

PIZZA PAN AND METHOD**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION****Field of the Invention**

The invention relates to utensils for cooking food items, and more
5 particularly, to pans adapted for cooking pizza and similar baked products.

Description of Related Art

Pizza is one of the most popular food items in the world. Pizzas
come in almost every imaginable size and shape, with virtually unlimited
10 variation in the types of toppings, meats, vegetables, cheeses,
doughs/crusts and other ingredients used. Pizza makers select and
assemble these ingredients to create a taste, aroma, texture, and consistency
in accordance with the desires of their selected tasting audience. Pizza
crust, for example, comes in a number of thicknesses and types, to create
15 thin pizza, pan pizza, and other types of pizzas.

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Commercial pizza manufacturers with national and international distribution, especially pizza restaurants, typically select, develop and promote a number of different pizzas, typically varying at least in the type of crust and the number and types of toppings. Within each pizza type, however, consistency is desired, from pizza to pizza and from restaurant to restaurant. National pizza restaurant chains want to develop the notion that customers can get their favorite pizza, consistently cooked to perfection, at any of the chain's restaurants anywhere in the nation, or, for that matter, the world.

10 A problem arises, however, in that the restaurants of many national chains are individually owned, and the individual owners select, within certain parameters, different ovens and other devices that affect the baking environment. Different types of ovens, for example, use different fans, thermostats and other heat regulation devices and consequently produce
15 different temperatures and heat flow patterns. Oven size, airflow within the oven, outside temperature, humidity and other environmental conditions, also affects heat distribution. Even identical ovens with identical controls and baking volumes are subject to variation in temperature and heat flow, due to manufacturing tolerances and differing
20 calibrations. It becomes very difficult for national pizza chains, therefore, to ensure that restaurants throughout the chain produce pizzas that look, feel and taste the same from restaurant to restaurant.

The problem is exacerbated in that a number of variables affect the look, feel and taste of a pizza as perceived by a customer. The texture of

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the pizza, for example, is very significant. Many customers desire a "hearth-baked" texture, that is, the texture that would be produced by baking a pizza on an open stone hearth. Such a pizza is placed directly on the stone to bake, and at the end of the baking process is of uniform coloration and texture. Uniform crispness is another variable affecting customer perception. The amount of moisture in the crust significantly affects its crispness; allowing too much moisture to remain after baking causes a flabby, soggy, undesirable product. Further, unless the moisture of the crust is uniform, alternating areas of crispness and sogginess result, which also is very undesirable. Overall consistency and appearance of the pizza, from top to bottom and side to side, is also very important. Because these and other variables all are affected differently and to varying degrees by the various types of ovens and other equipment used from restaurant to restaurant, as well as by variations in temperature, etc. within individual and/or identical ovens, achieving uniformity of all the products served throughout the chain is all the more complicated.

Perforated pans are known in the art for baking food products such as pizza. U.S. Patent No. 4,176,591 to Power, for example, which is incorporated herein by reference, discloses a pan with a plurality of perforations uniformly distributed over the entire base surface of the pan. By exposing a substantial portion of the lower dough surface of the pizza to the heat of the oven, a perforated pan shortens the baking time, produces relatively rapid elimination of moisture from the dough, which reduces separation and bubbling effects in the dough, and reduces sticking of the

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dough to the baking surface of the pan. Pans of the type disclosed in Power, however, have a number of disadvantages. Pizza products baked in the Power pan tend to come out of the oven with a splotchy, spotty appearance, caused by overdarkening or scorching at the perforations.

5 Additionally, the perforations and spacings between the perforations in Power are too large, resulting in well baked or even overbaked crust portions interspersed with unbaked or underbaked portions. Additionally, pans with perforations of uniform distribution throughout the surface of the pan tend to overbake the edges of the pizza, potentially scorching the

10 crust. Alternatively, if baking is sufficient for the edge portions of the crust, the central section of the pizza tends to be underbaked.

In an attempt to address these latter problems, U.S. Patent No. 4,563,946 to Barlow et al., which is incorporated herein by reference, discloses a pan having a perforated central section surrounded by a solid,

15 non-perforated periphery. Although the solid periphery reduces the amount of heat applied to the dough at the edge of the pizza, relative to periphery of the Power reference, the solid periphery of Barlow et al. tends to fail to allow sufficient heat to reach the dough at the edge of the pizza to sufficiently bake certain types of crust. Thus, non-uniform baking and

20 coloration result, as well as uneven melting of the cheese supported by the dough. Additionally, the Barlow et al. pan fails to allow the air movement required to withdraw moisture from the bottom crust along the outer edges of the pizza, since perforations are absent.

