

METHOD OF GRINDING BACK SURFACE OF SEMICONDUCTOR WAFER
AND SEMICONDUCTOR WAFER GRINDING APPARATUS

5 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a semiconductor wafer back-surface grinding method and a semiconductor wafer grinding apparatus for grinding the back surface of a semiconductor wafer, having a support base material adhered to a front surface with a circuit pattern formed thereon, for the purpose of reducing the thickness of the semiconductor wafer.

2. Description of the Related Art

15 In general, as processing methods for reducing the thickness of a semiconductor wafer, there is a method of grinding a back surface of the semiconductor wafer. For example, this method uses a grinding apparatus having a contact type sensor as an in-process gauge and, while the thickness of the semiconductor wafer is constantly monitored, grinding is performed until the wafer reaches a predetermined thickness that has been set in advance.

In this method, as shown in Fig. 3, the distance from the top surface of a turntable 2 to the back surface 3b of the wafer 3 is defined as the equivalent thickness (P1 - P2) of the semiconductor wafer, and processing and measurement on the wafer can be performed simultaneously and in-process until the equivalent thickness (P1 - P2) reaches δl without removing the semiconductor wafer 3 from the turntable 2, and the handling performance and the accuracy of the processing can be thereby improved.

However, in recent years, as increasingly large diameter and thin semiconductor wafers are required, due to the development of IC cards and 3-dimensional mounting, the above-described grinding method has a limitation in meeting these requirements. That is, in

the above-described method of grinding the back surface 3b of a semiconductor wafer 3 using an in-process gauge, the semiconductor wafer 3 is directly fixed to the turntable 2, so that, when the wafer is machined until
5 the wafer thickness $\delta 1$ is small, for example, as small as 30 μm , wafer strength is lowered and the wafer 3 is readily affected by a processing strain and this gives rise to cracking and warping.

As a solution to the above-described problem,
10 there is a method, of grinding a back surface 3b of a wafer, shown in Fig. 4. In this method, a support base material 4 such as glass is adhered to front surface 3a of the semiconductor wafer 3, and the semiconductor wafer 3 is fixed to a turntable 2 via this support base
15 material 4.

An example of a grinding method using an in-process gauge is disclosed in Japanese Unexamined Patent Publication No. 52-26686 (JP-A-52-26686), although it is not for grinding a semiconductor wafer, in which
20 processing is performed while simultaneously measuring the inner diameter of a work piece with a gauge and, in accordance with the variation of size of the finished piece, a correcting command is given to the in-process control system.

When a support base material 4 is adhered to
25 the front surface 3a of a semiconductor wafer 3, as shown in Fig. 4, the distance measured by an in-process gauge, that is, the distance (P1 - P2) from the top surface of the turntable 2 to the back-surface 3b of the wafer, is
30 the total thickness including the thickness $t3$ of the support base material 4 in addition to the thickness $t2$ of the protective surface film 5. As the tolerances (errors) of the protective film 5 and the support base material 4 are added, the single semiconductor wafer 3
35 cannot be finished to an accurate thickness. When a large number of semiconductor wafers 3 are continuously processed in batch processing, there is a problem that

variation of the thickness of individual support base material 4 entails variation of the thickness of individual semiconductor wafers 3.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 In view of above-described problem, it is an object of the present invention to provide a semiconductor wafer back-surface grinding method and a semiconductor wafer grinding apparatus, for grinding the back surface of a semiconductor wafer having a support member adhered thereto, which is capable of finishing a semiconductor
10 wafer to an accurate thickness.

 In order to attain above object, the present invention provides a semiconductor wafer back-surface grinding method, for grinding a back surface of a
15 semiconductor wafer, an opposed front surface of the semiconductor wafer being adhered to a support base material and being provided with a circuit pattern, comprising: measuring an initial thickness of the semiconductor wafer before grinding, in a condition where
20 the support base material is adhered to the front surface of the semiconductor wafer; obtaining a cutting depth by subtracting a final thickness measured after grinding from the initial thickness; and grinding the back surface of the semiconductor wafer, based on the cutting depth.

