

PATENT SPECIFICATION

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DRAWINGS ATTACHED

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(54) COMBINATION DRINKING STRAW AND SPOON

(71) We, FLEXIBLE PLASTIC STRAW CORPORATION, a corporation organised and existing under the laws of the State of Illinois, United States of America, of State Street, Ludlow, Massachusetts 01056, 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 a combination drinking tube and spoon. The expression "drinking straw" is used herein at various places; this expression is to be understood herein as being synonymous with "drinking tube".

According to the present invention, there is provided a combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member comprising (a) a tubular substantially cylindrical body member having a portion at one end thereof providing (b) an integral spoon member, and (c) a flexible interconnecting web portion interconnecting the said spoon member with the said tubular body member; the said tubular body member having an open lower end above the said spoon member providing an inlet for the said tubular body member.

The combination drinking tube and spoon member in accordance with the present invention is so designed and constructed that the tubular drinking straw and spoon member may be used as a drinking straw in a conventional manner. The spoon member may be bent at a substantial angle relative to the longitudinal axis of the tubular drinking straw member to enable the combination drinking straw and spoon to be used for drinking liquids as well as for sipping milk shakes, crushed ice drinks, and the like, from the bottom of a glass, cup or other container, with the spoon member lying generally parallel to the plane of the bottom of the container and with the liquid being drawn up from the open lower end of the tubular body of the drinking straw member. The spoon member is normally disposed in a plane parallel to the longitudinal axis of the tubular body of the drinking straw member and the flexible interconnecting web portion and

the spoon member have sufficient innate strength and rigidity to enable the spoon member to be used as a spoon for eating ice cream, ice mixes and the like, without bending under the weight of the edible food product on the spoon member.

A preferred combination drinking tube and spoon member in accordance with the present invention comprises:

(a) A tubular substantially cylindrical body member having a portion at one end thereof providing;

(b) An integral spoon member;

(c) A flexible interconnecting web portion interconnecting the said spoon member with the said tubular body member;

(d) The said spoon member having

1. side marginal edge portions extending laterally outwardly beyond the outer surface of the tubular body member and tapering longitudinally and radially inwardly and merging at their inner ends into the said flexible interconnecting web portion;

(e) The said tubular body member having an open lower end above the said spoon member providing an inlet for the said tubular body member;

(f) Said flexible interconnecting web portion having a cross sectional curvature of approximately 180°, which curvature is substantially coaxial with the longitudinal axis of curvature of said body member, and said spoon member having its bottom substantially in alignment with said body member and a maximum curved cross sectional width which is equal to approximately the circumference of said body member;

(g) Whereby the said spoon member may be bent at the said flexible interconnecting web portion into a position at a substantial angle relative to the longitudinal axis of said tubular body member and into a position generally parallel to the bottom wall of a container to enable the said combination tubular drinking straw and spoon member to be used for sipping liquids from the bottom of the container, while at the same time, the

said flexible interconnecting web portion has sufficient innate strength and rigidity to enable the said spoon member to be used for lifting edible food products by means of said tubular body member as a handle without bending under the weight of the contents of the said spoon member.

For a better understanding of the invention, reference is made to the accompanying drawings which illustrate one embodiment in accordance with the present invention and in which:

Fig. 1 is an elevational view illustrating the use of the new combination drinking straw and spoon member as a drinking straw;

Fig. 2 is a side elevational view on line 2-2 in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is an enlarged transverse sectional view of the spoon member on line 3-3 in Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 is an enlarged transverse sectional view of the spoon member on line 4-4 in Fig. 1;

Fig. 5 is an enlarged transverse sectional view on line 5-5 in Fig. 1 and showing the flexible interconnecting web between the tubular body of the drinking straw member and the spoon member;

Fig. 6 is an enlarged transverse sectional view of the tubular body of the drinking straw member on line 6-6 in Fig. 1;

Fig. 7 is an elevational view showing the new combination tubular drinking straw member and spoon member used to sip liquids from the bottom of a glass, cup, or the like;

Fig. 8 is an elevational view showing the body of the new tubular drinking straw member cut to form the new combination tubular drinking straw and spoon member; and

Fig. 9 is an enlarged fragmentary detail view illustrating the manner in which the flexible interconnecting web portion and the spoon member are formed to impart the desired rigidity to the flexible interconnecting web portion and the spoon member.

