

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A wafer processing method for dividing a wafer into a plurality of individual device chips along division lines, said division lines being formed on a front side of said wafer to thereby define a plurality of separate regions where a plurality of devices corresponding to said individual device chips are formed, the front side of said wafer being composed of a device area where said devices are formed and a peripheral marginal area surrounding said device area, said wafer processing method comprising:

a protective tape attaching step of attaching a protective tape to the front side of said wafer, said protective tape having an adhesive layer curable by the application of ultraviolet light;

an adhesive layer curing step of applying ultraviolet light to said protective tape attached to the front side of said wafer to thereby cure said adhesive layer;

a modified layer forming step of applying a laser beam having a transmission wavelength to said wafer along each division line in a condition where the focal point of said laser beam is set inside said wafer to thereby form a modified layer inside said wafer along each division line; and

a back grinding step of grinding a back side of said wafer as supplying grinding water to reduce the thickness of said wafer to a predetermined thickness and also divide said wafer along each division line where said modified layer is formed as a break start point, thereby obtaining said individual device chips after performing said adhesive layer curing step and said modified layer forming step.

2. The wafer processing method according to claim 1, wherein said adhesive layer curing step comprises the step of applying ultraviolet light to only a central area of said protective tape corresponding to said device area of said wafer, thereby curing only a portion of said adhesive layer in said central area of said protective tape corresponding to said device area of said wafer.