CLAIMS

1. A device for selectively retaining a package opening in a gaping configuration, the device comprising:

a circumferential strip configured to be secured to a package opening, the circumferential strip defining an opening axis;

a pair of side seams formed as vertical hinges, wherein the pair of side seams define opposed first and second ends of the device, the device being divided by the pair of side seams into first and second sides; and

a pair of tabs extending in a first axial direction from an upper edge of the circumferential strip, one of the pair of tabs being positioned at each of the opposed first and second ends of the device, each one of the pair of tabs being coupled to the circumferential strip with a horizontal hinge, the pair of tabs being pivotable about the horizontal hinges in opposite directions away from the opening axis to respective folded-out positions,

wherein each one of the pair of side seams intersects a corresponding one of the horizontal hinges of the pair of tabs such that folding of the device at the side seams inhibits pivoting of the pair of tabs to the respective folded-out positions, and folding of the device at the side seams is inhibited to retain a gaping open configuration of the device when the pair of tabs are in the respective folded-out positions, and

wherein the vertical hinges include thru cuts or a line of perforations that go through the entire material thickness of the adjacent portion of the circumferential strip and the pair of tabs, and

wherein the thru cuts or line of perforations extend for a majority of the full axial length of the device, from upper ends of the pair of tabs to a lower end of the circumferential strip.

2. The device of claim 1, wherein the pair of side seams extend substantially parallel to the opening axis.

3. The device of claim 2, wherein the horizontal hinges of the pair of tabs extend substantially circumferentially and substantially perpendicular to the opening axis.

4. The device of claim 1, wherein the majority of the full axial length of the device is at least 50% of the height or length of the side seams.

5. The device of claim 1, wherein the pair of side seams intersect the respective horizontal hinges of the pair of tabs at substantially 90-degree angles.

6. The device of claim 1, further comprising at least one projection substantially aligned with one of the pair of tabs in the circumferential direction and extending in a direction opposite the first axial direction.

7. The device of claim 1, wherein the horizontal hinges of the pair of tabs comprises a living hinge located at a radially outward side of the device and formed by a blind slit from a radially inward side of the device.

8. The device of claim 7, wherein the living hinge has a material thickness that is 80 percent or less of adjacent portions of the circumferential strip and the corresponding one of the pair of tabs.

9. The device of claim 8, wherein the living hinge has a material thickness that is 25 percent or less of adjacent portions of the circumferential strip and the corresponding one of the pair of tabs.

10. A package comprising:

a package body including flexible sides, a closed end, an openable end, and a pair of side seams; and

a device for selectively retaining the openable end of the package body in a gaping configuration, the device including

a circumferential strip secured to the package body at the openable end, the circumferential strip defining an opening axis coaxial with a package body axis,

a pair of side seams aligned with the pair of side seams of the package body, the pair of side seams of the device being formed by vertical hinges, and

a pair of tabs extending in a first axial direction from an upper edge of the circumferential strip, one of the pair of tabs extending across each one of the side seams of the device, each one of the pair of tabs being coupled to the circumferential strip with a horizontal hinge, the pair of tabs being pivotable in opposite directions away from the opening axis about the horizontal hinges to respective folded-out positions,

wherein the vertical hinges include thru cuts or a line of perforations that go through the entire material thickness of the adjacent portion portions of the circumferential strip and the pair of tabs, and wherein the thru cuts or line of perforations extend for a majority of the full axial length of the device, from upper ends of the pair of tabs to a lower end of the circumferential strip,

wherein each one of the pair of side seams of the device intersects a corresponding one of the horizontal hinges of the pair of tabs such that folding of the device at its side seams inhibits pivoting of the pair of tabs to the respective folded-out positions, and folding of the device at its side seams is inhibited to retain a gaping open configuration of the device when the pair of tabs are in the respective folded-out positions, the package thus being operable in at least two configurations including

a first configuration in which the device is folded upon its side seams and the openable end of the package body can be closed, and

a second configuration in which the pair of tabs are both folded outward away from the opening axis about the respective horizontal hinges to inhibit closing of the openable end of the package body.

11. The package of claim 10, wherein the pair of tabs extend outwardly past the openable end of the package body in the first configuration.

12. The package of claim 11, further comprising a hermetically-sealed header coupled to the package body at the openable end, the header covering the pair of tabs and being severable from the package body to expose the pair of tabs and enable access to the package body through the openable end.

13. The package of claim 10, wherein the horizontal hinges of the pair of tabs do not span the entire width of the tabs.

14. A device for selectively retaining a package opening in a gaping configuration, the device comprising:

a strip portion configured to be secured to a package opening;

at least one tab extending from the strip portion;

a vertical hinge portion dividing the strip portion and the at least one tab into two sides, the vertical hinge portion allowing the two sides to be folded together about the vertical hinge portion, wherein the vertical hinge portion includes thru cuts or a line of perforations that go through the entire material thickness of the adjacent strip portion and the adjacent at least one tab and wherein the thru cuts or line of perforations extend for a majority of the full axial length of the device, from upper end of the at least one tab to a lower end of the strip portion; and

a horizontal hinge portion coupling the tab to the strip portion, the horizontal hinge intersecting the vertical hinge portion and allowing the tab to pivot from a vertical orientation generally aligned with the strip portion to a folded-out position that is angled out of alignment from the strip portion, wherein the horizontal hinge portion comprises a living hinge located at a radially outward side of the device and formed by a blind slit from a radially inward side of the device of the horizontal hinge portion comprises thru cuts or a line of perforations that go through the entire material thickness of the adjacent strip portion and the at least one tab,

wherein folding of the device along the vertical hinge inhibits pivoting of the at least one tab to the folded-out position, and folding of the device along the vertical hinge is inhibited when the at least tab is in the folded-out position.

15. The device of claim 14, and a package coupled thereto, the package having at least one openable end, which is secured to the strip portion of the device.