 molar %; zirconium oxide is present over a range from about 15 molar % to about 25 molar %, and niobium oxide is present over a range from about 5 molar % to about 15 molar %.

[0025] In sintered ceramic test specimens formed from a Y_2O_3 - ZrO_2 - M_xO_y material of the kind described above, in embodiments where M is scandium, hafnium, niobium, or neodymium, an erosion rate was demonstrated which was 0.16 $\mu\text{m}/\text{hour}$ or less, after exposure for 76 hours to a CF_4/CHF_3 plasma. A similar erosion rate is expected when M is cerium, samarium, erbium, or another lanthanide series element. The plasma was formed in an Enabler for Trench Etch plasma processing chamber available from Applied Materials, Inc. The plasma source power was up to 2000W, the process chamber pressure was 10 - 500 mTorr, and the substrate temperature was 40 °C. This erosion rate of 0.16 $\mu\text{m}/\text{hour}$ or less is equivalent to the erosion rate of pure Y_2O_3 . Thus, the erosion rate of the sintered ceramics has been unaffected by the modification of the sintered ceramic to provide a lower resistivity sintered ceramic.

[0026] While the ceramic materials described above were sintered ceramics formed from oxides using sintering techniques known in the art, in other embodiments, the starting material compositions listed above may be used to form a ceramic coating over the surface of a variety of metal and ceramic substrates, including, but not limited to, aluminum, aluminum alloy, stainless steel, alumina, aluminum nitride and quartz, using

a coating technique. Such coating techniques include plasma spraying, thermal/flame spraying; physical vapor deposition from a sputtering target which is formed by sintering the oxides; or, chemical vapor deposition, by way of example and not by way of limitation.

[0027] **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

[0028] To assist in the understanding of the above recited embodiments, a more particular description of specific embodiments described above may be had by reference to the appended drawings. It is to be noted, however, that the appended drawings illustrate only a portion of the typical embodiments, and are not therefore considered to be limiting in scope of the invention which is described herein. The invention includes other equally effective embodiments.

[0029] Figure 1 is a graph 100 illustrating the electrical resistivity, as a function of temperature, for a variety of materials, where the applied voltage was 1000 V in an air environment.

[0030] Figure 2 is a phase diagram 200 of $Y_2O_3 - ZrO_2 - Al_2O_3$. This phase diagram shows, among other compositions, the composition of a specialized material, identified herein as an area "A" on the phase diagram, for reference purposes. The type "A" ceramic material is a ceramic composition which has demonstrated excellent resistance to erosion by halogen plasmas.

[0031] Figure 3 is a phase diagram 300 of $Y_2O_3 - ZrO_2 - Nb_2O_5$. This phase diagram shows, among other compositions, the composition of a specialized material, identified herein as an area "B" on the phase diagram, for reference purposes. The type "B" ceramic material is a ceramic composition which not only resists erosion by halogen

plasmas, but which also exhibits a controlled, lower electrical resistivity than the type "A" ceramic material, for example.

[0032] Figure 4 is a graph 400 illustrating electrical resistivity, as a function of applied voltage, for a variety of materials, where the measurement was made at room temperature (about 27 °C) in an air environment.

[0033] Figure 5 is a bar chart 500 which shows the average exemplary erosion rate, normalized relative to that for pure yttrium oxide, for a variety of sintered ceramic materials which were exposed to a plasma generated from CF₄ and CHF₃ source gases.

[0034] **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS**

[0035] As a preface to the detailed description, it should be noted that, as used in this specification and the appended claims, the singular forms "a", "an", and "the" include plural referents, unless the context clearly dictates otherwise.

[0036] When the word "about" is used herein, this is intended to mean that the nominal value presented is precise within $\pm 10\%$.

