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(54) **CONTAINER SUPPORT WITH TOOL**

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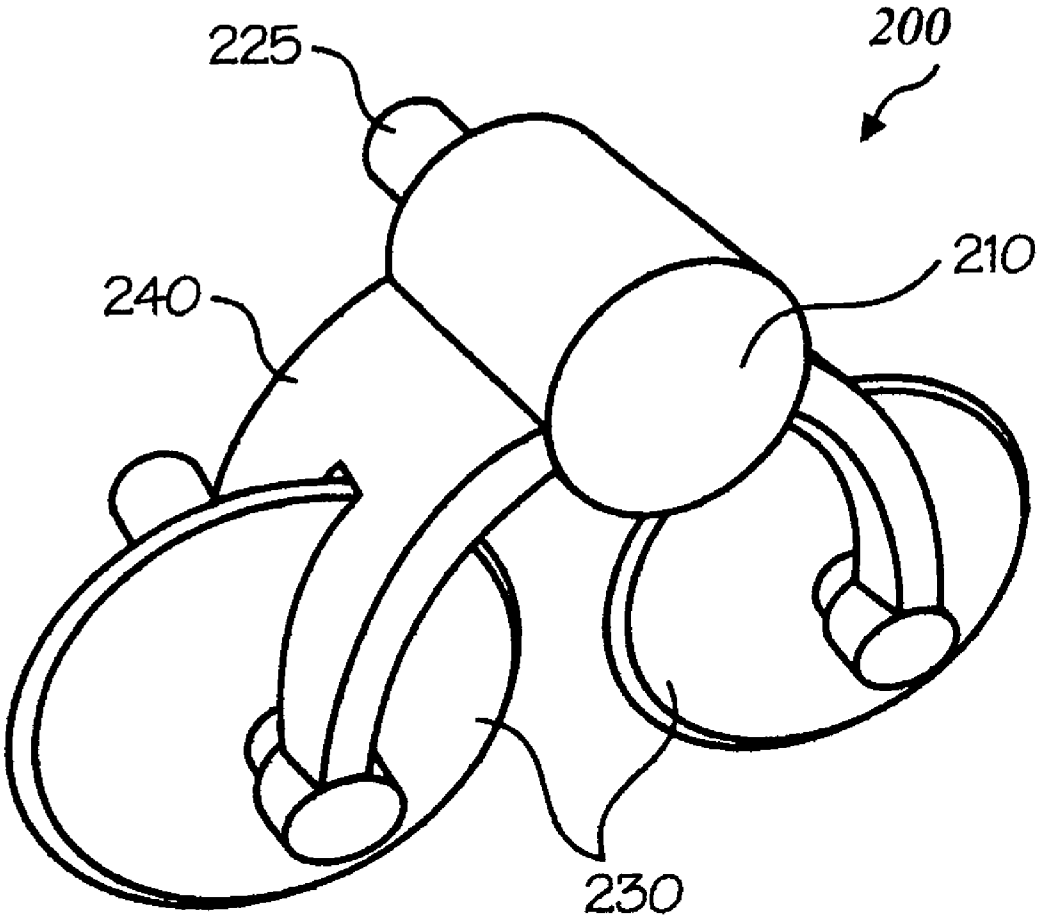
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A container support with tool is disclosed which includes a handle portion and a blade portion rotatably coupled to the handle portion. In one embodiment the container support is configured to cut pizza and has a shape and dimension to be placed at a central location inside of a pizza box containing a pizza to support a lid of the pizza box from collapsing on top of the pizza. Other embodiments for a disposable container support including a tool, unrelated to a pizza cutter are also disclosed.