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Similarly, U.S. Patent No. 4,676,151 to Gorsuch et al., which is incorporated herein by reference, also discloses a pan having a solid, non-perforated periphery, along with a central section perforated in a "starburst" pattern. Gorsuch et al. specifically avoided placing perforations

5 at the periphery, stating that if holes were provided in the entire bottom area of the pan, baking of the pizza would not be uniform and the sides of the pizza would be baked prior to the baking of the entire portion, resulting in overbaked sides of the pizza. Additionally, the starburst pattern fails to distribute baking heat in a uniform manner, resulting in

10 uneven coloration and/or baking and possibly in alternating limp and crisp portions.

The perforated pans of the prior art also suffer from other disadvantages. None of the prior art pans are able to provide the sought-after hearth-baked texture and consistency described above, because the

15 perforation densities and percentages of open areas are inadequately high and/or low across the pan. Additionally, the perforations of many prior art pans are too large or too small relative to pan thickness and diameter, resulting in sagging/pressing of the dough into the perforations, visible spottiness on the bottom of the cooked crust, inadequate elimination of

20 moisture from the dough, resulting in soggy/flimsy crust and separation and bubbling within the dough, elevated baking times and unnecessary energy use, uneven browning and cheese-melting at the top of the pizza during baking, and even reduced pan strength.

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Further, neither the perforated nor non-perforated pans of the prior art are able adequately to accomplish the uniformity of results desired from restaurant to restaurant and oven to oven, as described above.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

To solve the above and other problems, a pan according to the invention includes at least two regions of perforations extending through the base of the pan. In a first, outer region, the perforations are more widely spaced and consequently are of lesser perforation density than in a
10 central, inner region, in which the perforations are more densely spaced. These perforation densities are selected to cause uniform application of baking heat through the bottom of the pan to the food product being prepared, resulting in consistent texture, appearance and doneness throughout the entire product.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The preferred embodiments are described with reference to the drawings, in which like reference numerals denote like elements throughout the figures, and in which:

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Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a pan according to a preferred embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 2 is a side elevational view of the Fig. 1 pan;

Fig. 3 is a top view of the Fig. 1 pan; and

Fig. 4 is a bottom view of the Fig. 1 pan.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

According to a preferred embodiment, a cooking utensil in the form of a pan is designed for baking pizza-type food products. The pan according to the invention, however, is not limited to use with pizza-type products. The pan has wide application for use in cooking other foods, including pies, cookies, pastries, and numerous other food products. Thus, while preferred embodiments of the invention will be described with respect to pizza-type products, the invention is not limited to these embodiments.

10 Figs. 1-4 illustrate a preferred embodiment of a pan according to the invention. Pan 10 includes a base 13 having a top surface 17, bottom surface 18, and an outer rim 15 preferably disposed at an obtuse angle with respect to base 13. In a preferred embodiment, rim 15 extends at approximately a 52° angle with respect to base 13, but of course, other angles are contemplated for and are within the scope of the invention to produce desirable results with respect to different food products, for example.

Rim 15 extends circumferentially around the entire extent of pan 10 and includes an outer surface 23 and an inner surface 25, separated by a top edge 20. The top edge 20 of rim 15 preferably is at a height of 0.70 inches above the bottom surface 18 of pan 10. This preferred height has been found to produce the most advantageous air and heat flow characteristics around the edge of the pan to the edge of the pizza. But of course other heights are contemplated by the invention to produce the most desirable

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results, depending upon the particular type of pizza or other product being cooked, for example. Rim 15 also is designed for easy gripping by gripper handling devices common in many commercial restaurants, as described below.

5 Base 13 of pan 10 preferably is flat and includes a plurality of perforations 43, 48, disposed in two distinct regions 40, 45. Perforations 43 within outer region 40 are spaced farther apart than are perforations 48 of central region 45, as best shown in Figs. 1, 3 and 4. Central region 45 includes axis region 50, which in the illustrated embodiment does not
10 include a central hole, in accordance with ease-of-tooling requirements for the equipment used to produce the perforations in pan 10. In another embodiment, however, axis region 50 includes a central hole.

 The outer periphery of region 40 preferably is defined by corner 30 of pan 10, and the inner periphery of region 40 is defined by an imaginary
15 line running parallel to corner 30 around the entire circumference of the pan. This imaginary line defining the inner periphery of region 40 is spaced from corner 30 at a preferred distance, or bandwidth, toward region 50 of pan 10. According to a preferred embodiment, the imaginary line is spaced 1.5 inches from corner 30, to define a 1.5 inch bandwidth.

