

SOLID SOURCE PRECURSOR VESSEL

FIELD OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0001] The present disclosure generally relates to gas-phase reactors and systems. More particularly, the disclosure relates to an apparatus for delivering reactant gases from solid source precursors.

BACKGROUND OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0002] Gas-phase reactor systems, such as chemical vapor deposition (CVD), plasma-enhanced CVD (PECVD), and atomic layer deposition (ALD) can be used for a variety of applications, including depositing and etching materials on a substrate surface (e.g., semiconductor wafer). For example, gas-phase reactor systems can be used to deposit and/or etch layers on a substrate to form semiconductor devices, flat panel display devices, photovoltaic devices, microelectromechanical systems (MEMS), and the like.

[0003] In gas-phase reactor systems, reactant gases (also referred to herein as “precursor gases”) of different reactants are delivered to one or more substrates in a reaction chamber. The reaction chamber typically includes one or more substrates supported on one or more substrate holders (such as a susceptor(s)), with the substrate(s) and substrate holder(s) being maintained at a desired process temperature. The reactant gases can react with one another or with a surface of the substrate to form thin films on the substrate(s), with the growth rate being controlled by, among other things, the temperature or the amounts of reactant gases.

[0004] In some applications, the reactant gases are stored in gaseous form in a reactant source vessel. In such applications, the reactant vapors are often gaseous at ambient (i.e.,

normal) pressures and temperatures. Examples of such gases include nitrogen, oxygen, hydrogen, and ammonia. However, in some cases, the vapors of source chemicals (“precursors”) that are liquid or solid at ambient pressure and temperature are used. These source chemicals may have to be heated to produce sufficient amounts of vapor for the reaction process. For some solid substances (referred to herein as “solid source precursors”), the vapor pressure at room temperature is so low that they have to be heated to produce a sufficient amount of reactant vapor and/or maintained at very low pressures.

[0005] A typical solid source precursor delivery system includes a solid source precursor vessel and a heating system (e.g., radiant heat lamps, resistive heaters, etc.). The vessel includes the solid precursor (e.g., in powder form). The heating system heats the vessel to increase the vapor pressure of precursor gas in the vessel. Stated otherwise, the heating system heats the solid precursor such that the solid precursor vaporizes (e.g., sublimates). Accordingly, the vessel is sometimes referred to as a sublimator. The vessel has an inlet and an outlet for flowing an inert carrier gas (e.g., nitrogen) through the vessel to carry vaporized precursor to a substrate reaction chamber. Commonly, the path through the vessel is a non-direct path to increase the distance the carrier gas moves through the vessel thereby increasing the saturation of the carrier gas with the vaporized precursor. The carrier gas sweeps precursor vapor along with it through the vessel outlet and ultimately to a substrate reaction chamber. The vessel typically includes isolation valves for fluidly isolating the contents of the vessel from the vessel exterior.

[0006] Any discussion, including discussion of problems and solutions, set forth in this section has been included in this disclosure solely for the purpose of providing a context for the present disclosure, and should not be taken as an admission that any or all of the discussion was known at the time the invention was made or otherwise constitutes prior art

SUMMARY OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0007] This summary is provided to introduce a selection of concepts in a simplified form. These concepts are described in further detail in the detailed description of example embodiments of the disclosure below. This summary is not intended to necessarily identify key features or essential features of the claimed subject matter, nor is it intended to be used to limit the scope of the claimed subject matter.

[0008] The present disclosure is generally directed to a solid source precursor delivery system. More specifically, the present disclosure is directed to a solid source precursor vessel that is utilized to vaporize a supply of solid precursor stored within the vessel. The disclosed source vessel replaces a single serpentine channel used to store a supply of precursor and direct a carrier gas through the vessel with a plurality of individual cavities or pockets within the interior of the vessel. Each individual pocket may be loaded with precursor. In an arrangement, the pockets may be loaded with pre-formed blocks of compressed precursor that typically have a higher density than may be achieved when packing a powdered precursor in a serpentine channel. The increased density of the solid precursor material increases a capacity of the source vessel, resulting in longer intervals between replacement and/or refilling the source vessel.