[0037] Described herein are specialized ceramic materials which are developed to resist corrosion under semiconductor device processing conditions which employ a halogen-containing plasma. In certain embodiments, the specialty materials have been modified to have a reduced electrical resistivity when compared with similar ceramic materials which were developed previously to provide plasma erosion resistance. The reduced electrical resistivity is helpful in reducing the possibility of plasma arcing at various components within a semiconductor processing chamber, most notably upon a surface of an electrostatic chuck or a substrate lift pin, where plasma arcing is more of a problem, for example and not by way of limitation. In the past the component, or at least the surface of the component was fabricated from aluminum nitride or aluminum oxide,

which might be doped to provide electrical properties. While this material provided the desired electrical properties, the corrosion/erosion rate was relatively rapid, limiting the useful lifetime of the particular component, and requiring more down time for repairs and replacement of component parts.

[0038] Further, the electrical properties of the various materials used as process chamber liners and functional components within a plasma processing semiconductor apparatus affect the behavior of the plasma. Changes in the behavior of the plasma affect the plasma processing characteristics, and when the effect is substantial, it is necessary to change other process variables to accommodate the change in the plasma behavior. Rather than rework processing variables for device fabrication, it is more practical to develop erosion resistant ceramic materials which have acceptable electrical properties. Only a portion of the ceramic materials which exhibit acceptable plasma corrosion/erosion characteristics can be modified to control electrical resistivity properties within the desired range useful for a component in contact with plasmas. One skilled in the art and having read the present description will be able to be relatively certain of success when selecting combinations of oxides to form the ceramic materials.

[0039] For reasons of convenience, the development of acceptable halogen plasma corrosion/erosion-resistant ceramic materials having the desired electrical properties was carried out by making use of sintered ceramics. The sintered ceramics were produced by techniques well known in the art. In other embodiments, acceptable halogen plasma corrosion/erosion-resistant ceramic materials of the same general composition may be applied as a coating over an underlying material, such as aluminum or aluminum alloy, for example, using thermal/flame spraying or plasma spraying. In the alternative, a sintered ceramic material may be used to fabricate a target which may be used to apply the ceramic material by physical vapor deposition over the underlying material, particularly when the apparatus over which the protective ceramic material is to be applied is large, such as a process chamber liner.

[0040] As previously discussed, the sintered ceramic materials of interest comprise yttrium oxide. The resistivity of the sintered, yttrium-comprising ceramic material may be altered. In one exemplary technique, at least one other oxide is added to the yttrium oxide and the mixture is sintered. The positive ions of the at least one other oxide have a different valence from the Y^{3+} ion, to form a Y vacancy, leading to a decrease of electrical resistivity. Examples of such oxides include CeO_2 , TiO_2 , ZrO_2 , HfO_2 , and Nb_2O_5 , by way of example and not by way of limitation. In another exemplary technique, the at least one other oxide is added to yttrium oxide, and the mixture is sintered in a reductive atmosphere; however, the positive ions of the at least one other oxide show the same valence as the Y^{3+} ion, but possess a significantly different ion radius than the Y^{3+} ion. This results in an O vacancy, which also decreases electrical resistivity. Examples of oxides which show the same valence as the Y^{3+} ion, but possess a significantly different ion radius include Nd_2O_3 , Sm_2O_3 , Sc_2O_3 , Yb_2O_3 , Er_2O_3 , Ho_2O_3 and Dy_2O_3 , by way of example and not by way of limitation.

[0041] A number of exemplary sintered ceramic materials have been investigated to date, and the TABLE below provides an illustration of a portion of the sintered ceramic materials which were created and evaluated. The evaluation of these materials is discussed subsequently.