20 A preferred diameter of pan 10, from the center of the pan along base 13 to corner 30, is 14 inches. Of course, a wide variety of pan diameters are contemplated, both larger and smaller than a 14 inch diameter pan. For each diameter pan, however, the imaginary line defining the inner periphery of region 40 preferably remains at a constant

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distance from corner 30 of pan 10. For example, for 11 inch pans and 17 inch pans, the imaginary line dividing regions 40 and 45 preferably is spaced 1.5 inches away from corner 30. Of course, depending upon the type of pizza or other food product being cooked, for example, other
5 bandwidths may be more desirable, and such bandwidths are within the scope of the invention.

As clearly shown in the figures, the perforation density of outer region 40 is significantly lower than the perforation density of region 45. Additionally, within each region the perforations are uniformly
10 distributed. Unlike various prior art pizza pans, such as the Power pan identified above, the differentiation of perforation density from band to band results in a more desirable distribution of baking heat throughout the pizza or other food product being prepared.

According to a preferred embodiment, outer region 40 has a
15 percentage open area of approximately 4.5 percent, and central region 45 has an open area of approximately 17.8 percent, yielding an average open area of approximately 12.7 percent over the base of a 14 inch bottom diameter pan, as will be described below. The higher perforation density of central region 45 relative to outer region 40 allows more cooking heat to be
20 directed toward the center part of the pizza, which typically remains colder for a longer period of time during baking.

In region 40, according to a preferred embodiment, perforations 43 each are spaced 0.50 inches apart in preferably perpendicular X-Y columns. In region 45, on the other hand, perforations 48 preferably are spaced 0.25

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inches apart, also preferably in perpendicular X-Y columns. Perforations 43, 48 are disposed in X-Y columns for purposes of simplifying the tooling necessary to produce pan 10, namely the punches for creating each of the perforations 43, 48, but also could assume other patterns of uniform
5 distribution within each band. Additionally, the spacings between the perforations within in each region can be varied in accordance with the type of pizza or other food product being cooked, for example.

According to a preferred embodiment, each of the perforations has a diameter of approximately 0.119 inches. It has been found that
10 perforations of smaller diameter require extremely small-diameter punches, which are subject to easy breakage. The type of punch press used to create pan 10 would be clear to one of ordinary skill in the art from the disclosure of the pan. Of course, the size of perforations 43, 48, like the relative spacings between perforations 43 in region 40 and perforations 48
15 in region 45, can be varied as desired to achieve the best result. Additionally, perforations 43, 48 can be of other than circular shape, for example, oval, square or triangular shape.

The perforation densities in regions 45, 40 are carefully chosen to yield a texture that is close to a hearth-baked texture. Spotting and
20 splotchiness on the bottom surface of the pizza dough are significantly reduced, if not entirely eliminated, overcoming a significant disadvantage of prior art pans. Additionally, the dough at the bottom of the pizza is evenly cooked, without the alternating regions of overcooked and undercooked dough characteristic of the perforated pans of the prior art.

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By creating uniform cooking heat distribution in central region 45 and lower but still uniform cooking heat distribution in outer region 40, the overall uniform texture and appearance of the crust, characteristic of hearth-baked pizza, is produced.

5 According to a preferred embodiment, rim 20 is formed without any perforations. For certain types of pizza-products, perforations in rim 20 tend to burn the outer edge of the pizza. Solid rims provide more even air flow around the edge of the pizza in typical impingement-type pizza ovens and also yield a stronger pan that is more easily pulled out of standard
10 ovens by the gripping-type devices typically used in commercial restaurants. Finally, because pizza dough is often pressed against the rim during assembly of the pizza, rim perforations would cause unsightly deformation of the edge of the pizza.

 Additionally, the perforation patterns and densities across regions
15 40, 45 are chosen to produce uniform cooking results across a wide variety of oven types and cooking environments. As described above, this is especially important to national chain restaurants. The pan according to the invention produces uniformity of result from oven to oven and from restaurant to restaurant, despite the numerous variations in heat controls,
20 air-flow designs and temperature ranges that may be present in different ovens and even within ovens of the same type. This uniformity across a variety of oven types represents a significant advantage over the prior art.

 Additionally, perforations 43 of region 40 are disposed so as not to intersect corner 30 of pan 10. This yields a stronger pan that is more easily

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pulled out of standard ovens by the pan-gripping devices typically used in commercial restaurants. Additionally, the lack of perforations on corner 30 protects the pizza dough from unsightly discoloration, uneven coloring, and overbaking at the edge of the pizza.

- 5 Pan 10 also includes a score line 35, extending circumferentially around the pan at a selected distance from corner 30. According to a preferred embodiment, score line 35 is spaced approximately one-half inch from corner 30, along the entire circumference of pan 10. Score line 35 is useful for aiding in assembly of certain types of pizzas. For example, score
- 10 line 35 can act as a circular guide, facilitating production of a circular crust and thereby improving the overall appearance of the pizza product.