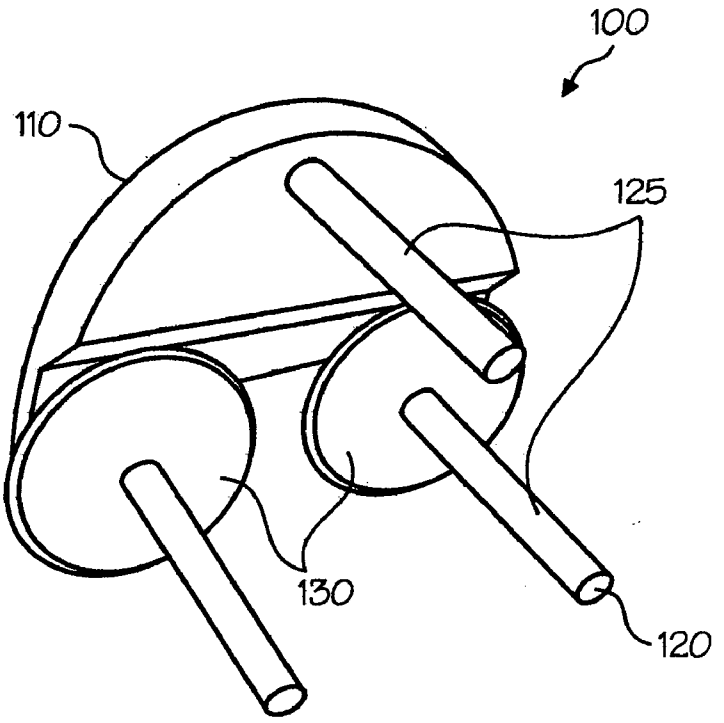


Fig. 1

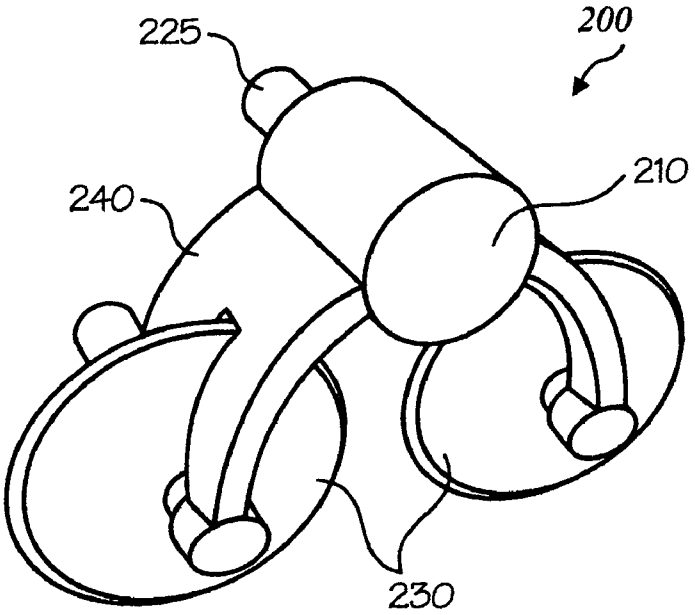


Fig. 2

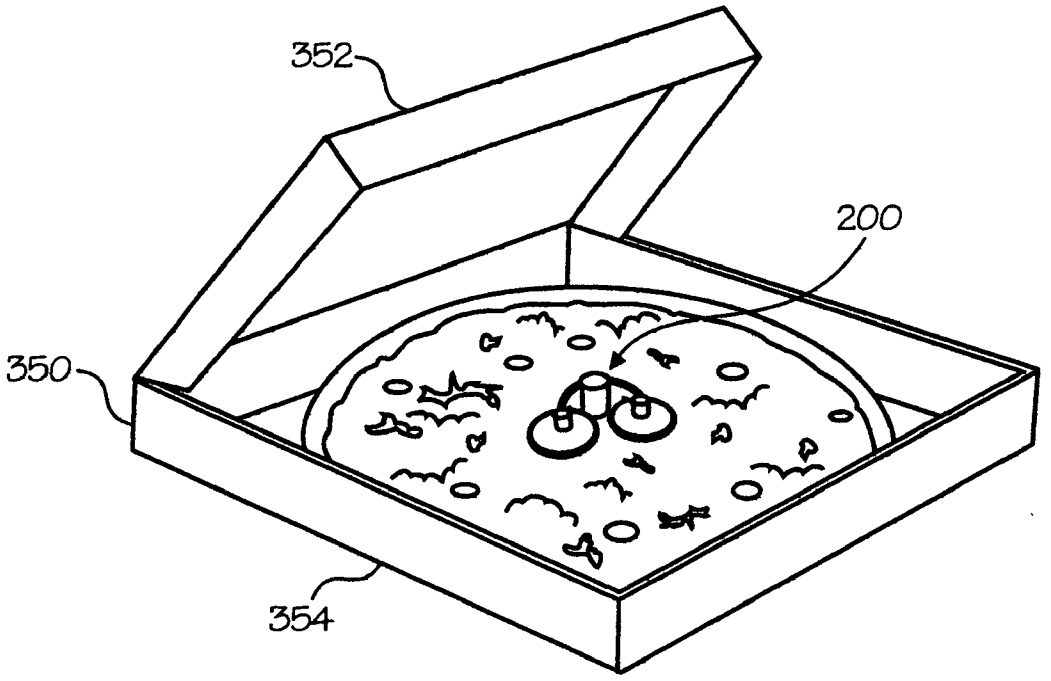


Fig. 3A

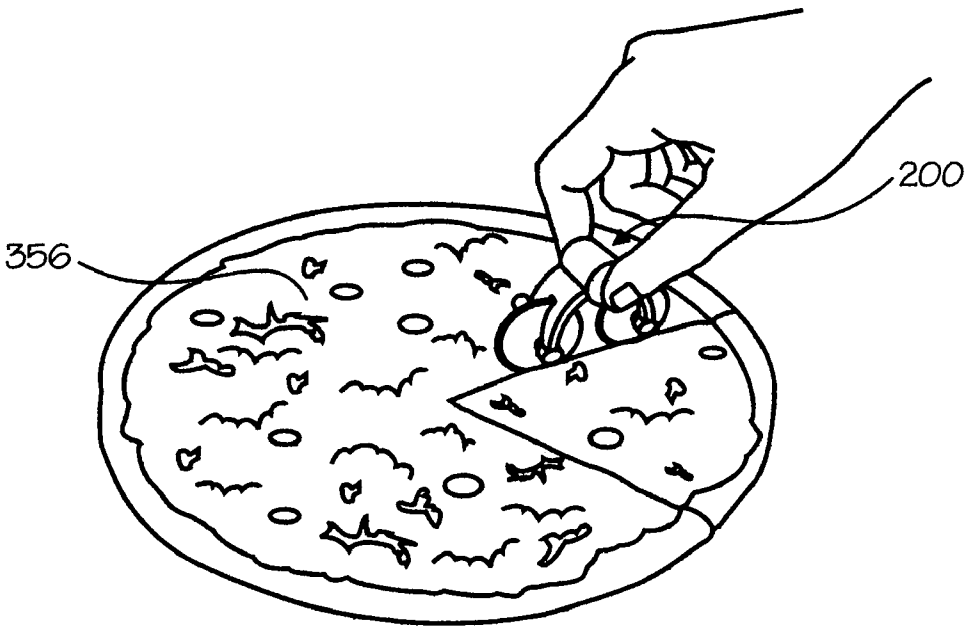


Fig. 3B

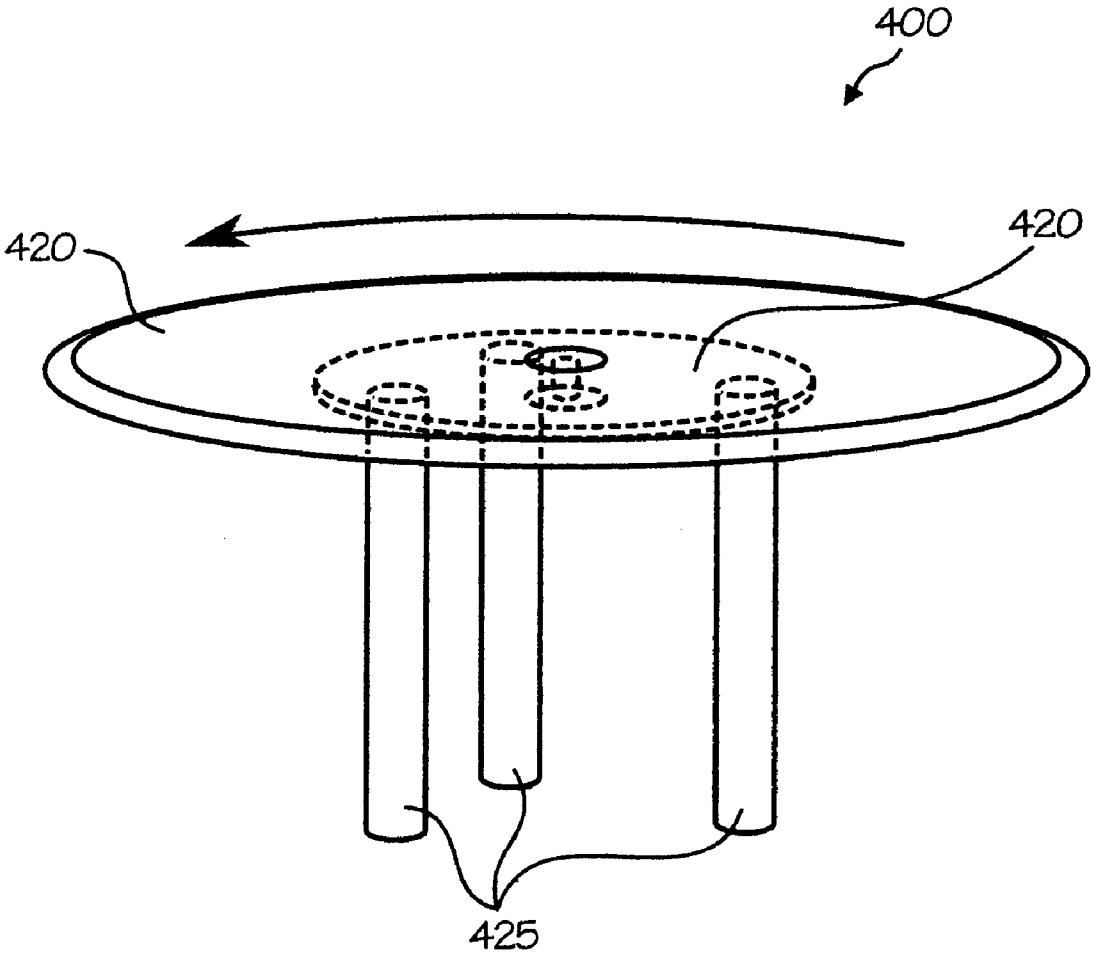


Fig. 4

CONTAINER SUPPORT WITH TOOL

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority under 35 U.S.C.§ 119e to copending application serial number 60/713,937, filed by the same inventor under the same title on Sep. 1, 2005; which is incorporated herein by its reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Technical Field

[0003] The present invention generally relates to a device for preventing boxes from collapsing and an attached tool such as a blade or the like.

[0004] 2. Background Art

[0005] In one example, containers used for carrying food such as pizzas may have a large enough cross section that one or more sides have a tendency to collapse, particularly if steam or condensation is present. Accordingly, various disposable supports for these containers have been used to prevent collapsing of one or more sides.

[0006] However, these disposable supports typically serve only one purpose; that is, to prevent the collapse of one or more sides of a container into which they are placed. U.S. Pat. No. 5,173,070 discloses a box support that serves the additional purpose of a toy. Particularly, this device is a convertible dual use device that serves in one capacity as a support for pizza boxes and in another capacity converts into a child's toy but having no significant utility. It would be desirable however, to have a container support that may also serve some other utilitarian purpose such as a tool that might be used in some capacity related to the container which it supports or the contents thereof.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING

[0007] Aspects, features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following description of the invention in reference to the appended drawing in which like numerals denote like elements and in which:

[0008] FIG. **1** illustrates a container support including an integrated tool according to a first embodiment of the present invention;

[0009] FIG. **2** illustrates a container support including an integrated tool according to another embodiment of the present invention;

[0010] FIGS. **3**A & B, respectively, illustrate an exemplary embodiment of the container support used for supporting a container and used as a tool; and

[0011] FIG. **4** illustrates a container support including a tool according to a third embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0012] According to embodiments of the present invention, referring to FIG. **1**, a container support **100** may be configured to include a first support surface **110** and a second support surface **120** which are arranged to respectively support different sides of a container from collapsing or deforming.

[0013] In one non-limiting implementation, container support **100** may be formed of a temperature resistant molded plastic and shaped for use to support a surface of a box, such as pizza box lid, where there may normally be a tendency to collapse or deform. For example, support **100** may be used to prevent a pizza box lid from sagging downwardly and damaging or otherwise contaminating a pizza or other packaged product inside. In one embodiment, support **100** may include a substantially flat first surface member **110** which is coupled to a second support surface **120**. According to one implementation, second support surface **120** may include a plurality of legs **125** and together with first support surface **110**, may support a pizza box cover or other container from collapsing and damaging the packaged products within the container. However, the embodiments of the present invention are not limited to supporting opposing sides of containers and may be configured to prevent adjacent sides from collapse or container corners from being deformed.

