

PATENT SPECIFICATION (11)

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(54) IMPROVEMENTS IN OR RELATING TO CONTAINERS

(71) We, DART INDUSTRIES INC., a corporation organised and existing under the laws of the State of Delaware, United States of America, of Post Office Box 3157 Terminal Annex, Los Angeles, California 90051, United States of America, do hereby declare the invention, for which we pray that a patent may be granted to us, and the method by which it is to be performed, to be particularly described in and by the following statement:—

This invention relates to containers and more particularly cruets suitable for the storage and service of condiments such as vinegar, oil, or other similar dressings which are commonly found in home table use. Moreover, the particular cruet here disclosed is adapted to be closed in a fashion typical to that shown in U.S. Patent No. 3,756,480 and U.S. Design Patent No. D-226,576.

Cruets, vials, or casters have typically been available in glassware form but in many instances are suitable for retention of the contained fluid only during table service use. Accordingly, the user will in such situations be forced to store such fluids in separate containers. This, of course, necessitates the employment of a plurality of containers for each such fluid being served and inherently necessitates that the user employ more time, space, and energy to this aspect of food storage and service.

It is a principal objective of this invention therefore to provide a single container that may be employed both in the usual storage and service of vinegar, oil, or the like which are common in everyday household food service use. Additionally, this container has been constructed in a fashion that makes it convenient for handling and similarly will retain a volume of fluid typically found available in packages offered across the counter. The user may accordingly empty the store-bought package directly into this container without the necessity of retaining a partial quantity in that original package form. This immediately makes the contained product ready for table service and similarly saves the consumer the inconvenience of storing a part quantity of such fluid or the like in

either the pantry, refrigerator, or other suitable kitchen area.

According to this invention there is provided a cruet for the storage and service of condiments or the like and including an elongate container having an integral bottom portion and a side wall portion and a top end opening, said side wall portion being shaped so that the top end opening is substantially larger than the bottom portion and including above, but about its mid point, a substantial vertical area that is recessed inwardly with respect to the area of side wall portion thereabove, and a base member having an outwardly tapering side wall the bottom extremity of which is approximately equal to the planar size of said container top end opening, the base member including a wall surface that is adapted matingly to engage, as a press fit, said vertical area of the container side wall portion.

By providing the base member as a press fit with the container in preferred embodiments such base member may be removable from the principal container itself thus making the whole item easy to clean. Similarly, due to the two piece construction of the cruet, its base supporting member may be constructed to provide maximum stability for the container yet provide a central area which is of a size that makes the manipulation thereof simple and convenient for the user.

Conveniently said base member may be of a length approximating to, but greater than, the distance from the upper extremity of said vertical area to the bottom wall of the container.

Furthermore, the depth of inward recess of the vertical area of the container side wall may be approximately equal to the thickness of the side wall at the upper extremity of the base member so that the container and the base member mate in close association.

In order that the invention may be more readily understood, and further features thereof appreciated, one specific embodiment of container in accordance with the invention will now be described by way of example:—

FIGURE 1 is an exploded top perspective 100

view of a cruet showing its overall two piece construction;

FIGURE 2 is a side elevational view of the cruet fully assembled;

5 FIGURE 3 is a vertical medial cross-sectional view of the cruet in the form shown in Figure 2; and

10 FIGURE 4 is an enlarged fragmentary cross-sectional view of an area of inter-engagement between the respective container and base member of the cruet.

In this embodiment the cruet is generally designated by reference numeral 10. Furthermore, such cruet is made up of two principal parts, an open topped container or vial 12 and a separable base member 14. At this juncture, it should be noted that the cruet is intended to be sealed at its open top end by a three part press type seal, not here shown, but similar to that which is shown and described in U.S. Patent No. 3,756,480.