[0009] In an arrangement, a reactant source vessel is provided that includes a container body and a lid. The lid is configured to attach to the container body to enclose an internal area of the container body defined by one or more sidewalls and a bottom surface. Formed within the internal area of the container body are a plurality of individual pockets that are each configured to hold a volume of solid source precursor. In an arrangement, the pockets may be of a uniform size (e.g., have common dimensions). The individual pockets may have any configuration. For instance, the pockets may be cylindrical, rectangular prismatic, etc. Generally,

each pocket has a closed lower or bottom end, one or more sidewalls and an open upper end. In such an arrangement, the pockets may receive a preformed block of compressed solid precursor (e.g., through the open upper end). This arrangement facilitates loading the source vessel. The plurality of individual pockets within the interior of the source vessel are each exposed to a fluid flow path passing through the interior of the vessel between a fluid path inlet end and a fluid path outlet end. This fluid path passes over each individual pocket within the source vessel to permit carrying vaporized precursor from the source vessel. In order to route the fluid path over the open end of each pocket, the path may be non-direct (e.g., serpentine) between the fluid path inlet end and the fluid path outlet end.

[0010] In an arrangement, the container body has a two-piece construction. In this arrangement, the container body may have a base that receives an insert in which the plurality of pockets are formed. In a further arrangement, the insert may be formed in multiple layers that are stacked to form the plurality of pockets. Such an arrangement may be beneficial when working with hard and/or brittle material.

[0011] In another arrangement, the plurality of pocket may be formed by a plurality of intersecting dividing walls that collectively define a matrix of pockets within the interior of the container body. In an arrangement, the dividing walls may be evenly spaced to enhance heat transfer throughout the container body. In such an arrangement, the container body may have a high degree of symmetry.

[0012] These and other embodiments will become readily apparent to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description of certain embodiments having reference to the attached figures; the disclosure not being limited to any particular embodiment(s) disclosed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING FIGURES

[0013] A more complete understanding of exemplary embodiments of the present disclosure can be derived by referring to the detailed description and claims when considered in connection with the following illustrative figures.

[0014] FIG. 1 illustrates one embodiment of a gas-phase reactor system.

[0015] FIG. 2 illustrates one embodiment of a solid precursor source vessel.

[0016] FIGS. 3A and 3B illustrate a container body of a prior art solid precursor source vessel.

[0017] FIG. 4 illustrates one embodiment of a two-piece container body of a solid precursor source vessel.

[0018] FIG. 5A illustrates an insert for use with the two-piece container body of FIG. 4.

[0019] FIGS. 5B and 5C illustrate first and second cross-sectional views of FIG. 5A.

[0020] FIG. 6 illustrates a multi-piece insert.

[0021] FIG. 7 illustrates one embodiment of a one-piece container body of a solid source precursor vessel.

[0022] It will be appreciated that elements in the figures are illustrated for simplicity and clarity and have not necessarily been drawn to scale. For example, the dimensions of some of the elements in the figures may be exaggerated relative to other elements to help to improve the understanding of illustrated embodiments of the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0023] The description of exemplary embodiments provided below is merely exemplary and is intended for purposes of illustration only; the following description is not intended to

limit the scope of the disclosure or the claims. Moreover, recitation of multiple embodiments having stated features is not intended to exclude other embodiments having additional features or other embodiments incorporating different combinations of the stated features.

[0024] The present disclosure generally relates to improved solid source precursor vessels, apparatuses and methods. The disclosed embodiments allow for providing ready access to reactant vapor while providing improved serviceability (e.g., recharging) of the solid source precursor vessel.

[0025] FIG. 1 schematically illustrates an exemplary gas-phase reactor system 100, which includes a reactor 102, including a reaction chamber 104, a susceptor 106 to hold a substrate 116 during processing, a gas distribution system 108 to distribute one or more reactants to a surface of the substrate 116, a solid reactant source 110, a second reactant source 112 and a carrier/purge gas source 114. The reactant sources and carrier/purge gas source are fluidly coupled to the reaction chamber 104 via fluid conduits and various valves or controllers. The system also includes a vacuum source 118. The solid reactant source is configured to feed a gas-phase reactant generated from a solid precursor source vessel 20 into a gas-phase reactor 102. The solid source vessel 20 contains a precursor or source chemical (not shown), which is solid under standard conditions (i.e., room temperature and atmospheric pressure). The solid precursor is vaporized within the source vessel 20, which may be maintained at or above a vaporizing temperature of the precursor. The resulting vaporized reactant is then fed into the reaction chamber 104. The source vessel 20 can be located in a reactant source cabinet 12, which may be individually evacuated and/or thermally controlled. The exemplary system 100 can be used for, without limitation, deposition e.g., chemical vapor deposition (CVD), plasma-enhanced CVD (PECVD) or Atomic Layer Deposition (ALD).

