

PATENT SPECIFICATION (11)

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(54) STORAGE CONTAINER COMBINATION FOR CELERY OR THE LIKE

(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 to a container combination for the storage of celery or other similar vegetables.

It is known that leaf type foodstuffs such as celery are more appetizing and present a more desirable appearance when they are maintained evenly moist and in a crisp condition. It is also known that celery and other vegetables will maintain such desirable appearance and condition for longer periods of time if they are stored in a moist cool atmosphere and especially so when kept out of residual liquids in the container.

Ideally such vegetables should be stored in a convenient manner which affords the attributes of the desirable aforementioned environmental conditions. It has been found that a container capable of being hermetically sealed which is generally shaped to conform to the shape and size of celery stalks and which has been provided with a suitable support means for the vegetables, forms such a convenient atmosphere. Thus, celery, for example, may be prepared and subsequently supported within a moist and hermetically controlled area and be maintained out of direct contact with any water which may collect at the bottom of the container, and accordingly be so stored under these conditions found to be most favourable to its preservation.

According to the present invention there is provided a container combination for assembly and use in storing foodstuffs such as celery and the like, which comprises a container, a foodstuff support means, and a sealing cover for said container, said container having a base and integral peripheral side walls upstanding therefrom, said cover hav-

ing peripheral sealing means which, when the container combination is assembled for use, is in contact with the free terminal peripheral portions of said upstanding side walls so as to hermetically seal said container, said support means including a plurality of ribs extending upwardly away from the base of said container each of said ribs having apexes formed by the juncture of two opposed surfaces which apexes provide areas of contact between the support means and said stored foodstuffs.

According to a preferred feature of the invention said support means is a removable tray of similar shape to the cross-sectional configuration of the container and said tray has an upstanding peripheral lip arranged to contact the side walls of said container so as to position centrally said tray in relation to said container bottom.

According to another preferred feature of the invention said foodstuff support means is a removable tray, the principal supporting area of which includes a plurality of interconnected triangularly shaped ribs integral with and interspersed between an upstanding peripheral lip that is arranged to contact the side walls of said container.

In combination with the aforementioned features of the invention it may be preferred that the side walls of said container also include a ledge portion extending substantially around said container adjacent said base, said ledge being adapted to support the removable tray.

It is in this last mentioned form preferred that said upstanding peripheral lip includes at least two recessed areas that are suitable for receipt of the finger digits so that the tray may be grasped and removed from the container as it rests on the upright position.

Preferably said ledge is interrupted in at least two places with projections that correspond in placement with said recessed areas when the tray is properly positioned in the container, said projections also being arranged for receipt of the finger digits.

Preferably the removable tray is provided with openings between said ribs to permit

[Price 25p]

drainage of liquid therethrough from said foodstuffs.

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

Figure 1 is an exploded perspective view of a container with some parts broken away for clarity;

Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of the container shown in Figure 1 taken along line 2—2; and

Figure 3 is a cross-sectional view of the container taken along line 3—3 of Figure 1.

In the drawings, component portions of a container assembly 10 include a container 11, a closure 12 therefor, and a tray or support 13. The container 11 is generally formed with a substantially flat base 14 having peripheral and integral side walls 15 upstanding therefrom. Such side walls 15 terminate in an open upper end defined by upper terminal edge portions 16.

The closure 12 is comprised of a top wall portion 17, the periphery of which has an inverted groove 19 for receipt of the terminal edge portion 16 of the container. Such inverted groove 19 (Figure 3) is comprised of an inner wall 20, an outer wall 21 and a connecting wall 22. The cover seal may also have a horizontally extending lip 23 dependent from the outer wall 21. A combination stiffening and grasping means 24 is positioned slightly below the upper terminal portions of the container.

As is apparent in all of the drawings, the support 13 is comprised primarily of a grid-like supporting surface 25, an upstanding peripheral lip 26, and downwardly directed flanges 27. The surface 25 further includes a plurality of interconnected triangularly shaped ribs 28 between which are openings 29. This surface is elevated above the container base or bottom 14, due to the container construction, more fully described below, and because of the flanges 27 which act as supporting legs. Thus, any residual liquid or condensation present within the container will tend to drain into the space below the supporting surface 25.