The container or vial 12 has an open end defined by a substantially vertical side wall portion 16 (which in this embodiment is circular in cross-section) having a slightly flared upper lip 18 which together are adapted to accommodate the closure mentioned hereinabove. A ledge 20 is formed at the point of intersection of wall portion 16 with a tapering side wall portion 22. This ledge 20 tends to assist the user in adopting the proper orientation of the closure on the container. Furthermore, the generally vertical side wall portion 16 enables the user to elevate the closure and yet have such retained within the open end of the container thus allowing use of the pour spout 24 even though the closure is not completely removed from the container. The container side wall portion 22 extends downwardly from ledge 20 in a generally conical fashion and with a smooth concave disposition.

As may best be seen in Figures 1, 3 and 4, this side wall portion 22 terminates approximately the mid point of the container in a circumferential part 26 that is defined by a downwardly directed sloping surface 28 on the inner surface of the wall portion 22. Along the outer surface of the portion 22 this ledge is defined by a recess 30 the purpose of which will be discussed in more detail hereinafter. Immediately below the recess and ledge the container side wall is substantially vertical at 32 and the outer surface thereof is substantially cylindrical. Such generally vertical area extends for only a very short distance and thereafter the side wall continues in its progression downwardly with a slight narrowing taper towards an integral bottom wall 34 where it terminates. It should be noted that the initial conical section of the side wall 22 and the lower extension thereof which tapers tends to create an overall shape that is particularly well adapted

to accommodate the base member 14 which is described more fully below.

The base member 14 flares gently from an uppermost extremity 36 toward its bottom edge 38. Accordingly, the diametrical relationship between these two end portions of the base member (as will be seen from Figure 3) is approximately two to three (2:3) thus providing for a substantially greater degree of stability than would be obtained if the member incorporated a straight wall. The planar size relationship between the open end of container 12 and base bottom edge 38 are also approximately equal, thus contributing to cruet stability. This base member 14 incorporates an annular portion immediately adjacent its upper extremity which portion includes an inner wall surface 40 (Figure 4) that is substantially vertical and is of a diameter that provides an interference fit of between about 0.015 and 0.025 inches between such inner wall surface and the generally vertical container wall area 32. Furthermore, it should be noted that the wall thickness at this particular area is such that it is adapted smoothly to blend into the outer wall area of side wall 22 immediately adjacent recess 30.

The base member 14 is therefore adapted to securely retain the cruet or container 12 in mated engagement that assures that the two will remain interengaged during use. However, manual separability of the two parts (container and base) is provided so that such parts can be easily cleaned and maintained. Similarly, due to the flaring relationship of the base member wall 42 there is a distinct continuity from the upper portion of the container side wall area 22 as it proceeds to the base member bottom edge 38. Such continuity can be evidenced by the concavity created in appearance due to this flaring effect. Likewise, because of the mentioned flare of the skirt as well as the slight taper of the bottom portion of the container and the close proximity of the bottom of the container that is maintained with respect to the bottom edge 38 of the base, the cruet has a significant stability in spite of its generally tall and slender construction.

WHAT WE CLAIM IS:—

1. A cruet for the storage and service of condiments or the like and including an elongate container having an integral bottom portion and a side wall portion and a top end opening, said side wall portion being shaped so that the top end opening is substantially larger than the bottom portion and including above, but about its mid point, a substantial vertical area that is recessed inwardly with respect to the area of side wall portion thereabove, and a base member having an outwardly tapering side wall the bottom extremity of which is approximately equal to

view of a cruet showing its overall two piece construction;

FIGURE 2 is a side elevational view of the cruet fully assembled;

5 FIGURE 3 is a vertical medial cross-sectional view of the cruet in the form shown in Figure 2; and

10 FIGURE 4 is an enlarged fragmentary cross-sectional view of an area of inter-engagement between the respective container and base member of the cruet.

In this embodiment the cruet is generally designated by reference numeral 10. Furthermore, such cruet is made up of two principal parts, an open topped container or vial 12 and a separable base member 14. At this juncture, it should be noted that the cruet is intended to be sealed at its open top end by a three part press type seal, not here shown, but similar to that which is shown and described in U.S. Patent No. 3,756,480.