[0026] As seen in FIG. 1, the precursor source vessel 20 is fluidly coupled to the reactor 102 via a conduit 22. Selectively opening a valve 24 in the conduit 22 allows feeding a gas-phase reactant (e.g., vaporized solid precursor) from the precursor source vessel 20 to the reactor 102. Inactive or inert gas is preferably used as a carrier gas for the vaporized precursor. The carrier gas (e.g., nitrogen or argon) may be fed into the precursor source vessel 20 through a carrier gas supply conduit 26. In this regard, the precursor source vessel 20 includes at least one inlet valve 44 for connection to the carrier gas supply conduit 26 and at least one outlet valve 42 for connection to the reactor 102 via the conduit 22. The carrier gas supply conduit 26 includes at least one valve 28, which can be used for fluidly isolating the interior of the source vessel 20 from a source of carrier gas (not shown).

[0027] The precursor source vessel 20 can be positioned within the reactant source cabinet 12. The interior space 18 of the cabinet 12 may be maintained at a reduced pressure to, for example, promote radiant heating of the components (e.g., source vessel(s)) within the cabinet 12 and to thermally isolate such components from each other to facilitate uniform temperature fields. In other variations, the cabinet is not evacuated and includes convection-enhancing devices (e.g., fans, cross-flows, etc.). The illustrated cabinet 12 includes one or more heating devices 8, such as radiation heaters. Additionally, reflectors (not shown) can be provided, which may be configured to surround the components within the cabinet 12 to reflect the radiant heat generated by the heating devices 8 to the components positioned within the cabinet 12. Reflectors can be provided on the inner walls, ceiling and/or floor of the cabinet 12. Additional heaters (not shown) may be provided for heating the conduit 22 and any valves between the cabinet 12 and the reactor 102, to prevent the precursor gas from condensing.

[0028] FIG. 2 illustrates an embodiment of the solid precursor source vessel 20. As shown, the precursor source vessel 20 includes a container body 30 and a lid 40. As illustrated, the lid 40 is removed from the container body 30. However, it will be appreciated that the lid 40 is fastened to the container body 30, upon assembly. The illustrated vessel 20 is fastened together by fastening elements (not shown), such as screws or nut and bolt combinations. The fastening elements are adapted to extend into or through aligned mating apertures (e.g., bolt holes) that extend about a periphery of the lid and about a periphery of a flange of the container body 30. Skilled artisans will appreciate that the assembly can be fastened together by a variety of alternative methods. As described herein, the container body 30 is configured to hold a supply of solid precursor. The lid 40 is configured to direct a gas flow (e.g., carrier gas) through an interior flow path of the container body to remove vaporized precursor (e.g., reactant gas). When the solid source precursor is depleted and in need of replacement, it is customary to replace the entire source vessel 20 with a new one that has a full load of the source chemical.

[0029] In the illustrated embodiment the vessel lid 40 includes an inlet valve 44 and an outlet valve 42. The inlet valve 44 has an inlet that receives carrier gas via the carrier gas conduit 26 (See FIG. 1). The inlet valve 44 has an outlet that is in fluid communication with an inlet end of the interior flow path through the container body. That is, the outlet of the inlet valve 44 connects to a fluid passage through the lid that is in communication with an interior of the container body when the source vessel is assembled. The outlet valve 42 has an inlet that is in fluid communication (e.g., via a fluid passage through the lid) with an outlet end of the interior flow path through the container body. The outlet valve has an outlet that is in fluid communication with the fluid conduit 22 that extends between the source vessel 20 and the reactor. Various valves, manifolds and conduits may be disposed between the fluid conduit and

the outlet valve. In use, carrier gas flows into the source vessel through the inlet valve 44, flows through the interior of the container body 30 and out of outlet valve 42 where it exists the source vessel. In the illustrated embodiment, the lid 40 further includes a vent or purge valve 46 disposed between the inlet and outlet valves 44, 42. The purge valve 46 has an inlet that is in fluid communication (e.g., via a fluid passage through the lid) with a mid-portion of the interior flow path through the container body. The purge valve also has an exhaust outlet. In use, the purge valve may be opened to exhaust gas flow from the interior flow path out of the vessel. has an inlet connectable to a source of purge gas (not shown) and an outlet that is in fluid communication with a mid-portion of the interior flow path through the container body. In operation, the purge valve may be used to purge gases (e.g., carrier gas and/or reactant gas) from an interior of the source vessel 20.