As indicated, the ribs 28 are triangularly shaped and the apexes thereof are directed upwardly. This construction then reduces the possible area of contact between the contained vegetables and the tray 13 and so presents a large proportion of vegetable surface to the moist atmosphere which is so desirable in obtaining the crisp characteristics of such produce.

Each end of the tray also includes a recessed area 32 which enables the user easily to grasp same for removal from the container. This particular arrangement therefore permits such removal without emptying the contents of the container and without in-

verting the container. Thus, excess collections of water or other liquids can be easily disposed of or water may be easily added to the container without unduly disturbing the contents thereof.

Referring particularly to Figure 3, it will be apparent that a ledge 30 is fashioned into the side walls 15 of the container at a position adjacent the base 14. This ledge extends substantially all around the container with the exception of two places where downward projections 31 (as shown in Figure 2) break that continuity. The projections are preferably positioned in the container end walls and are arranged to be in alignment with the recessed areas 32 of the tray when it is properly positioned in the container. The combined recesses and projections thus accommodate entry of a user's finger digits under the tray facilitating its removal as mentioned above. It should be obvious that the particular placement of the respective recesses 32 and projections 31 is somewhat discretionary; however, the placement shown and described is preferred.

With continued reference to Figures 2 and 3, it may be seen that the ledge 30 also functions as a supporting means for the tray 13 in that the upstanding peripheral lip 26 engages the ledge and so acts in concert with the downwardly directed flanges 27. This, of course, tends to stabilize the tray 13 to prevent shifting and sagging thereof.

Alternatively, in a form not illustrated, the ribs 28 may be integrally moulded into the base 14 of the container. As indicated above, however, in the preferred embodiment, it is contemplated that a removable tray be employed. The latter type of construction in addition to the advantages enumerated also renders the container more flexibly suitable for other varied uses.

It should further be pointed out that the preferred embodiment of the container closure and tray herein described are manufactured of plastics materials. Likewise, the container and tray are generally made of high and low density polyethylene blends or of polypropylene while the closure is preferably made of a low density polyethylene material. However, other materials may be employed with equally good results.

WHAT WE CLAIM IS:—

1. A container combination for assembly and use in storing foodstuffs such as celery and the like, which comprises a container, a foodstuff support means, and a sealing cover for said container, said container having a base and integral peripheral side walls upstanding therefrom, said cover having peripheral sealing means which, when the container combination is assembled for use, is in contact with the free terminal peripheral portions of said upstanding side walls



drainage of liquid therethrough from said foodstuffs.

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

Figure 1 is an exploded perspective view of a container with some parts broken away for clarity;

10 Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of the container shown in Figure 1 taken along line 2—2; and

Figure 3 is a cross-sectional view of the container taken along line 3—3 of Figure 1.

15 In the drawings, component portions of a container assembly 10 include a container 11, a closure 12 therefor, and a tray or support 13. The container 11 is generally formed with a substantially flat base 14 having peripheral and integral side walls 15 upstanding therefrom. Such side walls 15 terminate in an open upper end defined by upper terminal edge portions 16.

20 The closure 12 is comprised of a top wall portion 17, the periphery of which has an inverted groove 19 for receipt of the terminal edge portion 16 of the container. Such inverted groove 19 (Figure 3) is comprised of an inner wall 20, an outer wall 21 and a connecting wall 22. The cover seal may also have a horizontally extending lip 23 dependent from the outer wall 21. A combination stiffening and grasping means 24 is positioned slightly below the upper terminal portions of the container.

25 As is apparent in all of the drawings, the support 13 is comprised primarily of a grid-like supporting surface 25, an upstanding peripheral lip 26, and downwardly directed flanges 27. The surface 25 further includes a plurality of interconnected triangularly shaped ribs 28 between which are openings 29. This surface is elevated above the container base or bottom 14, due to the container construction, more fully described below, and because of the flanges 27 which act as supporting legs. Thus, any residual liquid or condensation present within the container will tend to drain into the space below the supporting surface 25.