- With typical hearth-type baking, the product is baked on a deck oven (stone) that maintains high heat, such as 500 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. Pizza dough with toppings is placed directly on the stone to bake.
- 15 The surface in contact quickly "sears," or sets a "skin." Free moisture on the surface is driven off, and heat then actively is transferred into the product to increase the internal temperature. This in turn gelatinizes the starch, sets the protein structure, creates steam to expand air cells, and stops yeast and enzyme activity.

- 20 The nature of the deck oven creates temperature gradients. There generally is no air flow, contrary to the typical impingement oven. This in turn creates a moisture barrier or insulated area around the pizza. Therefore, while the bottom of the crust continues to heat in the 3 - 5 minute bake time, denaturization begins. Because moisture is not driven

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off, a gradient is created within the product. When the product is removed from the oven, the bottom crust is initially crisp. But within 3 - 5 minutes it is tough and leathery due to the continuous moisture migration within the crust.

- 5 To overcome this disadvantage of hearth-baked pizza product, pan 10 according to the invention allows for crispness to be created and maintained in the food product to be cooked. In the typical impingement oven, continuously moving air around the product in pan 10 causes moisture to continuously move within the product towards the outside.
- 10 The product thus is actually "seared" on the bottom as in a typical deck oven, but perforations 43, 48 in pan 10 allow for air circulating around the product to carry off the moisture. Thus, the tough and leathery crust typical of deck-oven baked pizzas is avoided.

- According to a preferred embodiment, pan 10 is produced of a 5052
- 15 aluminum of thickness approximately 0.063 inches. Although softer aluminum, such as 3003/3004 aluminum, also can be used, softer materials tend to allow rim deformation when the pan is lifted from the oven. Of course, a wide variety of materials are contemplated by the invention, including stainless steel, copper alloys and other materials.
- 20 The preferred thickness creates a relatively stiff and strong pan that can withstand the stresses typically associated with insertion and removal from ovens, and with physical removal of the pizza from the pan itself, but other thicknesses also are contemplated as needed.

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Dense holes, that is, holes in central region 45, are of density .178 in² OPEN/1 in² metal space (i.e., 17.8%). Band holes, that is, holes in outer region or band 40, are of density .0445 in² OPEN/1 in² metal space (i.e., 4.45%). The total area of the preferred embodiment pan's bottom is: 153.94 in² (Dense area: $\pi r^2 = \pi(11/2)^2 = 95.033$ in²) + (Band area: Outside Diameter area - Dense area = $\pi r^2 - 95.033 = \pi(14/2)^2 - 95.033 = 58.905$ in²). Therefore, the following hold true:

Open area (in²):

Dense area: .178(17.8%) OPEN x 95.033 in² = 16.916 in²

10 Band area: .0445 (4.5%) OPEN x 58.905 in² = 2.621 in²

Total open area: 16.916 in² + 2.621 = 19.537 in² OPEN

Overall percentage open area: 19.537 in² OPEN/153.94 in² total area = 12.7% OPEN.

Of course, different calculations would apply to different pan diameters and different perforation diameters.

While the invention has been described with reference to specific embodiments, the description is illustrative and is not to be construed as limiting the scope of the invention. For example, as mentioned throughout the specification, other types of food products advantageously can be cooked using the pan according to the invention, not just pizza-type products. The pan according to the invention also can be used in a wide variety of ovens, formed of a wide variety of materials, and be of a wide range of diameters. Additionally, more than two regions of varying density can be used, and the base of the pan can be formed of a screen with

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regions of differing aperture density. Various other modifications and changes may occur to those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A pizza pan for receiving and baking a pizza in a baking oven, the
 2 pan producing a hearth-baked-type texture and appearance in the crust of
 3 the pizza, the pizza pan comprising:

4 (a) a generally planar, continuous base having a top surface to
 5 receive the pizza and a bottom surface to rest on a surface of the baking
 6 oven, the base comprising a circular shape, the base further including
 7 structure defining a plurality of perforations of similar geometric shape,
 8 the perforations being disposed through the base in X-Y columns to allow
 9 transmission of baking heat through the base; and

10 (b) a continuous rim extending circumferentially around the base
 11 in its entirety;

12 (c) the perforations being formed in first and second perforation
 13 regions on the base, the first and second perforation regions together
 14 covering at least the majority of the base, the perforations of the first
 15 perforation region being distributed generally uniformly within the first
 16 perforation region and the perforations of the second perforation region
 17 being distributed generally uniformly within the second perforation
 18 region, the first perforation region defining a generally circular shape and
 19 the second perforation region defining a general ring shape, the second
 20 perforation region surrounding the first perforation region, the second
 21 perforation region being surrounded by the rim;