[0014] Additionally, container support **100** may include one or more tools such as one or more cutting blades **130**. Blade(s) **130** may be fixedly or rotatably attached to one or more legs **125** in a manner that blade(s) **130** may serve as a tool cutting surface. For example, when removed from a pizza box or other container, the spinning cutting blade(s) **130** of support **100** can be used to cut slices or portions of the pizza, the box or other item present in the container. Further, in certain embodiments, first supporting surface **110** may be configured to serve as a handle or holding surface for utilizing the tool **130**. The included tool **130** may be a blade or blades (rotating, single edge razor or serrated knife), screwdriver, marking device (e.g. pen), radio frequency tag, wrench, eating utensil, dispenser, calculator or other tool which may preferably be suitable to use on the container or with the container contents after opening the container.

[0015] In one embodiment, the support **100** may comprise a single unit that has a dual use (e.g., as a container support and as a tool) without any manipulation. In other embodiments, support **100** may have a detachable tool or require some manipulation before tool use. Container support **100**, including blade(s) **130**, may be made of a low cost plastic material suitable for disposal after a single use although the embodiments are not limited in this respect. Alternatively, or in addition, support **100** and/or blade(s) **130** could be constructed of metal, glass, cardboard, foam, rubber or other material suitable for protecting a container from collapsing or otherwise deformed.