30 As indicated, the ribs 28 are triangularly shaped and the apexes thereof are directed upwardly. This construction then reduces the possible area of contact between the contained vegetables and the tray 13 and so presents a large proportion of vegetable surface to the moist atmosphere which is so desirable in obtaining the crisp characteristics of such produce.

35 Each end of the tray also includes a recessed area 32 which enables the user easily to grasp same for removal from the container. This particular arrangement therefore permits such removal without emptying the contents of the container and without in-

verting the container. Thus, excess collections of water or other liquids can be easily disposed of or water may be easily added to the container without unduly disturbing the contents thereof.

Referring particularly to Figure 3, it will be apparent that a ledge 30 is fashioned into the side walls 15 of the container at a position adjacent the base 14. This ledge extends substantially all around the container with the exception of two places where downward projections 31 (as shown in Figure 2) break that continuity. The projections are preferably positioned in the container end walls and are arranged to be in alignment with the recessed areas 32 of the tray when it is properly positioned in the container. The combined recesses and projections thus accommodate entry of a user's finger digits under the tray facilitating its removal as mentioned above. It should be obvious that the particular placement of the respective recesses 32 and projections 31 is somewhat discretionary; however, the placement shown and described is preferred.

With continued reference to Figures 2 and 3, it may be seen that the ledge 30 also functions as a supporting means for the tray 13 in that the upstanding peripheral lip 26 engages the ledge and so acts in concert with the downwardly directed flanges 27. This, of course, tends to stabilize the tray 13 to prevent shifting and sagging thereof.

Alternatively, in a form not illustrated, the ribs 28 may be integrally moulded into the base 14 of the container. As indicated above, however, in the preferred embodiment, it is contemplated that a removable tray be employed. The latter type of construction in addition to the advantages enumerated also renders the container more flexibly suitable for other varied uses.

It should further be pointed out that the preferred embodiment of the container closure and tray herein described are manufactured of plastics materials. Likewise, the container and tray are generally made of high and low density polyethylene blends or of polypropylene while the closure is preferably made of a low density polyethylene material. However, other materials may be employed with equally good results.

WHAT WE CLAIM IS:—

1. A container combination for assembly and use in storing foodstuffs such as celery and the like, which comprises a container, a foodstuff support means, and a sealing cover for said container, said container having a base and integral peripheral side walls upstanding therefrom, said cover having peripheral sealing means which, when the container combination is assembled for use, is in contact with the free terminal peripheral portions of said upstanding side walls



so as to hermetically seal said container, said support means including a plurality of ribs which, when the container combination is in use, extend upwardly away from the base of said container, each of said ribs having apexes formed by the juncture of two opposed surfaces which apexes provide areas of contact between the support means and said stored foodstuffs.

2. A container combination as claimed in claim 1, wherein said support means is a removable tray of similar shape to the cross-sectional configuration of the container and wherein said tray has an upstanding peripheral lip arranged to contact the side walls of said container so as to position centrally said tray in relation to said container bottom.

3. A container combination as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2, wherein said foodstuff support means is a removable tray, the principal supporting area of which includes a plurality of interconnected triangularly shaped ribs integral with and interspersed between an upstanding peripheral lip that is arranged to contact the side walls of said container.

4. A container combination as claimed in claim 2 or claim 3, wherein the side walls of said container also include a ledge por-

tion extending substantially around said container adjacent said base, said ledge being adapted to support the removable tray.

5. A container combination as claimed in claim 4 when appendant to claim 3, wherein said upstanding peripheral lip includes at least two recessed areas that are suitable for receipt of the finger digits so that the tray may be grasped and removed from the container as it rests in the upright position.

6. A container combination as claimed in claim 5, wherein said ledge is interrupted in at least two places with projections that correspond in placement with said recessed areas when the tray is properly positioned in the container, said projections also being arranged for receipt of the finger digits.

7. A container combination as claimed in any one of claims 2 to 6, wherein the removable tray is provided with openings between said ribs to permit drainage of liquid therethrough from said foodstuffs.

8. A container combination for storing foodstuffs such as celery and the like, substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to and as shown in the accompanying drawings.

BOULT, WADE & TENNANT.