[0042] EXAMPLES:

[0043]

TABLE

Sample #	Precursor Molar %	Precursor Weight %	Precursor Weight Parts/100 Y_2O_3	Melting Point ($^{\circ}C$)	Sintering Temp. ($^{\circ}C$)	Phase Comp.	Density (g / cm^3)
1	Y_2O_3 : 75.0 HfO_2 : 20.0 ZrO_2 : 5.0	Y_2O_3 : 77.82 HfO_2 : 19.35 ZrO_2 : 2.83	Y_2O_3 : 100.00 HfO_2 : 24.86 ZrO_2 : 3.64	2800	>1800	c-ss single phase**	5.607
2	Y_2O_3 : 60.0 Sc_2O_3 : 20.0 ZrO_2 : 20.0	Y_2O_3 : 72.18 Sc_2O_3 : 14.69 ZrO_2 : 13.13	Y_2O_3 : 100.00 Sc_2O_3 : 20.36 ZrO_2 : 18.19	2360	>1800	c-ss single phase**	4.936
3	Y_2O_3 : 60.0 Nd_2O_3 : 20.0 ZrO_2 : 20.0	Y_2O_3 : 59.58 Nd_2O_3 : 29.58 ZrO_2 : 10.84	Y_2O_3 : 100.00 Nd_2O_3 : 49.66 ZrO_2 : 18.19	N/A*	>1800	c-ss single phase**	5.555
4	Y_2O_3 : 70.0 Nb_2O_5 : 10.0 ZrO_2 : 20.0	Y_2O_3 : 75.53 Nb_2O_5 : 12.7 ZrO_2 : 11.77	Y_2O_3 : 100.00 Nb_2O_5 : 16.82 ZrO_2 : 15.59	N/A*	>1800	c-ss** Y_3NbO and Nb	5.331

*N/A = not available

** c-ss means cubic yttria type solid solution.

[0044] Example One

[0045] Figure 1 shows a graph 100 illustrating electrical resistivity of a variety of ceramic materials, including the Type A and Type B materials made according to exemplary embodiments of the invention. The resistivity is shown on axis 104, as a function of temperature, which is shown on axis 102. The resistivity was measured at 1000 V in an air environment, using standard test conditions in accordance with ASTM D 1829-66 or JIS C2141.

[0046] Curve 106 shown in Figure 1 is representative of the Nb_2O_5 -comprising sintered ceramic material which is described as Sample #4 in the Table. With respect to

sintered ceramic material comprising Nb_2O_5 , acceptable electrical resistivity values are expected to be obtained for additional compositions as well, as illustrated by the phase diagram shown in Figure 3. The sintered ceramic material contains three phases, which include a first phase solid solution comprising Y_2O_3 - ZrO_2 - Nb_2O_5 which may make up about 60 molar % to about 90 molar % of the sintered ceramic material; a second phase of Y_3NbO_7 which may make up from about 5 molar % to about 30 molar % of the sintered ceramic material; and, a third phase of Nb in elemental form, which may make up from about 1 molar % to about 10 molar % of the sintered ceramic material. This material is particularly useful when the resistivity needs to be low to prevent arcing. The resistivity is lower than about $10^{11} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ at room temperature and about $10^8 \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ at 200 °C, and may exhibit a resistivity in the range of $10^9 \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ at typical semiconductor processing conditions.

[0047] One embodiment of the Nb_2O_5 -comprising sintered ceramic material illustrated in Figure 1 is referred to as Nb_2O_5 - ZrO_2 - Y_2O_3 . With reference to Figure 3, one area of the phase diagram has been labeled as “B”. This designation indicates that the solid solution composition of a sintered ceramic material comprises Y_2O_3 at a concentration ranging from about 55 molar % to about 80 molar %, ZrO_2 at a concentration ranging from about 5 molar % to about 25 molar %, and an additive such as Nb_2O_5 , HfO_2 , Nd_2O_3 , or Sc_2O_3 at a concentration ranging from about 5 molar % to about 25 molar %.

[0048] Example Two

[0049] Curve 108 shown in Figure 1 is representative of the HfO_2 -comprising sintered ceramic material, made in accordance with the present invention, which is also described as Sample #1 in the Table. This ceramic material exhibits a higher resistivity than the Nb_2O_5 -comprising material, but is useful for fabricating semiconductor processing apparatus components where arcing is less critical than with respect to an electrostatic chuck or a substrate lift pin.