[0030] Each of the valves 42, 44 and 46 (if utilized) preferably comprises a valve porting block 43, 45 and 47, respectively, including gas flow passages that can be restricted or opened by the valve. For example, the porting block 45 of the inlet valve 44 preferably includes an internal gas flow passage extending from a side of the porting block to a restrictor region that includes an internal apparatus (not shown) for restricting the flow of the gas, such as a valve seat and a movable restrictor or diaphragm. In one embodiment, the movable internal restrictor or diaphragm can be moved by turning a knob (e.g., the larger cylindrical upper portion of the valve 44) either manually or in an automated fashion. Another internal gas flow passage preferably extends from the restrictor region through an opposite side of the porting block 45 to an inlet passage that extends through the lid 40 into the source vessel 20.

[0031] FIGS. 3A and 3B illustrate one embodiment of a flow path through an interior of a container body 30. As shown, the container body includes flow path 38, which is a continuous

serpentine path extending between an inlet end 32 and an outlet end 34. The inlet end 32 is disposed beneath the inlet valve of the lid and the outlet end 34 is disposed beneath the outlet valve of the lid, when the source vessel is assembled. Accordingly, the inlet and outlet ends 32, 34 of the flow path 38 are in fluid communication with the inlet and outlet valves of the lid, respectively, when the source vessel is assembled. In the illustrated embodiment, a mid-portion of the flow path 38 includes a purge port manifold 36 that is in fluid communication with the purge valve, when the source vessel is assembled. As shown, the flow path 38 extends between the front and rear wall of the container body in a series of parallel channels that are connected on alternating adjacent ends. The flow path defines a tortuous or serpentine path through which a carrier gas must travel as it flows through the container body 30. In use, the flow path 38 contains a solid precursor source, such as a powder. For instance, a solid source precursor/chemical may be packed into lower portions of the channels. Upon heating the source vessel, at least a portion of the solid precursor in the channels may vaporize. Routing the carrier gas through the long serpentine flow path 38 between the inlet end 32 and outlet end 34 while exposing the carrier gas to the vaporized precursor causes the carrier gas to carry reactant vapor. That is, as the carrier gas is required to flow along a longer path while exposed to the precursor source, it is exposed to the precursor source for a longer time and is thus more likely to become saturated with the vaporized precursor.

[0032] While the carrier body illustrated in FIGS. 3A and 3B is effective for producing a gas-phase reactant from a solid precursor, this carrier body embodiment has a number of drawbacks. Specifically, the use of narrow deep channels to form the serpentine flow path makes the removal and replacement of a solid source precursor (e.g., compacted powder) difficult. Further, the narrow deep channels limit the amount of solid precursor that may be

held in a container body of a source vessel. That is, a significant amount of the interior volume of the container body is utilized to form the dividing walls that define the serpentine flow path. Aspects of the present disclosure are based, in part, on the recognition that increasing a surface area of the solid precursor may allow for effectively saturating a carrier gas over a shorter flow path, while allowing a container body to hold increased amounts of the solid precursor.

[0033] FIG. 4 illustrates an embodiment of a two-piece container body 130 in accordance with various aspects of the present disclosure. Though illustrated as a two-piece container body, it will be appreciated that this embodiment is provided by way of example and not by limitation. Along these lines, it will be appreciated that the container body may be a single piece container body similar to that described above. It will be further appreciated that the container body 130 of FIG. 4 may replace the container body 30 of FIG. 2. That is, the lid of FIG. 2 may be utilized the container body 130. In the illustrated embodiment, the container body 130 includes a base member 132 and an insert tray 150. The base member 132 is a generally rectangular element having four sidewalls 134a-134d, a bottom surface 136 and a generally open upper surface. Collectively these sidewalls and bottom surface define an opening/recess (e.g., internal area) that is sized to receive the insert tray 150. In the illustrated embodiment, the base member 132 further includes a shelf 138 within its interior located proximate to the front wall 134a. This shelf 138 includes an inlet manifold 144, an outlet manifold 142 and a purge valve manifold 146. When the tray insert 150 is disposed within the interior of the base member 132, an opening in the sidewall of the inlet manifold 144 opens into an opening 155a at a first end of a flow path (not shown) extending through the insert tray 150. Likewise, when the insert tray 150 is disposed within the base member 132, an opening in the outlet manifold 142 opens to a second opening 155c at a second end the flow path extending through the insert tray. Likewise, an opening in a sidewall of the purge manifold 146 opens to a third opening 155b located at a