25 According to this invention, by measuring the initial thickness of the semiconductor wafer before grinding, a cutting depth can be obtained by subtracting the final thickness after grinding from the initial thickness, and by grinding the back surface of the
30 semiconductor wafer fixed on the turntable based on this cutting depth, the influence of the thickness of the support base material and thickness of the surface protective tape can be eliminated and the semiconductor wafer can be finished to an accurate thickness.

35 In order to attain the above object, the present invention provides a semiconductor wafer grinding apparatus, for grinding a back surface of a semiconductor

wafer, an opposed front surface of the semiconductor wafer being adhered to a support base material and being provided with a circuit pattern, the apparatus comprising: a first measuring section for measuring a
5 initial thickness of the semiconductor wafer before grinding, in a condition where the support base material is adhered to the front surface of the semiconductor wafer; a cutting depth obtaining section for obtaining a cutting depth by subtracting a final thickness measured
10 after grinding from the initial thickness; and a machining grinding section for grinding the back surface of the semiconductor wafer based on the cutting depth.

According to this invention, as the grinding apparatus includes the measuring section for measuring
15 the thickness of the single semiconductor wafer before grinding, the cutting depth can be obtained by subtracting the final thickness, after grinding, from the thickness before grinding. By grinding the back surface of the semiconductor wafer fixed on the turntable based
20 on this cutting depth, the influence of the thickness of the support base material and thickness of the protective film can be eliminated, and the single semiconductor wafer can be finished to an accurate thickness.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

25 These and other objects and features of the present invention will become clearer from the following description of the preferred embodiments given with reference to the attached drawings, wherein:

Fig. 1 is a view useful for explaining a
30 semiconductor wafer back-surface grinding method according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is an enlarged sectional view showing the semiconductor wafer shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a view useful for explaining an example of
35 conventional semiconductor wafer back-surface grinding method; and

Fig. 4 is a sectional view showing a semiconductor

wafer having a glass base material adhered thereto that is ground by the same method as in Fig. 3.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

5 The semiconductor wafer back-surface grinding method and the semiconductor wafer grinding apparatus according to the present invention will be described in detail with reference to the appended drawings showing preferred
10 embodiments thereof. Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 are views useful for explaining a semiconductor wafer back-surface grinding method according to an embodiment of the present invention. Common constituents are denoted by the same reference numerals.

As partially shown in Fig. 1, the semiconductor wafer grinding apparatus 1 includes a turntable 2 for
15 supporting the semiconductor wafer 3, a cup-type grinding wheel 6 (a grinding section), a spindle head 7 for rotatably supporting the grinding wheel 6, an unshown IR (Infrared Ray) sensor as a first measuring section, and an unshown in-process gauge as a second measuring
20 section.

As shown in Fig. 2, the semiconductor wafer 3 is detachably held on the turntable 2 with glass base material (support base material) 4 adhered to the front
25 surface 3a having circuit pattern 3c formed thereon. For example, before grinding, the thickness t_1 of the semiconductor wafer 3 measured with an IR sensor is about $750\mu\text{m}$, the thickness of the protective film 5 is about $100\mu\text{m}$, and the thickness of the glass base material 4 is about 1mm. The semiconductor wafer 3 can be ground to a
30 thickness as thin as $30\mu\text{m}$, for example, based on the cutting depth δ_2 that is determined from the thickness t_1 of single wafer for each wafer.

In the present embodiment, the combined wafer member 8 is composed of a semiconductor wafer 3, a protective
35 film 5, and a glass base material 4. In another embodiment, the combined wafer member 8 may be composed

of a semiconductor wafer 3, and a glass base material 4. The combined wafer member 8 may be composed with account being taken of the thickness of adhesive between the protective film 5 and the glass base material 4.

5 Next, referring to Fig. 1, each of the constituents of the semiconductor wafer grinding apparatus 1 according to the present embodiment will be described. The turntable 2 is formed in the shape of a disk, and an output shaft 11 of a motor 10 is mounted to its lower
10 surface concentrically with the center axis of the turntable 2. The turntable 2 is rotated by the driving force of the motor 10 in the direction of the arrow A in the Figure. On the upper surface of the turntable 2, an unshown suction plate (chuck) is provided, and the glass
15 base material (support base material) 4 to be adhered to the semiconductor wafer 3 is adapted to be sucked to this suction plate under a vacuum. The semiconductor wafer 3 can be thereby held on the turntable 2, and rotated by the turntable 2. After grinding, the semiconductor wafer
20 3 can be easily removed from the suction plate by supplying air to the suction plate.

