In a first aspect the present invention can be characterised by a beverage dispensing assembly, comprising a container and a tapping apparatus having a chamber in which the container fits and can be entered into through an opening closable by a lid, such that the container is enclosed between the lid and a opposite end of a chamber. Spaced apart from the lid a first connector is provided, for feeding pressurised gas into the container through a gas inlet provided in the container. At the side of the opening of the chamber a pressure element is provided for pressing the container with the gas inlet onto the first connector. The first connector is preferably provided at said opposite end of the chamber, such that the container is pushed onto and/or into it when the container is inserted into the chamber through the opening. The container has an inner and outer container, the inner container is connected to the outer container at at least two spaced apart locations, such as for example at opposite axial ends at or near the neck region and at or near the connector, such that a direction of compression is at least partly predefined, such as primarily in radial direction, wherein a ~~tapping~~ dispense line is connected to the container for dispensing beverage from the container. The tapping apparatus comprises a tapping valve operating system, preferably within or above the opening of the chamber, to which a valve provided in and/or on said dispense line near an outlet end thereof can be connected, such that with the tapping valve operating system a passage of the dispense line can be brought into fluid communication with the environment for dispensing a beverage from the container, or blocked there from, for interrupting or preventing such dispensing.

In ~~a~~ an embodiment, ~~second aspect~~ the present invention can be characterised by a closure provided in and/or on the neck region of the container, with a substantially tubular element at the neck region, having a closed peripheral wall, and an operating element fitting inside said tubular element, slidingly sealing against the said wall. A cap is fitted at or near an

end of the tubular element, closing off the tubular element, wherein the operating element can be pushed into the tubular element to such extend that it at least partly removes the cap from the tubular element and/or pierces said cap, for opening a passage from the container to a dispensing line connected to the operating element. The cap can be positioned at an end of the tubular element facing an inner space of the container, especially a beverage containing space.

In ~~a~~ another embodiment, ~~third aspect~~ the present invention can be characterised by a beverage container wherein a closure is provided in and/or on the neck region of the container, comprising a substantially tubular element at the neck region, having a closed peripheral wall, and an operating element fitting inside said tubular element, slidingly sealing against the said wall. A cap is fitted at or near an end of the tubular element, closing off the tubular

element, wherein the operating element can be pushed into the tubular element to such extend that it at least partly removes the cap from the tubular element and/or pierces said cap, for opening a passage from the container to a tapping line connected to the operating element.

In a ~~fourth~~ further aspect, the present invention can be characterized by a beverage container for use in a beverage dispensing assembly as described herein, wherein the container has an inner and outer container, wherein the inner container is connected to the outer container at at least two spaced apart locations, such as for example at opposite axial ends at or near the neck region and at or near the connector, such that a direction of compression is at least partly predefined, such as primarily in radial direction, wherein a dispense line is connected to the container for dispensing beverage from the container.

The tubular element with the cap can be made integrally, for example by multi component injection moulding, such as 2-K moulding. Alternatively the cap can be mounted to the tubular element in a different manner, for example by press fit or bonding, as long as it can be pushed at least partly away from the tubular element.

The operating element preferably is designed such that once it has been use for pushing the cap at least partly away, it locks in or behind part of the tubular element, such that it is locked in position and cannot be removed, at least not without damage, or reused, whereas it preferably extends at least partly beyond the position in which the cap was fitted, such that the cap cannot be pushed back into a position in which it closes off the tubular element.

In order to further elucidate the present invention, embodiments thereof shall be disclosed and discussed hereafter, with reference to the drawings. Therein shows:

Fig. 1A and B schematically in top and side view respectively an assembly according to the disclosure, with a container enclosed inside the tapping assembly;

Fig. 2 schematically in cross sectional view along the line II - II in fig. 1 an assembly according to the disclosure;

Fig. 3 schematically an assembly of fig. 1 and 2, with a tapping apparatus in open position and a container for insertion therein, showing an operating element with tapping line;

Claims

1. Beverage dispensing assembly, comprising a container and a tapping apparatus having a chamber in which the container fits and can be entered into through an opening closable by a lid, such that the container is placed, it is enclosed between the lid and an opposite end of a chamber, wherein preferably spaced apart from the lid and preferably at said opposite end of the chamber a first connector is provided, for feeding pressurised gas into the container through a gas inlet provided in the container, and at the side of the opening of the chamber, a pressure element is provided for pressing the gas inlet onto and/or into the first connector, wherein the container has an inner and outer container, wherein the inner container is connected to the outer container at at least two spaced apart locations, such as for example at opposite axial ends at or near the neck region and at or near the connector, such that a direction of compression is at least partly predefined, such as primarily in radial direction, wherein a ~~tapping line~~dispense line is connected to the container for dispensing beverage from the container and wherein the apparatus comprises a tapping valve operating system, preferably within or above the opening of the chamber, to which a valve provided in and/or on said dispense line near an outlet end thereof can be connected, such that with the tapping valve operating system a passage of the dispense line can be brought into fluid communication with the environment for dispensing a beverage from the container, or blocked there from, for interrupting or preventing such dispensing.

