

PATENT SPECIFICATION

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DRAWINGS ATTACHED

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(54) IMPROVED STORAGE AND SERVING CONTAINER FOR FOODSTUFFS

(71) We, DART INDUSTRIES INC., a Corporation organised and existing under the laws of the State of Delaware, United States of America, of 8480 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles, State of California, 90054, 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 generally to containers, and more specifically it relates to plastics containers for storing and serving chilled foodstuffs such as ice cream desserts or the like. These containers are generally known as parfait dishes or dessert dishes.

According to the present invention there is provided a storing and serving container for foodstuffs, such as chilled desserts, comprising: a container portion having side and base walls, said said walls terminating in a first circular peripheral edge portion, and a saucer portion connected to the base wall of said container, said saucer portion including a base from which there outwardly extends an upwardly flared flange which terminates in a second circular peripheral edge which is of a height and diameter in relation to the height and upper diameter of the container portion such that at least one such container can be positioned on the edges of the saucer portions of two or more like containers so that an upper portion of said one container may be in contact with the periphery of the closures of said two or more containers, in combination with a closure adapted to form a moisture tight seal with the aforesaid first peripheral edge portion.

According to another feature of the invention said closure includes a main wall and a peripheral downwardly turned U-shaped groove, said U-shaped groove including an inner wall, an outer wall, and a connecting wall between said inner and said outer walls, said walls being adapted to engage said first peripheral edge portion of the container in moisture tight relationship.

According to yet another feature of the invention said saucer portion is demountably attached to said container portion and adapted to be removed therefrom.

In one form it is preferred that said container portion with said saucer portion removed is adapted to be nested within similar container portions for ease of storage.

In another form it is preferred that the first peripheral edge portion of said container portion is substantially greater in diameter than the base portion of said container.

In a specific form of the invention there is a coupling provided between said container portion and said saucer portion, said coupling including a socket on said saucer portion, said socket including a shoulder at the upper opening thereof, and an undercut portion having smoothly angled side walls below said shoulder, and said container portion including a plug adapted to fit in said socket, said plug having annular side walls being formed with a bead on the outside of said side walls at the terminal edge thereof, and slots in said side walls extending from the terminal edge to the base of said container, the outside diameter of said bead being greater than the inside diameter of the shoulder portion of said plug, whereby, said plug can be press fitted into said socket, said plug and socket forming the stem between said container portion and said saucer portion.

In this form it is preferred that the curvature of said bead and the curvature of said angled undercut portion are such that the surfaces thereof when the plug is in assembled relationship with the socket provide a downward force on said container portion.

A specific embodiment of the invention will now be described by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings of which:—

Figure 1 is an exploded perspective view showing a storage and serving container;

Figure 2 is a side view thereof;

Figure 3 is a view and cross section taken on line 3—3 of Figure 2;

Figure 4 is a side view showing three of the storage and serving containers in a stacked relationship;

5 Figure 5 is a top view of the containers shown in Figure 4;

Figure 6 is a side elevation view showing the container portions of two of the storage and serving containers in a vertical stored relationship;

10 Figure 7 is a side elevation view of three of the storage and serving containers in another stored relationship.

Figure 8 is an exploded cross sectional view in side elevation showing details of construction of the storage and serving containers;

15 Figure 9 is an under plan view of the top portion of the storage and serving container; and

20 Figure 10 is a perspective view illustrating some of the advantages of the storage and serving container.

Referring now to the drawings, the storage and serving container 10 of the example includes a container portion, 11, which is shaped as an elongate parfait dish. The container portion has side walls 12 terminating in a peripheral edge 13 and a base wall 14. As shown, the container portion has a circular cross section.

30 The base of storage and serving container 10 is formed as a saucer portion 15. As seen in the drawings, the saucer portion is removable. The saucer is formed with a base 16 and an outwardly flared flange 17 which terminates in a peripheral edge 18.

35 For sealing the contents of the container in moisture tight relationship, a closure 19 is provided. The closure has a main wall 20 and a sealing edge portion formed as a downwardly turned U-shaped groove 21. The U-shaped groove comprises an inner wall 22, a top wall 23 and an outer wall 24.