mid-portion of the flow path through the insert tray 150. When the lid 40 is attached to the container body (See e.g., FIG. 2) the inlet manifold 144 is disposed beneath the inlet valve 44 and the outlet manifold 142 is disposed beneath the outlet valve 42.

[0034] In the illustrated embodiment, the outside surfaces of tray insert 150 are correspondingly shaped to the interior surface of the base member as defined by the sidewalls and bottom surface. When inserted, an upper edge of the insert tray is generally even with the upper edges of the base member 132. The tray insert 150 includes a plurality of individual pockets 152 that are each configured to hold a supply of solid source precursor. The individual pockets are formed into the tray insert each extending from an open upper end proximate to an upper edge of the tray insert to a closed bottom end proximate to a bottom surface of the tray insert. In an embodiment, all of the pockets 152 have identical dimensions (e.g., length, width and depth) allowing the pockets to receive an identical pre-prepared supply (e.g., compressed block) of solid precursor. However, this is not a strict requirement.

[0035] FIGS. 5A-5C illustrate a perspective view of the insert tray 150, a cross-sectional view of the insert tray taken along section line A-A' of FIG. 5A and a cross-sectional view of the insert tray taken along section line B-B' of FIG. 5A, respectively. In the illustrated embodiment, the tray insert 150 includes four outer sidewalls 154a-d (hereafter 154 unless specifically referenced) that define a generally rectangular outer periphery of the tray insert 150. Each of the outer sidewalls extends from a solid bottom surface 156 to an upper edge. The upper edge of the tray insert 150 is configured to engage the bottom surface of the lid when the source vessel is assembled. To provide the plurality of pockets 152, the illustrated tray insert includes a first plurality of dividing walls 162a-f (hereafter 162 unless specifically referenced) that extend between the front wall 154a and rear wall 154c of the tray insert 150. The tray insert also includes a second plurality of dividing walls 164a-e (hereafter 164 unless specifically referenced)

that extend between the of the sidewalls 154b and 154d of the tray insert 150. In the illustrated embodiment, the first and second plurality of dividing walls 162 and 164 are evenly spaced between their respective pair of outer sidewalls as well as generally parallel to their respective outer sidewalls. That is, the first plurality of dividing walls 162 may be substantially transverse to the second plurality of dividing walls 164. In this configuration, the two sets of dividing walls 162, 164 define a matrix of equally sized pockets 152. Though discussed as being formed by the intersection of the transverse dividing walls, it will be appreciated that the pockets may be otherwise defined. By way of example, the individual pockets may each be a cylindrical bore recessed into the tray insert (i.e., if utilizing a two-piece container body) or into the container body (i.e., is utilizing a one-piece container body). However, use of the transverse dividing walls that define a matrix of equally sized pockets results in a container body that is more symmetrical. Such symmetry may provide a more uniform thermal performance when the source vessel is heated.

[0036] In the illustrated embodiment, each of the pockets 152 have generally identical cross-dimensions. That is each pocket 152 may have an identical length 'L' as measured between two opposing sidewalls and an identical width 'W' as measured between another pair of opposing sidewalls. See FIG. 5B. Further, each pocket may have an identical depth 'D' as measured from the closed bottom surface 156 and an open top end 158 of the pocket. As illustrated, the use of the commonly sized pockets allows for filling the pockets with a pre-formed amount of a solid precursor. That is, rather than filling the bottom of a deep narrow channel (e.g., serpentine flow path) with a powder and compacting the powder in a lower portion of the channel, pre-formed compressed blocks 172 of a precursor material may be inserted into each of the pockets 152. For instance, a precursor powder may be compressed into a block 172 that is sized to fit within the interior of the pockets 152. Use of the compressed