[0050] Example Three

[0051] Curve 110 shown in Figure 1 is representative of the Sc_2O_3 -comprising sintered ceramic material, made in accordance with the present invention, which is also described as Sample 2 in the Table. Again, this material may be used in applications where the resistivity requirement is $10^{11} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$.

[0052] Example Four (Comparative Example)

[0053] Curve 112 shown in Figure 1 is representative of the Y_2O_3 - ZrO_2 - Al_2O_3 material which is illustrated in the Figure 2 phase diagram . This material is described for purposes of a comparative example only with respect to the controlled resistivity ceramic materials. This sintered ceramic material comprises a solid solution which is formed from Y_2O_3 and ZrO_2 , and a compound which is formed from Y_2O_3 and Al_2O_3 oxides. A typical sintered ceramic material is formed from Y_2O_3 at a concentration ranging from about 60 molar % to about 65 molar %; ZrO_2 at a concentration ranging from about 20 molar % to about 25 molar %; and, Al_2O_3 at a concentration ranging from about 10 molar % to about 15 molar %. One embodiment of a centered ceramic material, which is illustrated by area "A" in the phase diagram in Figure 2, and which is represented by the graph for Y_2O_3 - ZrO_2 - Al_2O_3 shown in Figure 1, contains: about 60 molar % solid solution with a cubic yttria type crystal structure, where c- Y_2O_3 is a solvent, with Zr_2O_3 solute; about 2 molar % solid solution with a fluorite type crystal structure, where ZrO_2 is a solvent, with Y_2O_3 solute; and about 38 molar % YAM ($\text{Y}_4\text{Al}_2\text{O}_9$) compound.

[0054] Example Five (Comparative Example)

[0055] Curve 114 of Figure 1 is representative of the Nd_2O_3 -comprising sintered ceramic material which is described as Sample #3 in the Table. This material is failed to meet the requirements which are necessary to prevent arcing, and is considered to be a comparative example which is not part of the unique ceramic materials which make up the invention.

[0056] Example Six (Comparative Example)

[0057] Curve 116 of Figure 1 is representative of the electrical resistivity characteristics observed for a sintered ceramic of pure Y_2O_3 . This material is also a comparative example, which is useful as a baseline, since a number of semiconductor apparatus components have been fabricated from pure Y_2O_3 . A comparison of the resistivity of the pure Y_2O_3 shows the very significant improvement in terms of electrical resistivity which is achieved by the present invention.

[0058] Also shown in Figure 1 are curves 120, which represents a doped aluminum nitride of the kind commonly used to fabricate an electrostatic chuck, and 122 which represents a second doped aluminum nitride which is also used to fabricate an electrostatic chuck and other semiconductor processing apparatus which requires a low electrical resistivity.

[0059] Example Seven

[0060] Figure 4 is a graph 400 which illustrates the electrical resistivity, as a function of the voltage applied during the resistivity testing, for a number of sintered ceramic test specimens. The resistivity is shown on axis 404, with the voltage shown on axis 402. The test temperature is room temperature (about 27 °C). The purpose of this graph is to illustrate the differences in resistivity between the corrosion-resistant ceramic embodiments of the present invention which have been controlled to reduce resistivity and the currently used doped aluminum nitride ceramics. While the doped aluminum nitride ceramics have a somewhat lower resistivity, their corrosion rate is at least 2 times higher than that of the yttrium oxide-comprising ceramics which have been modified to reduce resistivity.

[0061] In particular, Curve 422 of Figure 4 represents doped aluminum nitride ceramic of the kind currently used to fabricate an electrostatic chuck. Curve 420 represents another doped aluminum nitride ceramic which is used to fabricate an electrostatic chuck and other low resistivity components.