REPLACED SHEETS

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22 (d) the perforations of the first perforation region having a
23 separation distance between adjacent perforations along each X column
24 and having a separation distance between adjacent perforations along each
25 Y column, the separation distance between adjacent perforations of the
26 first perforation region along each X column being identical to the
27 separation distance between adjacent perforations of the first perforation
28 region along each Y column;

29 (e) the perforations of the second perforation region having a
30 separation distance between adjacent perforations along each X column
31 and having a separation distance between adjacent perforations along each
32 Y column, the separation distance between adjacent perforations of the
33 second perforation region along each X column being identical to the
34 separation distance between adjacent perforations of the second
35 perforation region along each Y column, the separation between adjacent
36 perforations of the second perforation region being greater than the
37 separation between adjacent perforations of the first perforation region
38 such that the base transmits greater baking heat through the first
39 perforation region than through the second perforation region.

1 2. The pizza pan of claim 1, wherein the rim intersects the base to
2 form a distinct, obtuse angle of intersection with the top surface of the
3 base.

1 3. The pizza pan of claim 1, wherein the rim is non-perforated.

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1 4. The pizza pan of claim 1, wherein the X-Y perforation columns of
2 the second perforation region are aligned with the X-Y perforation
3 columns of the first perforation region.

1 5. The pizza pan of claim 1, wherein the separation between adjacent
2 perforations of the second perforation region is twice the separation
3 between adjacent perforations of the first perforation region.

1 6. The pizza pan of claim 1, wherein the perforations of the first
2 perforation region together form a substantially octagonal shape.

1 7. The pizza pan of claim 1, wherein the perforations are identical
2 circular perforations.

1 8. A pan for receiving and baking a food product in a baking oven, the
2 pan producing a desired texture and appearance in the crust of the food
3 product, the pan comprising:

4 (a) a generally planar base having a top surface to receive the food
5 product and a bottom surface to rest on a surface of the baking oven, the
6 base comprising a generally circular shape, the base further comprising
7 structure defining a plurality of perforations extending through the base to
8 allow transmission of baking heat through the base; and





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9 (b) a continuous rim extending circumferentially around the base,
10 the rim intersecting the base to form an obtuse angle of intersection with
11 the top surface of the base;

12 (c) the perforations being formed in first and second perforation
13 regions on the base, the first perforation region extending toward the rim
14 from a central region of the base and terminating at an outer border, the
15 second perforation region extending radially outwardly from the outer
16 border of the first perforation region, the perforations of the first
17 perforation region being generally evenly distributed across the entire first
18 perforation region at a first perforation density, the perforations of the
19 second perforation region being generally evenly distributed across the
20 entire second perforation region at a second perforation density, the first
21 perforation density being greater than the second perforation density to
22 allow greater transmission of baking heat through the base to the food
23 product in the first perforation region than in the second perforation
24 region.

1 9. The pan of claim 8, wherein the base defines a surface area, further
2 wherein the first perforation region defines a surface area that is greater
3 than half the surface area of the base.

1 10. The pan of claim 9, wherein the surface area of the first perforation
2 region is approximately 60% of the surface area of the base, further

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3 wherein the second perforation region defines a surface area that is
4 approximately 40% of the surface area of the base.

1 11. The pan of claim 8, wherein the perforation density of the first
2 perforation region is at least twice the perforation density of the second
3 perforation region.

1 12. The pan of claim 11, wherein the perforation density of the first
2 perforation region is in the range between 12% and 22%, further wherein
3 the perforation density of the second perforation region is in the range
4 between 2% and 6%.

1 13. The pan of claim 8, wherein the perforation density of the first
2 perforation region is approximately 17.8%, further wherein the perforation
3 density of the second perforation region is approximately 4.5%.

1 14. The pan of claim 11, wherein the base defines a diameter, further
2 wherein the outer border of the first perforation region is spaced from the
3 center of the base by a distance that is approximately 85%-90% the
4 diameter.

1 15. The pan of claim 11, wherein the outer border of the first
2 perforation region is spaced from the rim by approximately 1.5 inches.

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1 16. The pan of claim 8, wherein the second perforation region extends
2 radially outwardly to the rim of the pan.

1 17. A pan for receiving and baking a dough product in a baking oven,
2 the pan comprising:

3 (a) a generally planar, continuous base having a top surface to
4 receive the dough product and a bottom surface to rest on a surface of the
5 baking oven, the base further comprising structure defining a plurality of
6 perforations disposed through the base to allow transmission of cooking
7 heat through the base;

8 (b) an outer border surrounding the base; and

9 (c) a score line disposed on the base, the score line extending around
10 the entire base parallel to the outer border such that an outer edge of the
11 dough product substantially borders the score line.

1 18. The pan of claim 17, wherein the score line is continuous.