The new combination tubular drinking straw and spoon member illustrated in the drawing is generally indicated at 10, and comprises a tubular body 11 which may be made of any suitable material such, for example, as extended synthetic plastic resinous material such as polyethylene, polypropylene and like resins. The tubular body 11 has a spoon member 12 interconnected thereto at one end thereof by a flexible interconnecting web portion 13 which is notched or indented at one side thereof, as at 14. The cross sectional shape of the spoon member 12 is illustrated in Figs. 3 and 4, and the cross sectional shape of the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 is illustrated in Fig. 5.

In the manufacture of the new combination

tubular drinking straw and spoon member 10 the tubular body 11 is cut, as shown in dotted lines at 15 in Fig. 8, and the cut-out portion 16 is then severed from the tubular body 11 and the outer end portion of the tubular body 11 is then spread out beyond the circumference of the tubular body 11 to provide the spoon member 12 having the configuration illustrated in Figs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7. When so formed the spoon member 12 is flexible and is integrally connected to the tubular body 11 by the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 which, while being flexible, has sufficient strength and rigidity to maintain the spoon member 12 in a position parallel to the longitudinal axis of the tubular body 11 when used as a spoon for eating ice cream, ice mixes, etc., and without bending under the weight of the edible food product on the spoon member 12.

It will be noted, in this connection, that the desired and necessary rigidity in the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 and in the spoon member 12 is obtained by having the notched or indented portion 14 formed by gradually tapering the side marginal edges 18 of the spoon member 12 longitudinally and radially inwardly until they merge, as at 19, into the flexible interconnecting web portion 13, from the relatively minor degree of arcuate curvature illustrated in Figs. 3 and 4 to a point, as shown in Figs. 5 and 9, approximately at the center line 21 of the longitudinal axis of the tubular body 11 so that the arcuate curvature of the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 is approximately 180° while, at the same time, the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 has a curved inner wall portion 20 by which it is joined to the tubular body member 11 (Fig. 9); the curved inner wall portion 20 of the flexible interconnecting web 13 providing the open lower end and inlet to the tubular body member 11.

The new combination drinking straw and spoon member 10 may be used interchangeably as a conventional drinking straw, as shown in Fig. 1, and when so used the liquid is drawn into the tubular body member 11 through the open lower portion or inlet 20 thereof, and it may also be used, as shown in Fig. 7, for sipping liquids from the bottom of a glass, cup, or the like 17. When so used the spoon member 12 is bent at an angle relative to the longitudinal axis of the body 11 of the tubular drinking straw member so as to lie flat against the bottom wall of the container or vessel, as 17.

It will be noted that the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 has a cross sectional area at its radially inner end, that is, at the longitudinal axis 21 of the tubular body 11, which is not substantially less nor substantially more than 180° of the circumference of the tubular body 11, as

shown in Fig. 5. This construction imparts to the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 the necessary strength and rigidity and other characteristics to enable the new combination tubular drinking straw and spoon member 10 to be used as a spoon member. Thus, it has been found, in this connection that if the degree of arc of the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 at its radially inner end, as at 21, is substantially less than 180° of arc of the circumference of the tubular body member 11 it will not have sufficient strength and rigidity to support the spoon member 12 and its contents against flexing when the new combination tubular drinking straw and spoon member 10 is used as a spoon whereas, on the other hand, if the degree of arc of the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 is substantially greater than 180° of arc of the circumference of the tubular body member 11 the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 could be flexed at a substantial angle relative to the longitudinal axis 21 of the tubular body member 11 but in such an instance the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 would tend to close the open lower end portion 20 of the tubular body member 11, so that the user of the new combination drinking straw and spoon would be unable to sip the liquid contents of the container or vessel 17 up through the tubular body member 11 by way of its open lower end or inlet 20. Moreover, if the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 is substantially greater than 180° of arc of the circumference of the tubular body member 11 the parts which form the spoon member 12 could not be spread out sufficiently to form a spoon member, since the greater the aforesaid arc is from 180° the less the parts which form the spoon member 12 have the appearance of or function as a spoon member.

It will be noted, in this connection, that when the new combination drinking straw and spoon member 10 is used as a spoon the tubular body 11 serves as a handle for the spoon member 12, and that the new combination drinking straw and spoon member may be used interchangeably to sip liquids from the bottom of a glass, cup or the like, and also as a spoon, without any appreciable loss in its efficiency in performing both of such functions.

WHAT WE CLAIM IS:—

1. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member comprising (a) a tubular substantially cylindrical body member having a portion at one end thereof providing (b) an integral spoon member, and (c) a flexible interconnecting web portion interconnecting the said spoon member with the said tubular body member; the said tubular body member

having an open lower end above the said spoon member providing an inlet for the said tubular body member.

2. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member as claimed in claim 1 wherein the said spoon member has side marginal edge portions extending laterally outwardly beyond the outer surface of the tubular body member and tapering longitudinally and radially inwardly and merging at their inner ends into the said flexible interconnecting web portion.

3. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the said flexible interconnecting web portion has a cross sectional curvature of approximately 180° which curvature is substantially coaxial with the longitudinal axis of curvature of the said tubular body member.

4. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member as claimed in claim 3 wherein the said spoon member has its bottom substantially in alignment with the said body member and a maximum curved cross sectional width which is equal to approximately the circumference of the said body member.

5. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member as claimed in claim 4 wherein the said spoon member is bendable at the said flexible interconnecting web portion into a position at a substantial angle relative to the longitudinal axis of the said tubular body member and into a position generally parallel to the bottom wall of a container to enable the said combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member to be used for sipping liquids from the bottom of the container.

6. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member as claimed in any of the preceding claims wherein the said flexible interconnecting web portion has sufficient innate strength and rigidity to enable the said spoon member to be used for lifting edible food products by means of the said tubular body member as a handle without bending under the weight of the contents of the said spoon member.

7. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member as claimed in claim 1 substantially as herein described.

8. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member substantially as herein described with reference to, and as illustrated in, Figs. 1-9 of the accompanying drawings.

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shown in Fig. 5. This construction imparts to the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 the necessary strength and rigidity and other characteristics to enable the new combination tubular drinking straw and spoon member 10 to be used as a spoon member. Thus, it has been found, in this connection that if the degree of arc of the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 at its radially inner end, as at 21, is substantially less than 180° of arc of the circumference of the tubular body member 11 it will not have sufficient strength and rigidity to support the spoon member 12 and its contents against flexing when the new combination tubular drinking straw and spoon member 10 is used as a spoon whereas, on the other hand, if the degree of arc of the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 is substantially greater than 180° of arc of the circumference of the tubular body member 11 the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 could be flexed at a substantial angle relative to the longitudinal axis 21 of the tubular body member 11 but in such an instance the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 would tend to close the open lower end portion 20 of the tubular body member 11, so that the user of the new combination drinking straw and spoon would be unable to sip the liquid contents of the container or vessel 17 up through the tubular body member 11 by way of its open lower end or inlet 20. Moreover, if the flexible interconnecting web portion 13 is substantially greater than 180° of arc of the circumference of the tubular body member 11 the parts which form the spoon member 12 could not be spread out sufficiently to form a spoon member, since the greater the aforesaid arc is from 180° the less the parts which form the spoon member 12 have the appearance of or function as a spoon member.

It will be noted, in this connection, that when the new combination drinking straw and spoon member 10 is used as a spoon the tubular body 11 serves as a handle for the spoon member 12, and that the new combination drinking straw and spoon member may be used interchangeably to sip liquids from the bottom of a glass, cup or the like, and also as a spoon, without any appreciable loss in its efficiency in performing both of such functions.

WHAT WE CLAIM IS:—

1. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member comprising (a) a tubular substantially cylindrical body member having a portion at one end thereof providing (b) an integral spoon member, and (c) a flexible interconnecting web portion interconnecting the said spoon member with the said tubular body member; the said tubular body member

having an open lower end above the said spoon member providing an inlet for the said tubular body member.

2. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member as claimed in claim 1 wherein the said spoon member has side marginal edge portions extending laterally outwardly beyond the outer surface of the tubular body member and tapering longitudinally and radially inwardly and merging at their inner ends into the said flexible interconnecting web portion.

3. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the said flexible interconnecting web portion has a cross sectional curvature of approximately 180° which curvature is substantially coaxial with the longitudinal axis of curvature of the said tubular body member.

4. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member as claimed in claim 3 wherein the said spoon member has its bottom substantially in alignment with the said body member and a maximum curved cross sectional width which is equal to approximately the circumference of the said body member.

5. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member as claimed in claim 4 wherein the said spoon member is bendable at the said flexible interconnecting web portion into a position at a substantial angle relative to the longitudinal axis of the said tubular body member and into a position generally parallel to the bottom wall of a container to enable the said combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member to be used for sipping liquids from the bottom of the container.

6. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member as claimed in any of the preceding claims wherein the said flexible interconnecting web portion has sufficient innate strength and rigidity to enable the said spoon member to be used for lifting edible food products by means of the said tubular body member as a handle without bending under the weight of the contents of the said spoon member.

7. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member as claimed in claim 1 substantially as herein described.

8. A combination tubular drinking tube and spoon member substantially as herein described with reference to, and as illustrated in, Figs. 1-9 of the accompanying drawings.

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