[0062] Curve 406 of Figure 4 is representative of the Nb_2O_5 -comprising sintered ceramic material which is described as Sample #4 in the Table. This yttrium-oxide comprising material which has been modified to reduce resistivity exhibits a resistivity which is very close to that of the doped aluminum nitride identified as AlN-1. Yet, the corrosion rate of the doped aluminum nitride is more than 10 times faster than the corrosion rate of the yttrium-oxide comprising material illustrated by curve 406, as is shown by the bar chart 500 in Figure 5.

[0063] Curve 408 in Figure 4 is representative of the HfO_2 -comprising sintered ceramic material which is described as Sample #1 in the Table. This ceramic material exhibits a higher resistivity than the Nb_2O_5 -comprising material, and at room temperature exhibits a resistivity which is outside of the recommended range for components where plasma arcing is more likely to occur. However, at 200 °C, a temperature which is present during some semiconductor processing, the resistivity falls within an acceptable range, as illustrated by Curve 108 in Figure 1.

[0064] Curve 410 of Figure 4 is representative of the Sc_2O_3 -comprising sintered ceramic material which is described as Sample 2 in the Table. Again, this material may be used in applications where the resistivity requirement is $10^{11} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$, when the processing temperature is 200 °C.

[0065] For comparative purposes (with respect to a controlled electrical resistivity ceramic containing a yttria-comprising solid solution), Curve 412 of Figure 4 shows a ceramic type “A” material comprising Y_2O_3 , ZrO_2 , and Al_2O_3 which is illustrated in Figure 2. One embodiment of such a type “A” material, which is shown in Figure 1, contains about 60 molar % cubic yttria type structure with c- Y_2O_3 as a solvent and with Zr_2O_3 solute; about 2 molar % fluorite-type structure solid solution with ZrO_2 as a solvent and with Y_2O_3 solute; and, about 38 molar % YAM ($\text{Y}_4\text{Al}_2\text{O}_9$) compound. While the Type A HPM material exhibits acceptable corrosion-resistant properties and commendable mechanical properties, the electrical resistivity is considerably higher than

the desired range maximum $10^{11} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$. This is the case even at 200°C , as illustrated by Curve 112 in Figure 1. This material is not included among the embodiments for the electrical resistivity modified corrosion resistant ceramics.

[0066] For comparative purposes, Curve 414 of Figure 4 shows the Nd_2O_3 - comprising sintered ceramic material which is described as Sample #3 in the Table. This material is failed to meet the requirements which are necessary to prevent arcing, and is considered to be a comparative example which is not part of the unique ceramic materials which make up the invention.

[0067] For comparative purposes, Curve 416 of figure 4 shows the electrical resistivity characteristics observed for a sintered ceramic of pure Y_2O_3 . This material is also a comparative example, which is useful as a baseline, since a number of semiconductor apparatus components have been fabricated from pure Y_2O_3 . A comparison of the resistivity of the pure Y_2O_3 shows the very significant improvement in terms of electrical resistivity which is achieved by the present invention.

[0068] Example Eight

[0069] Figure 5 illustrates a bar chart 500 which shows the exemplary erosion rate, normalized to pure Y_2O_3 , for a variety of sintered ceramic materials exposed to a plasma. The plasma was generated from CF_4 and CHF_3 source gases. The plasma processing chamber was an Enabler for Trench Etch available from Applied Materials, Inc. The plasma source power was up to 2000 W, the process chamber pressure was 10 - 500 mTorr, and the substrate temperature was about 40°C , for a time period of 76 hours. The axis 502 shows a variety of materials which were tested for erosion resistance. The test specimen identified by a description Y_2O_3 - 10 ZrO_2 , represent a sintered solid solution ceramic test specimen which was formed by sintering 100 parts by weight Y_2O_3 in combination with 10 parts by weight of ZrO_2 . The test specimens identified as containing Nb_2O_5 -, or HfO_2 -, or Nd_2O_3 -, or Sc_2O_3 - represent the TABLE

compositions which are recited as containing each of those materials. A comparison of the erosion rates as shown on axis 504 shows that the erosion rates of the resistivity modified, yttrium oxide-comprising sintered ceramic materials are essentially the same as the erosion rate for pure yttrium oxide. Further, the erosion rates of the resistivity modified, yttrium oxide-comprising sintered ceramics are substantially better than the erosion rate of Al₂O₃, AlN, ZrO₂, Quartz, W/ZrC, B₄C and SiC, other ceramic materials which have been used to provide a halogen plasma corrosion- resistant materials for semiconductor processing chamber liners and on semiconductor processing apparatus interior components.