1 19. The pan of claim 18, further comprising a continuous rim extending
2 around the base of the pan at the outer border of the pan.

1 20. The pan of claim 17, wherein the score line is spaced approximately
2 one-half inch from the outer border of the base.

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- 1 21. A method of using a pan for receiving and baking a dough product
2 in a baking oven, the method comprising:
- 3 (a) placing the dough product on a top surface of a planar,
4 continuous base of the pan within an outer border of the pan surrounding
5 the pan in its entirety;
- 6 (b) placing the dough product within a score line extending around
7 the entire base parallel to the outer border of the base, such that an outer
8 edge of the dough product substantially borders the score line;
- 9 (c) resting a bottom surface of the base on a surface of the baking
10 oven; and
- 11 (d) transmitting cooking heat to the dough product through a
12 plurality of perforations disposed through the base of the pan.

- 1 22. The pan of claim 8, wherein the perforations direct moisture away
2 from the food product.

- 1 23. The pan of claim 8, further comprising a third perforation region of
2 different perforation density than the first and second perforation regions.

- 1 24. A pan for supporting a food product during a cooking process, the
2 pan comprising:
- 3 a base;
- 4 a rim surrounding the base; and

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5 a plurality of perforations extending through the base, the
6 perforations being formed into a plurality of perforation regions each of
7 uniform perforation density, the perforation density of one of the regions
8 being greater than the perforation density of at least one other region.

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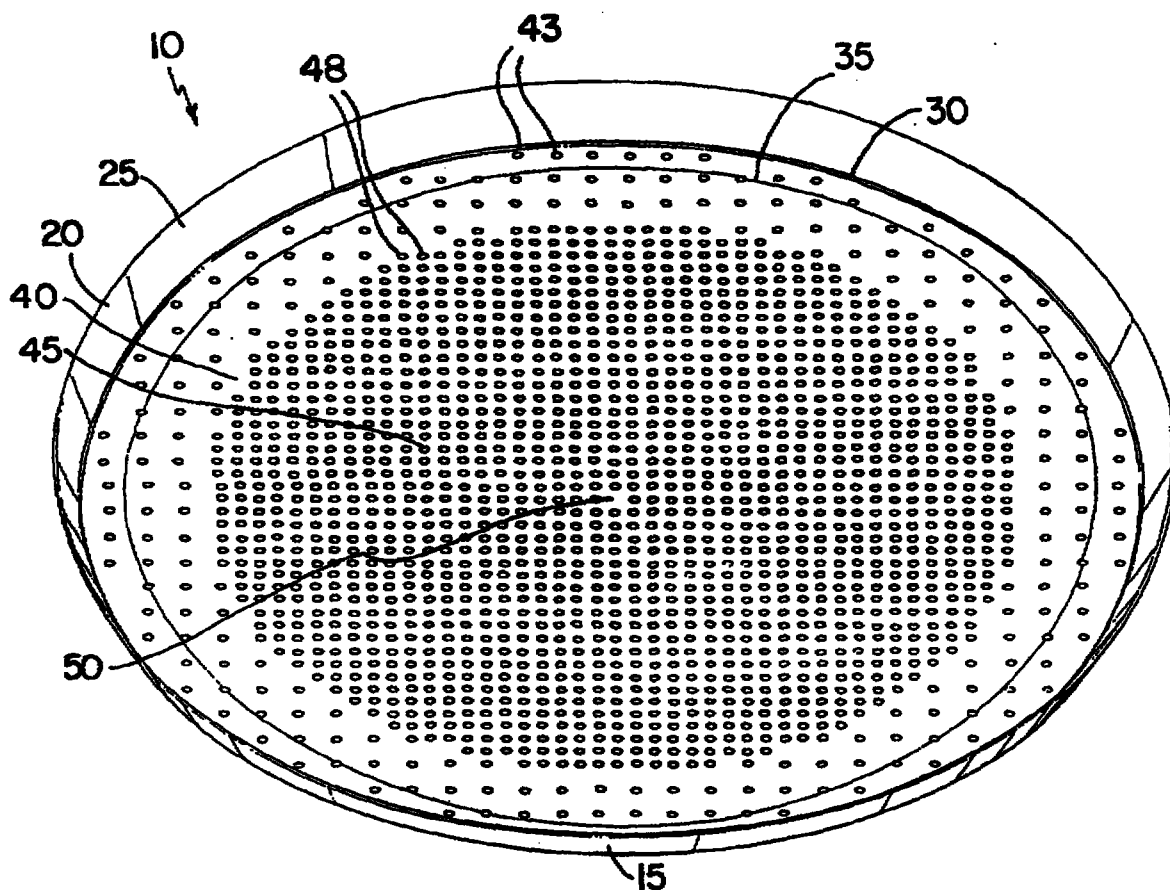
Fig. 1