The container or vial 12 has an open end defined by a substantially vertical side wall portion 16 (which in this embodiment is circular in cross-section) having a slightly flared upper lip 18 which together are adapted to accommodate the closure mentioned hereinabove. A ledge 20 is formed at the point of intersection of wall portion 16 with a tapering side wall portion 22. This ledge 20 tends to assist the user in adopting the proper orientation of the closure on the container. Furthermore, the generally vertical side wall portion 16 enables the user to elevate the closure and yet have such retained within the open end of the container thus allowing use of the pour spout 24 even though the closure is not completely removed from the container. The container side wall portion 22 extends downwardly from ledge 20 in a generally conical fashion and with a smooth concave disposition.

As may best be seen in Figures 1, 3 and 4, this side wall portion 22 terminates approximate the mid point of the container in a circumferential part 26 that is defined by a downwardly directed sloping surface 28 on the inner surface of the wall portion 22. Along the outer surface of the portion 22 this ledge is defined by a recess 30 the purpose of which will be discussed in more detail hereinafter. Immediately below the recess and ledge the container side wall is substantially vertical at 32 and the outer surface thereof is substantially cylindrical. Such generally vertical area extends for only a very short distance and thereafter the side wall continues in its progression downwardly with a slight narrowing taper towards an integral bottom wall 34 where it terminates. It should be noted that the initial conical section of the side wall 22 and the lower extension thereof which tapers tends to create an overall shape that is particularly well adapted

to accommodate the base member 14 which is described more fully below.

The base member 14 flares gently from an uppermost extremity 36 toward its bottom edge 38. Accordingly, the diametrical relationship between these two end portions of the base member (as will be seen from Figure 3) is approximately two to three (2:3) thus providing for a substantially greater degree of stability than would be obtained if the member incorporated a straight wall. The planar size relationship between the open end of container 12 and base bottom edge 38 are also approximately equal, thus contributing to cruet stability. This base member 14 incorporates an annular portion immediately adjacent its upper extremity which portion includes an inner wall surface 40 (Figure 4) that is substantially vertical and is of a diameter that provides an interference fit of between about 0.015 and 0.025 inches between such inner wall surface and the generally vertical container wall area 32. Furthermore, it should be noted that the wall thickness at this particular area is such that it is adapted smoothly to blend into the outer wall area of side wall 22 immediately adjacent recess 30.

The base member 14 is therefore adapted to securely retain the cruet or container 12 in mated engagement that assures that the two will remain interengaged during use. However, manual separability of the two parts (container and base) is provided so that such parts can be easily cleaned and maintained. Similarly, due to the flaring relationship of the base member wall 42 there is a distinct continuity from the upper portion of the container side wall area 22 as it proceeds to the base member bottom edge 38. Such continuity can be evidenced by the concavity created in appearance due to this flaring effect. Likewise, because of the mentioned flare of the skirt as well as the slight taper of the bottom portion of the container and the close proximity of the bottom of the container that is maintained with respect to the bottom edge 38 of the base, the cruet has a significant stability in spite of its generally tall and slender construction.

WHAT WE CLAIM IS:—

1. A cruet for the storage and service of condiments or the like and including an elongate container having an integral bottom portion and a side wall portion and a top end opening, said side wall portion being shaped so that the top end opening is substantially larger than the bottom portion and including above, but about its mid point, a substantial vertical area that is recessed inwardly with respect to the area of side wall portion thereabove, and a base member having an outwardly tapering side wall the bottom extremity of which is approximately equal to



(14)

the planar size of said container top end opening, the base member including a wall surface that is adapted matingly to engage, as a press fit, said vertical area of the container side wall portion.

2. A cruet according to claim 1, wherein said base member is of a length approximating to, but greater than, the distance from the upper extremity of said vertical area to the bottom wall of the container.

3. A cruet according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the depth of inward recess of the vertical area of the container side wall is approximately equal to the thickness of the side wall at the upper extremity of the base member so that the container and the base member mate in close association.

4. A cruet according to claim 3, wherein

the inside to the outside dimensions of the base member and container respectively at their areas of engagement provides for between about 0.015 and 0.025 inches of interference.

5. A cruet substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to, and as shown in, the accompanying drawings.

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