[0016] Turning to FIG. **2**, another embodiment of the present invention discloses a container support **200** which may be similar in nature to that shown in FIG. **1**. For example, support **200** may include a first supporting surface **210** and three legs **225** which together may server to prevent a container from deforming when placed between surfaces of the container. In this embodiment, a tool **230**, such as the cutting blade(s) of the type previously discussed, may be disposed around an axis of one or more legs **225** and a body of support **200** is configured to retain the tool **230** in its place when in use.

[0017] Referring to FIGS. **3**A & **3**B, container support **200** is shown in dual use. For example, in FIG. **3**A, container

support **200** is shown in a first use; i.e., providing support between opposing sides **352**, **354** of pizza box **350**. In FIG. **3**B, container support **200** is shown in a second use; i.e., cutting slices of pizza **356**.

[**0018**] Turning to FIG. **4**, yet another embodiment of the present invention includes a container support **400** having a first support surface **410** and a support structure **420**. In this embodiment, the first supporting surface **410** is configured in a manner such that it may serve as both a surface for supporting a container as well as a cutting tool. For example, surface **410** may be a disc-shaped structure that is rotatably attached, e.g., via a rivet or other connector, to support structure **420**. Surface **410** may include a sharpened or serrated periphery. When surface **420** is in a horizontal position it may serve as a container supporting surface and when in a vertical position it may server as a cutting device, via its rotating connection to support structure **420**. Support structure may include a plurality of legs **425** which may serve as a bottom surface to support a container as well as a holding area to utilize container support **400** as a cutting tool.

[**0019**] It should be recognized that the specific arrangements and configurations for various container supports with tool could vary greatly and the embodiments of the present invention are not limited to any particular configuration or arrangement shown in the example embodiments.

[**0020**] Unless contrary to physical possibility, the inventor envisions the components of respective embodiments may be combined in any manner.

[**0021**] Although there have been described preferred embodiments of this novel invention, many variations and modifications are possible and the embodiments described herein are not limited by the specific disclosure above, but rather should be limited only by the scope of the appended claims.

What I claim is:

1. A container support comprising:

a support body having at a first surface and a second surface, said first and second surfaces configured to support at least two inner surfaces of a product container from deforming, wherein the container support further includes a tool configured to be used in a capacity related to the product container or contents thereof in addition to serving as a support for the at least two inner surfaces.

2. The container support of claim 1 wherein the support body further includes a tool grasping surface to enable a user of the container support to utilize the tool.

3. The container support of claim 1 wherein the support body comprises a top surface and three or more legs extending substantially perpendicular to the top surface and wherein the tool comprises one or more cutting discs disposed around an axis of at least one of the three or more legs.

4. The container support of claim 1 wherein the support body is formed from an injection molded plastic.

5. The container support of claim 1 wherein the support body comprises a circular disc forming the first surface and a support structure rotatably connected to the circular disk, the support structure including three or more legs extending substantially perpendicular from the circular disk.

6. The container support of claim 1 wherein the product container comprises a pizza box and wherein the tool is a pizza cutter.

7. A disposable pizza cutter comprising a handle portion and a blade portion rotatably coupled to the handle portion; wherein the disposable pizza cutter is configured in shape and dimension to be placed at a central location inside of a pizza box containing a pizza to support a lid of the pizza box from collapsing on top of the pizza.

8. The disposable pizza cutter of claim 7 wherein the handle portion is shaped and dimensioned to support the lid of the pizza box.

9. The disposable pizza cutter of claim 7 wherein the handle portion is configured to support a bottom side of the pizza box and wherein the blade portion is configured to support the lid of the pizza box.

10. The disposable pizza cutter of claim 7 wherein both the handle portion and the blade portion are made from a molded plastic material.

11. An article of manufacture comprising:

a plastic support configured to support two inner surfaces of a product container from deforming; and

one or more cutting tools coupled to the plastic support and configured to cut the product container or contents thereof.

12. The article of claim 11 wherein the plastic support is further configured as a handle to utilize the one or more cutting tools to cut the product container or contents thereof.

13. The article of claim 11 wherein the one or more cutting tools comprise a rotating disc having sharp edges.

14. The article of claim 11 wherein the plastic support comprises a top surface to support a lid of the product container and three or more legs to support a side of the product container opposing the lid.

15. The article of claim 14 wherein the one or more cutting tools comprise a circular blade rotatably coupled to one of the three of more legs.

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