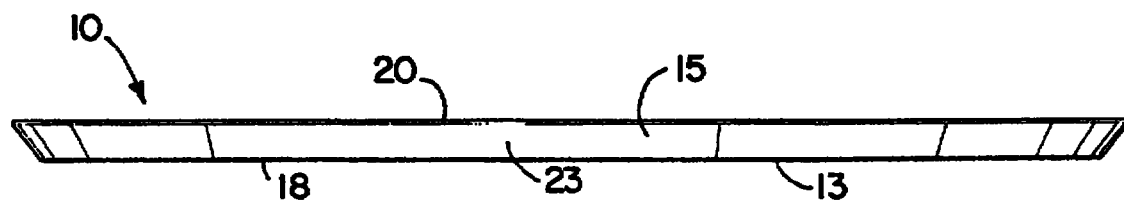
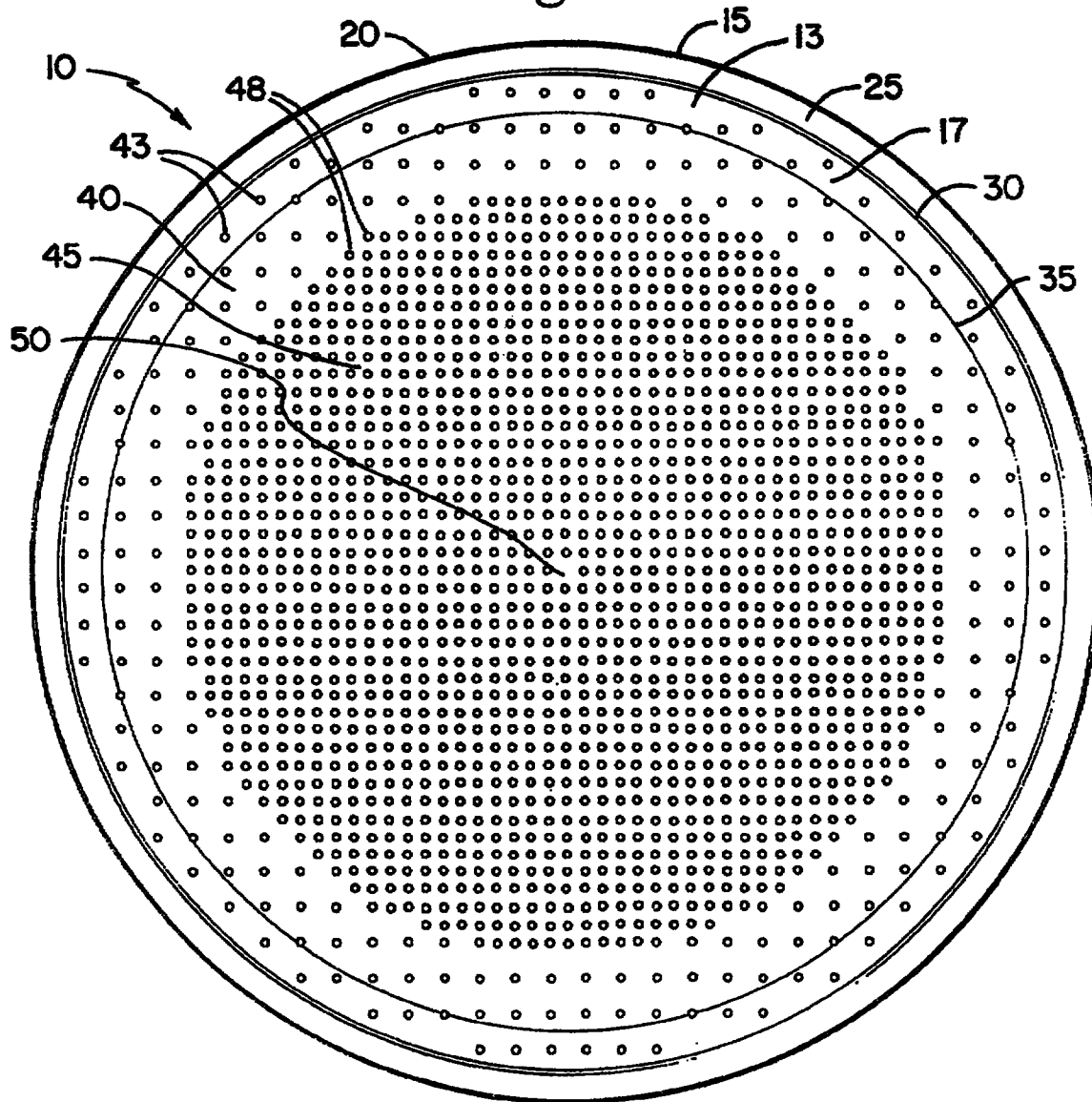
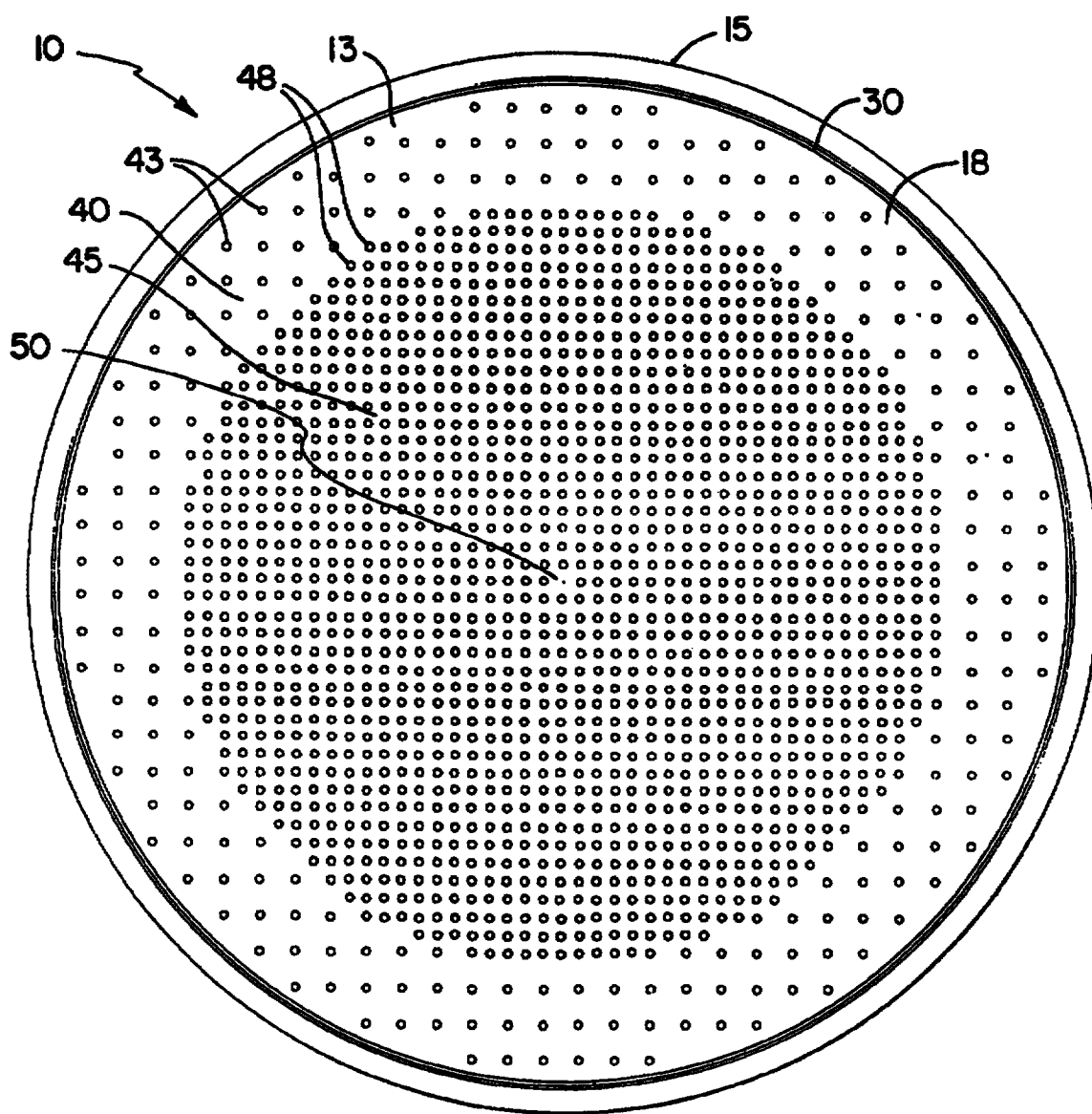
Fig. 2*Fig. 3*

Fig. 4



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(54) Title: **PIZZA PAN AND METHOD**

(57) Abstract

A pizza pan (10) receives and bakes a pizza to produce a hearth-baked texture and appearance. The pizza pan (10) comprises a base (13) with a plurality of perforations (43, 48) therethrough, the perforations being disposed in first and second perforation regions (40, 45). The perforation density in the first region (45), disposed toward the center of the pan, is greater than the perforation density of the second region (40), disposed toward the outside of the pan, to allow greater transmission of heat to the center of the pizza. A continuous, non-perforated rim (15) extends circumferentially around the base of the pan to form an obtuse angle of intersection therewith.