blocks 172 provides a higher density of precursor within the source vessel. By way of example, packing a precursor powder of hafnium tetrachloride (HfCl_4) in the deep narrow channels of the flow path 38 illustrated in FIGS. 3A and 3B typically resulted in a maximum precursor density of about 2 grams per cubic centimeter (g/cc). Utilization of the compressed blocks often provides a precursor density of 3 g/cc or more. Assuming the internal volume of the container body 30 of FIG. 3A and the container body 130 of FIG. 4 are equal, the use of the pre-compressed precursor blocks increases the capacity of the source vessel by 50%. This increase in the capacity of the source vessel results in longer intervals between replacement and/or refilling the source vessel. Likewise, this reduces down time in the manufacturing process.

[0037] Notably, a top edge or open end 158 of each of the pockets 152 is typically disposed below the upper edge of the insert tray 150 or container 30. More specifically, a space must be present above each of the pockets permit a carrier gas to flow over the top surface of the pocket between the inlet and the outlet of the container body. As best illustrated in FIG. 5A, the dividing walls 162, 164 and the outer sidewalls 154 are collectively utilized to define a flow path 170 through the insert tray 150. This flow path extends over a top surface (e.g., open end 158) of each of the pockets 152 allowing a carrier gas to carry vaporized precursor from each pocket when the source vessel is in use. The outer sidewalls 154 typically have a full height such that they contact a bottom surface of the source vessel lid when assembled. The dividing walls 162 are variously arranged to have a height that is equal to the upper edge of the outer sidewalls or to have a lower height (e.g., even with an upper edge of the pockets 152) for directing fluid flow through the vessel. In the illustrated embodiment, each pocket 152 is defined by four sidewalls. Two of the sidewalls are of a full height such that they contact the lid with the source vessel upon assembly while two other sidewalls have a lower height to define a flow path across an

upper surface of the pocket 152. FIG. 5A illustrates one non-limiting embodiment of a flow path 170 that extends over the top surface of each pocket 152 between an inlet and outlet.

[0038] As illustrated in FIGS. 5A-5C, the insert tray 150 can be an integrally formed element. For instance, the insert tray may be milled from a single block of material or cast in a single piece. Other fabrication techniques are possible.

[0039] FIG. 6 illustrates an alternate embodiment of an insert tray 150. In this embodiment, the insert tray is formed from three layers of wall fixtures 160a, 160b and 160c. These layers of wall fixtures 160a-c may be stacked to produce the insert tray. In an embodiment, the wall fixtures may each define a matrix of pockets having upper and lower open ends. In such an embodiment, the fixtures may be stacked on a flat plate that forms the bottom of the insert tray. In another embodiment, the lowest wall fixture 160c may include a bottom surface. Though illustrated as having three layers, it will be appreciated that a multi-layer insert tray may have more or fewer layers. Constructing the insert tray from separate layers may be particularly beneficial with the insert tray is made from ceramic materials such as, without limitation, aluminum nitride and silicon carbide. It will be further appreciated that the insert tray and/or container body may be made from a variety of materials including ceramics and stainless steels.

[0040] FIG. 7 illustrates another embodiment of a container body 230. In this embodiment, the container body has a one-piece construction. That is, the pockets 152 are integrally formed within the container body 30. In such an arrangement, the pockets 152 may again have common dimensions to facilitate the loading the pockets with common sized blocks of compressed precursor. As illustrated a flow path 170 again passed over an open top surface of each of the pockets while passing between an inlet manifold 144 and an outlet manifold 142.

As set forth above, these manifolds are in fluid communication with the inlet and outlet valves when the source vessel is assembled.

[0041] Although exemplary embodiments of the present disclosure are set forth herein, it should be appreciated that the disclosure is not so limited. Various modifications, variations, and enhancements of the system and method set forth herein may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the present disclosure. The subject matter of the present disclosure includes all novel and nonobvious combinations and subcombinations of the various systems, components, and configurations, and other features, functions, acts, and/or properties disclosed herein, as well as any and all equivalents thereof.