2. Beverage dispensing assembly according to claim 1, wherein the gas inlet is provided at a bottom end of the container, opposite a neck portion of the container, for cooperation with the first connector, positioned at an end of the chamber opposite the opening of the chamber, wherein the pressure element is provided at the side of the opening for fitting against and/or over the neck portion of the container and/or at the closure of the container,

wherein a dispense opening of the container is provided in or at the neck portion.

3. Beverage dispensing assembly of claim 1 or 2, wherein the pressure element is provided in or on or connected to the lid.

4. Beverage dispensing assembly according to any one of the previous claims, wherein the gas inlet is provided with a second connector situated in and/or on the container, preferably comprising a gas valve operable by pressing the container onto and or into the first connector, thereby establishing a gas connection between an inner volume of the container and a pressurised gas supply.

5. Beverage dispensing assembly according to any one of the previous claims, wherein the first connector comprises a connecting part movable relative to a housing and connected to a gas supply line, wherein a spring element is provided between the connecting part and the housing, biasing the connecting part towards the container and allowing adjustment of the position of the connecting part relative to the housing and/or to the container and/or to the chamber.

6. Beverage dispensing assembly according to any one of the previous claims, wherein a closure is provided in and/or on the neck region of the container, comprising a substantially tubular element extending into the neck region, having a closed peripheral wall, and an operating element fitting or fitted inside said tubular element, slidingly sealing against the said wall, wherein a cap is fitted at or near an end of the tubular element, closing off the tubular element, wherein the operating element can be pushed into the tubular element to such extend that it at least partly removes the cap from the tubular element and/or pierces said cap, for opening a passage from the container to a ~~tapping line~~dispense line connected to the operating element.

7. Beverage dispensing assembly according to claim 6, wherein the operating element comprises a peripheral seal for sealing against said wall of the tubular element, spaced apart from a forward end facing the cap, wherein

flange thereof and/or the operating element, on two spaced apart positions next to the dispensing line, preferably at opposite sides of the dispensing line.

13. Beverage dispensing assembly according to claim 1, wherein the tapping valve operating system comprises a tapping handle and a valve engagement portion engaging a valve connected to or provided in said ~~tapping line~~dispense line, wherein between said tapping handle and said valve engagement portion a bi-stable spring operated assembly is provided, such that upon movement of the handle over a predetermined angle from a rest position the spring operated assembly switches from a first stable position into a second stable position, forcing the engagement portion from a position fully closing the valve into a position fully opening the valve, irrespective of movement of the handle further away from the rest position.

14. Beverage container for use in a beverage dispensing assembly according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the container has an inner and outer container, wherein the inner container is connected to the outer container at at least two spaced apart locations, such as for example at opposite axial ends at or near the neck region and at or near the connector, such that a direction of compression is at least partly predefined, such as primarily in radial direction, wherein a dispense line is connected to the container for dispensing beverage from the container.

15. Beverage container according to claim 14, wherein a closure is provided in and/or on the neck region of the container, comprising a substantially tubular element at the neck region, having a closed peripheral wall, and an operating element fitting inside said tubular element, slidingly sealing against the said wall, wherein a cap is fitted at or near an end of the tubular element, closing off the tubular element, wherein the operating element can be pushed into the tubular element to such extend that it at least partly removes the cap from

the tubular element and/or pierces said cap, for opening a passage from the container to a ~~tapping line~~dispense line connected to the operating element.

16. Beverage container according to claim 15, wherein the tubular element with the cap has been manufactured by multi-component moulding, such as 2-K moulding.

17. Beverage container according to claim 15 or 16, wherein the container is a BIB- or BIC-type container having an inner and an outer container, wherein the inner container is connected to the outer container at at least two spaced apart locations.

18. Beverage dispensing assembly according to any one of claims 1-14, wherein the or each container is a BIB or BIC type container, wherein the gas inlet opens into a pressure space within the container, preferably between an inner holder and an outer holder, wherein the inner holder is connected to the outer holder at at least a position near the gas inlet.