 As the glass base material, a glass material having material properties similar to those of the semiconductor wafer 3 is preferred in order to avoid occurrence of a
25 processing strain during the grinding process due to a difference in the material properties of the two materials. The thickness of the glass base material 4 is determined depending on the thickness of the semiconductor wafer 3, and any thickness may be selected.

30 The grinding wheel 6 is for grinding the back surface 3b of the semiconductor wafer 3 held by suction to the turntable 2, and may, for example, be a cup-type diamond grinding wheel with a liquid bond as a binder. By using a liquid bond as a binder, the grinding wheel
35 becomes resilient so that the shock at the time of contact of the grinding wheel 6 with the wafer 3 may be reduced and the wafer back-surface 3b can be ground to

high precision. The grinding wheel 6 is mounted to the spindle head 7 with the grinder portion 6a facing downward.

5 An output shaft 18 of a motor 17 is attached to the upper surface of the grinding wheel 6 and is concentric with the center axis of the grinding wheel 6, and the grinding wheel 6 is rotated by the driving force of the motor 17 in the direction of an arrow B in the Figure. The grinding wheel 6 attached to the spindle head 7 is
10 subjected to truing, on the apparatus, so as to form the wheel surface opposed to the wafer 3. Also, dressing is performed to generate a sharp cutting edge on the surface of the wheel 6 that has been degraded in cutting performance.

15 The spindle head 7 is composed of the motor 17, a ball screw 12, and the like. By driving the ball screw 12 with an unshown motor, the grinding wheel 6 can be moved up and down relative to the semiconductor wafer 3. Thus, by abutting and pressing the grinding wheel 6 to
20 the back surface 3b of the semiconductor wafer 3 and feeding the grinding wheel 6, the back surface 3b of the semiconductor wafer 3 can be ground by the grinding wheel 6.

The ball screw 12 is fixed on a ram 14 that is
25 formed in L-shape. The ram 14 may be of a movable type or a fixed type. The ram 14 of the present embodiment is a fixed type.

The IR sensor makes use of a property of infrared rays, that infrared rays are transmitted through metals, glass, and plastics, to measure the reflection time of
30 infrared rays reflected at the boundary of the semiconductor wafer 3 and the glass base material 4 or the protective film 5 in order to obtain the thickness t1 of the single wafer as shown in Fig. 2. The IR sensor is
35 provided on the grinding apparatus as a measuring system composed of a stage unit having an unshown data analyzer and a probe, and a power controller, etc.

The in-process gauge is a so-called touch sensor of a contact type and is a measuring device in which a displacement of the probe as a contact plunger is converted to voltage signal by a differential transformer, and the distance (P1 - P2) between the top surface of the turntable 2 and the wafer back-surface 3b, that is, the thickness of the combined wafer 8, is performed based on the converted voltage signal (see Fig. 4) in process. For example, an in-process measurement using the in-process gauge is performed in each case, when processing finished by one-path. Although the distance (P1 - P2) varies for each individual combined wafer 8, grinding is performed to a position determined by subtracting the cutting depth from the distance (P1 - P2), so that every semiconductor wafer 3 can be ground always to the same thickness.

Next, the method of grinding the back surface 3b of the semiconductor wafer 3 using the semiconductor wafer grinding apparatus 1 will be described. First, the thickness t_1 of the semiconductor wafer 3 integrated with the glass base material 4 is measured, using the IR sensor, before grinding. Then, cutting depth δ_2 is determined by subtracting the final thickness (a set value) δ_3 of the wafer 3 from the measured value (an initial thickness) of the wafer thickness t_1 . The cutting depth δ_2 is inputted to an unshown controller for controlling the grinding apparatus based on the cutting depth.

As shown in Fig. 2, the combined wafer 8 is held on the upper surface of the turntable 2 with the glass base material 4 adhered to the front surface 3a of the semiconductor wafer 3. Next, while the semiconductor wafer 3 is rotated by the motor 10, the grinding wheel 6 attached to the spindle head 7 is rotated by the motor 17. Then, the ball screw 12 is driven to move the grinding wheel 6 downward. The grinder portion 6a of the

grinding wheel 6 is abutted and pressed to the back surface 3b of the semiconductor wafer 3 and, for each rotation of the turntable 2, the grinding wheel 6 is moved downward by a predetermined cutting depth to grind the back surface until the cutting depth $\delta 2$ is removed off from the thickness $t1$ of the semiconductor wafer 3.