CLAIMS:

We claim:

1. A reactant source vessel comprising:

a container body having an outer sidewall and a bottom surface that define an internal area of the container body;

a plurality of pockets disposed within the internal area of the container body, each of the plurality of pockets configured to contain a volume of a solid source precursor;

a lid configured to engage the container body, the lid enclosing the internal area of the container body when connected to the container body;

a fluid flow path within the internal area of the container body, the fluid flow path being formed above the plurality of pockets and below a bottom surface of the lid, the fluid flow path extending between an inlet end and an outlet end along a path the passes over at least a portion of each of the plurality of pockets.
2. The vessel of claim 1, further comprising:

an inlet valve and an outlet valve attached to a top surface of the lid, wherein each valve connects to a fluid passage through the lid.
3. The vessel of claim 2, wherein the inlet valve is in fluid communication with the inlet end of the fluid flow path and the outlet valve is in fluid communication with the outlet end of the fluid flow path, when the lid is connected to the container body.
4. The vessel of claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of pockets comprises:

a closed bottom end;

an open upper end; and

at least one sidewall surface extending between the closed bottom end and the open upper end, wherein the closed bottom end, the open upper end and the at least one sidewall surface define an interior volume of the pocket.

5. The vessel of claim 4, wherein each pocket of the plurality of pockets have common dimensions.

6. The vessel of claim 4, wherein each pocket of the plurality of pockets comprises a rectangular prism.

7. The vessel of claim 1, further comprising:
an insert configured for disposition within the internal area of the carrier body, wherein the plurality of pockets are formed within the insert.

8. The vessel of claim 1, wherein the insert comprises at least a first layer and a second layer, wherein the first and second layers are stacked within the internal area of the carrier body to collectively define the plurality of pockets.

9. The vessel of claim 1, wherein the first and second layers of the insert are formed from a ceramic material.

10. The vessel of claim 1, wherein the flow path comprises a non-direct flow path between the inlet end and the outlet end.

11. The vessel of claim 1, further comprising:
a first plurality of parallel dividing walls extending between a first set of opposing sidewalls of the container body; and

a second plurality of parallel dividing walls extending between a second set of opposing sidewalls of the container body, wherein the first and second plurality of dividing walls intersect to define a matrix of the plurality of pockets.

12. The vessel of claim 11, wherein at least of the first plurality of dividing walls and the second plurality of dividing walls are equally spaced between the first set of opposing sidewalls and the second set of opposing sidewalls, respectively.

13. The vessel of claim 11, wherein the first and second plurality of dividing walls vary in height to define the fluid flow path between the inlet end and the outlet end.

14. A reactant source vessel comprising:

a container body having outer sidewalls and a bottom surface that define an internal area of the container body;

a first plurality of parallel dividing walls extending between a first set of opposing sidewalls of the container body; and

a second plurality of parallel dividing walls extending between a second set of opposing sidewalls of the container body, wherein the first and second plurality of dividing walls intersect to define a matrix of pockets within the internal area of the container body, each of the matrix of pockets configured to contain a volume of a solid source precursor;

a lid having configured to engage the container body, the lid enclosing the internal area of the container body when connected to the container body;

a fluid flow path defined by a bottom surface of the lid, the outer sidewall of the container and the first and second plurality of dividing walls, wherein the fluid flow path extends between an inlet end and an outlet end and passes over an upper surface of each of the matrix of pockets.

15. The vessel of claim 14, wherein the matrix of pockets each have common dimensions.

16. The vessel of claim 14, wherein the fluid flow path comprises a non-direct flow path between the inlet end and the outlet end.

17. The vessel of claim 14, further comprising:

an inlet valve and an outlet valve attached to a top surface of the lid, wherein each valve connects to a fluid passage through the lid and, when the lid is connected to the container body, the inlet valve is in fluid communication with the inlet end of the fluid flow path and the outlet valve is in fluid communication with the outlet end of the fluid flow path.

18. A method for use with a reactant source vessel comprising:

accessing an interior area of a container body of the reactant source vessel, wherein the interior area includes a plurality of individual pockets;

inserting preformed blocks of compressed solid precursor into each of the plurality of individual pockets;

attaching a lid to the container body to enclose the interior area;

in conjunction with elevating a temperature of the reactant source vessel, directing a carrier gas through a flow path extending through the interior area of the reactant source vessel between a flow path inlet end and a flow path outlet end, wherein the carrier gas removes vaporized precursor from the vessel.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the carrier gas is directed over a top surface of each of the plurality of individual pockets as it passes between the flow path inlet end and the flow path outlet end.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein the carrier gas is directed over an at least partially serpentine path between the flow path inlet end and the flow path outlet end.