40 As noted, the saucer portion 15 is removable from container portion 11. A joint between the two portions is provided by a socket 25 on the saucer and a complimentary plug 26 on the container. The plug is formed with a downwardly extending wall 27 having a bead 28. The socket has a shoulder 29 and an undercut portion 30. Four slots 31 are spaced around the periphery of the plug wall. The slots are equidistant from each other. When the container is assembled, bead 28 is forced past shoulder 29 to a position in the undercut portion 30 (Figure 3). The curvatures of the bead 28 and the undercut portion 30 are such that a continuous downwardly directed force is exerted on the container 11 thus maintaining a tight fit between the upper edge of shoulder 29 and the shoulder 32 located above plug 26. This arrangement still permits the container 11 to be turned relative to the saucer. Moreover, the container 11 can easily be removed from the saucer 15 by simply grasping the saucer in one hand, the container in the other

and twisting while at the same time tipping the container relative to the saucer as shown in Figure 10.

The storage and serving container as described, has several advantages. Due to the fact that saucer 15 is removable, a group of containers can be stored together in more limited spaces than those containers with permanently fixed bases. Moreover, even if the saucer portion is left on, economy of space can still be obtained. As an example of this latter advantage, Figure 4 shows three storing and serving containers stacked together. The saucer portion 15 of one of the containers rests upon the peripheral edge 18 of the saucer portions of two other containers. This relationship is due to the height and diameter of the saucer and the height and diameter of the container portions. Thus, if a large number of filled containers of the type shown were to be placed in a refrigerator, they could be placed relatively close together. This has obvious advantages when considering the large numbers of such containers which might be prepared at one time.

The container 11 having plug 26 can also be connected with any connector socket of the type on the saucer. Of course, the converse is also true, and the saucer can be used with a variety of containers having a plug such as plug 26.

The socket and plug structure previously described forms a convenient stem 33 between the container portion and the saucer portion.

Several advantages are also obtainable when the saucer portion is removed. As shown in Figure 6, the empty containers are nestable. As shown in Figure 7, the containers can be fitted quite closely together for shipping or storage.

Still another advantage of the containers of the example is that the containers, when filled, can still be placed in a horizontal position for storage simply by placing closure 19 on the container 11. Due to the moisture tight relationship between the closure and the container, the contents cannot leak, even if they are in a liquid state.

The containers and saucers according to the example can be made of any suitable plastics material by injection moulding techniques. The containers are preferably formed of high density polyethylene or polypropylene. The saucer member is preferably formed of the same materials. The closure is preferably formed of low density polyethylene.

WHAT WE CLAIM IS:—

1. A storing and serving container for food-stuffs, such as chilled desserts, comprising: a container portion having side and base walls, said side walls terminating in a first circular peripheral edge portion, and a saucer portion connected to the base wall of said container, said saucer portion including a base from which there outwardly extends an upwardly flared



Figure 4 is a side view showing three of the storage and serving containers in a stacked relationship;

Figure 5 is a top view of the containers shown in Figure 4;

Figure 6 is a side elevation view showing the container portions of two of the storage and serving containers in a vertical stored relationship;

Figure 7 is a side elevation view of three of the storage and serving containers in another stored relationship.

Figure 8 is an exploded cross sectional view in side elevation showing details of construction of the storage and serving containers;

Figure 9 is an under plan view of the top portion of the storage and serving container; and

Figure 10 is a perspective view illustrating some of the advantages of the storage and serving container.

Referring now to the drawings, the storage and serving container 10 of the example includes a container portion, 11, which is shaped as an elongate parfait dish. The container portion has side walls 12 terminating in a peripheral edge 13 and a base wall 14. As shown, the container portion has a circular cross section.

The base of storage and serving container 10 is formed as a saucer portion 15. As seen in the drawings, the saucer portion is removable. The saucer is formed with a base 16 and an outwardly flared flange 17 which terminates in a peripheral edge 18.

For sealing the contents of the container in moisture tight relationship, a closure 19 is provided. The closure has a main wall 20 and a sealing edge portion formed as a downwardly turned U-shaped groove 21. The U-shaped groove comprises an inner wall 22, a top wall 23 and an outer wall 24.

As noted, the saucer portion 15 is removable from container portion 11. A joint between the two portions is provided by a socket 25 on the saucer and a complimentary plug 26 on the container. The plug is formed with a downwardly extending wall 27 having a bead 28. The socket has a shoulder 29 and an undercut portion 30. Four slots 31 are spaced around the periphery of the plug wall. The slots are equidistant from each other. When the container is assembled, bead 28 is forced past shoulder 29 to a position in the undercut portion 30 (Figure 3). The curvatures of the bead 28 and the undercut portion 30 are such that a continuous downwardly directed force is exerted on the container 11 thus maintaining a tight fit between the upper edge of shoulder 29 and the shoulder 32 located above plug 26. This arrangement still permits the container 11 to be turned relative to the saucer. Moreover, the container 11 can easily be removed from the saucer 15 by simply grasping the saucer in one hand, the container in the other

and twisting while at the same time tipping the container relative to the saucer as shown in Figure 10.