When grinding of the back surface 3b has been completed, the grinding wheel 6 is retracted from the semiconductor wafer 3, and the motor 17 is stopped to stop the rotation of the grinding wheel 6. The grinding process with the grinding apparatus 1 is thereby finished.

After the grinding process has been finished, with the semiconductor wafer 3 still fixed on the turntable 2, polishing is performed using an unshown polishing apparatus to remove a damaged layer generated by grinding process. This can prevent damage, such as an inadvertent crack, from being produced in the wafer 3. After polishing has been completed, the semiconductor wafer 3 is removed from the turntable 2, transferred to next process such as wafer processing, and coating or dicing of the wafer is performed.

In accordance with the semiconductor wafer grinding apparatus 1 according to the present embodiment and a method of grinding the back surface 3b of a semiconductor wafer using the same, by measuring the thickness $t1$ of the semiconductor wafer 3 with an IR sensor before grinding, the cutting depth $\delta 2$ of the wafer 3 can be obtained. By grinding the wafer back-surface 3b fixed on the turntable 2 based on this cutting depth $\delta 2$, the influence of the thickness of the glass base material 4 and the thickness of the protective film 5 can be eliminated, and individual single semiconductor wafer 3 can be ground and finished to an accurate thickness.

The present invention is not limited to the above-described embodiment, but can be implemented in various

modifications and variations without departing from the concept of the invention. Although, in the present embodiment, the wafer thickness t_1 is measured before the semiconductor wafer 3 is held on the turntable 2, the
5 wafer thickness t_1 may be measured after the semiconductor wafer 3 has been mounted on the turntable 2.

Although the grinding apparatus 1 of the present embodiment comprises an in-process gauge, other measuring
10 section may be used in place of the in-process gauge as long as the measuring section are capable of measuring the position of the back surface of the semiconductor wafer 3 fixed on the turntable 2.

Although an IR sensor is used in the present
15 embodiment, another non-contact type sensor or, if possible, another contact type sensor, may be used as long as the thickness t_1 of the single semiconductor wafer 3 can be measured before grinding.

CLAIMS

1. A semiconductor wafer back-surface grinding method, for grinding a back surface of a semiconductor wafer, an opposed front surface of the semiconductor wafer being adhered to a support base material via a protective film and being provided with a circuit pattern, comprising:
 - measuring an initial thickness of the semiconductor wafer before grinding, in a condition where the support base material is adhered to the front surface of the semiconductor wafer;
 - obtaining a cutting depth by subtracting a set final thickness after grinding from the initial thickness; and
 - grinding the back surface of the semiconductor wafer, based on the cutting depth.
2. A semiconductor wafer back-surface grinding method according to claim 1,
 - wherein measuring the initial thickness of the semiconductor wafer is performed after the semiconductor wafer is fixed relative to a turntable of a grinding apparatus.
3. A semiconductor wafer back-surface grinding method according to claim 1,
 - wherein the initial thickness of the semiconductor wafer is measured using an IR sensor.
4. A semiconductor wafer grinding apparatus for grinding a back surface of a semiconductor wafer, an opposed front surface of the semiconductor wafer being adhered to a support base material via a protective film and being provided with a circuit pattern, the apparatus comprising:

a first measuring section for measuring a initial thickness of the semiconductor wafer before grinding, in a condition where the support base material is adhered to the front surface of the semiconductor wafer;

a cutting depth obtaining section for obtaining a cutting depth by subtracting a set final thickness after grinding from the initial thickness; and

a grinding section for grinding the back surface of the semiconductor wafer based on the cutting depth.

5. A semiconductor wafer grinding apparatus according to claim 4,

further comprising a second measuring section for measuring, in an in-process mode after fixing the semiconductor wafer via the support base material on a turntable, a distance from the top surface of the turntable to the back surface of the semiconductor wafer.

6. A semiconductor wafer grinding apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the first measuring section comprises an IR sensor.