[0070] Based on the results obtained during the experimentation which provided the examples described above, and data from other reference sources, calculations have been made which provide estimates of the effect of UV radiation in plasma leakage current. UV radiation in a plasma environment (of the kind used in semiconductor processing) does not have an effect on leakage current of electrical resistivity-modified yttrium oxide-comprising sintered ceramic materials.

[0071] An investigation of the affect of 193 nm UV irradiation (which is employed in some semiconductor processing operations) on the leakage current in the Nb₂O₅ - Type B sintered ceramic material and the HfO₂ - Type B sintered ceramic material has indicated that the electrical performance of these materials should not be affected by such UV irradiation.

[0072] The ceramic-comprising articles which are useful as semiconductor processing apparatus which is in contact with a plasma include a lid, a liner, a nozzle, a gas distribution plate, a shower head, an electrostatic chuck component, a shadow frame, a substrate-holding frame, a processing kit, and a chamber liner, by way of example and not by way of limitation.

[0073] The above described exemplary embodiments are not intended to limit the scope of the present invention, as one skilled in the art can, in view of the present

disclosure, expand such embodiments to correspond with the subject matter of the invention claimed below.

[0074]

CLAIMS

[0075] We claim:

1. A ceramic-comprising article which is resistant to erosion by halogen-containing plasmas used in semiconductor processing and which exhibits a controlled electrical resistivity in the range of about 10^{-7} to $10^{-15} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ at a temperature ranging from about 350 °C to room temperature, said ceramic article having a surface comprising at least one solid solution containing yttrium oxide, and wherein at least one solid solution which comprises yttrium oxide also contains at one or more oxides selected from the group consisting of zirconium oxide, hafnium oxide, scandium oxide, niobium oxide, samarium oxide, ytterbium oxide, erbium oxide, cerium oxide, and combinations thereof.
2. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 1, where other lanthanide series element oxides are included in said ceramic article.
3. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 1, wherein two oxides are used to form said at least one solid solution which comprises yttrium oxide and an other oxide, and wherein said other oxide is selected from the group consisting of zirconium oxide, cerium oxide, hafnium oxide, and niobium oxide.
4. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 3, wherein scandium oxide, samarium oxide, ytterbium oxide, erbium oxide, or an other lanthanide series element oxide is included in said ceramic article.
5. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 1, wherein more than

two precursor oxides are used to form said solid solution which comprises yttrium oxide, and wherein said precursor oxides include zirconium oxide and another oxide selected from the group consisting of hafnium oxide, scandium oxide, niobium oxide, samarium oxide, ytterbium oxide, erbium oxide, cerium oxide, and combinations thereof.

6. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 5, wherein other lanthanide series elements are included in said ceramic-comprising article.

7. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 3, wherein said ceramic is formed from yttrium oxide at a concentration ranging from about 40 molar % to less than 100 molar %, and zirconium oxide at concentration ranging from more than 0 molar % to about 60 molar %.

8. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 3, wherein said ceramic is formed from yttrium oxide at a concentration ranging from about 40 molar % to less than 100 molar %, and cerium oxide at concentration ranging from greater than 0 molar % to about 60 molar %.

9. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 3, wherein said ceramic is formed from yttrium oxide at a concentration ranging from about 40 molar % to less than 100 molar %, and hafnium oxide at concentration ranging from greater than 0 molar % to about 60 molar %.

10. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 3, wherein said ceramic is formed from yttrium oxide at a concentration ranging from about 40 molar % to less than 100 molar %, and niobium oxide at concentration ranging from greater than 0 molar % to about 60 molar %.

11. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 5, wherein yttrium oxide is present at a concentration ranging from about 40 molar % to less than 100 molar %, zirconium oxide is present over a range from more than 0 molar % to about 20 molar %, and scandium oxide is present over a range from more than 0 molar % up to less than 100 molar %.

12. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 5, wherein yttrium oxide is present at a concentration ranging from about 70 molar % to less than 100 molar %, zirconium oxide is present over a range from more than 0 molar % to about 17 molar %, and hafnium oxide is present over a range from more than 0 molar % up to about 27 molar %.

13. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 5, wherein said article is formed from a three phase sintered ceramic which includes a first phase of solid solution comprising Y_2O_3 - ZrO_2 - Nb_2O_5 which makes up from about 60 molar % to about 90 molar % of the sintered ceramic material; a second phase of Y_3NbO_7 which makes up from about 5 molar % to about 30 molar % of the sintered ceramic material; and, a third phase of Nb in elemental form, which makes up from about 1 molar % to about 10 molar % of the sintered ceramic material.

14. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 1, wherein said article is in the form of an electrostatic chuck or a substrate lift pin figure, or another article which requires an electrical resistivity in the range of about 10^{-7} to $10^{-15} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ at a temperature which ranges from about 350 °C to room temperature.

15. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 1, wherein said article

is in the form of an internal component or a liner used in the interior of a semiconductor processing chamber, and wherein the resistivity of said ceramic article is in the range of about 10^{-7} to $10^{-15} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ at a temperature which ranges from about 350 °C to room temperature.

16. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 1, wherein said article is a solid sintered ceramic article.

17. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 1, wherein said article is selected from the group consisting of an electrostatic chuck, a lid, a liner, a nozzle, a gas distribution plate, a shower head, an electrostatic chuck component, a shadow frame, a substrate holding frame, a processing kit, and a chamber liner.

18. A ceramic-comprising article in accordance with Claim 1, wherein said surface of said article is coated with said ceramic.

19. A method of reducing plasma arcing within a semiconductor processing chamber which employs an electrostatic chuck, a liner or an internal component having a surface which is in contact with a plasma, said surface comprising a ceramic material, said method comprising:

- a) selecting oxides to comprise said ceramic material from yttrium oxide and at least one other oxide, where a positive ions of said other oxide has a significantly different valance from a Y^{3+} ion, to form a Y vacancy, leading to a decrease of electronic resistivity of said ceramic material;
- b) sintering said oxides to form at least one crystalline solid solution; and
- c) exposing said ceramic material to a plasma.

20. A method in accordance with Claim 19, wherein said oxide having said different valence from said Y^{3+} ion is selected from the group consisting of CeO_2 , TiO_2 , ZrO_2 , HfO_2 , Nb_2O_5 , and combinations thereof.

21. A method of reducing plasma arcing within a semiconductor processing chamber which employs an electrostatic chuck, a liner or an internal component having a surface contacting a plasma, said surface comprising a ceramic material, said method comprising:

a) selecting oxides to comprise said ceramic material from yttrium oxide and at least one other oxide, where a positive ion of said other oxide shows the same valence as the Y^{3+} ion, but possess a significantly different ion radius than the Y^{3+} ion, leading to a decrease of electronic resistivity of said ceramic material;

b) sintering said oxides in a reductive atmosphere; and

c) exposing said ceramic material to a plasma.

22. A method in accordance with Claim 21, wherein said oxide having said significantly different ion radius is selected from the group consisting of Nd_2O_3 , Sm_2O_3 , Sc_2O_3 , Yb_2O_3 , Er_2O_3 , Ho_2O_3 , Dy_2O_3 , and combinations thereof.