The storage and serving container as described, has several advantages. Due to the fact that saucer 15 is removable, a group of containers can be stored together in more limited spaces than those containers with permanently fixed bases. Moreover, even if the saucer portion is left on, economy of space can still be obtained. As an example of this latter advantage, Figure 4 shows three storing and serving containers stacked together. The saucer portion 15 of one of the containers rests upon the peripheral edge 18 of the saucer portions of two other containers. This relationship is due to the height and diameter of the saucer and the height and diameter of the container portions. Thus, if a large number of filled containers of the type shown were to be placed in a refrigerator, they could be placed relatively close together. This has obvious advantages when considering the large numbers of such containers which might be prepared at one time.

The container 11 having plug 26 can also be connected with any connector socket of the type on the saucer. Of course, the converse is also true, and the saucer can be used with a variety of containers having a plug such as plug 26.

The socket and plug structure previously described forms a convenient stem 33 between the container portion and the saucer portion.

Several advantages are also obtainable when the saucer portion is removed. As shown in Figure 6, the empty containers are nestable. As shown in Figure 7, the containers can be fitted quite closely together for shipping or storage.

Still another advantage of the containers of the example is that the containers, when filled, can still be placed in a horizontal position for storage simply by placing closure 19 on the container 11. Due to the moisture tight relationship between the closure and the container, the contents cannot leak, even if they are in a liquid state.

The containers and saucers according to the example can be made of any suitable plastics material by injection moulding techniques. The containers are preferably formed of high density polyethylene or polypropylene. The saucer member is preferably formed of the same materials. The closure is preferably formed of low density polyethylene.

WHAT WE CLAIM IS:—

1. A storing and serving container for food-stuffs, such as chilled desserts, comprising: a container portion having side and base walls, said side walls terminating in a first circular peripheral edge portion, and a saucer portion connected to the base wall of said container, said saucer portion including a base from which there outwardly extends an upwardly flared

flange which terminates in a second circular peripheral edge which is of a height and diameter in relation to the height and upper diameter of the container portion such that at least one such container can be positioned on the edges of the saucer portions of two or more like containers so that an upper portion of said one container may be in contact with the periphery of the closures of said two or more containers, in combination with a closure adapted to form a moisture tight seal with the aforesaid first peripheral edge portion.

2. A storing and serving container as claimed in claim 1 in which said closure includes a main wall and a peripheral downwardly turned U-shaped groove, said U-shaped groove including an inner wall, an outer wall, and a connecting wall between said inner and said outer walls, said walls being adapted to engage said first peripheral edge portion of the container in moisture tight relationship.

3. A storing and serving container as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 wherein said saucer portion is demountably attached to said container portion and adapted to be removed therefrom.

4. A storing and serving container as claimed in claim 3, wherein said container portion with said saucer portion removed is adapted to be nested within similar container portions for ease of storage.

5. A storing and serving container as claimed in claim 4, wherein the first peripheral edge portion of said container portion is substantially greater in diameter than the base portion of said container.

6. A storing and serving container as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein a coupling is provided between said container portion and said saucer portion, said coupling including a socket on said saucer portion, said socket including a shoulder at the upper opening thereof, and an undercut portion having smoothly angled side walls below said shoulder, and said container portion including a plug adapted to fit in said socket, said plug having annular side walls being formed with a bead on the outside of said side walls at the terminal edge thereof, and slots in said side walls extending from the terminal edge to the base of said container, the outside diameter of said bead being greater than the inside diameter of the shoulder portion of said plug, whereby, said plug can be press fitted into said socket, said plug and socket forming the stem between said container portion and said saucer portion.

7. A storing and serving container as claimed in claim 7 wherein the curvature of said bead and the curvature of said angled undercut portion are such that the surfaces thereof when the plug is in assembled relationship with the socket provide a downward force on said container portion.

8. A storing and serving container substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to and as shown in the accompanying drawings.

BOULT, WADE & TENNANT,
111 & 112 Hatton Garden, London E.C.1.
Chartered Patent Agents,
Agents for the Applicants.

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