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(54) **CONTAINER WITH HINGED COVER**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

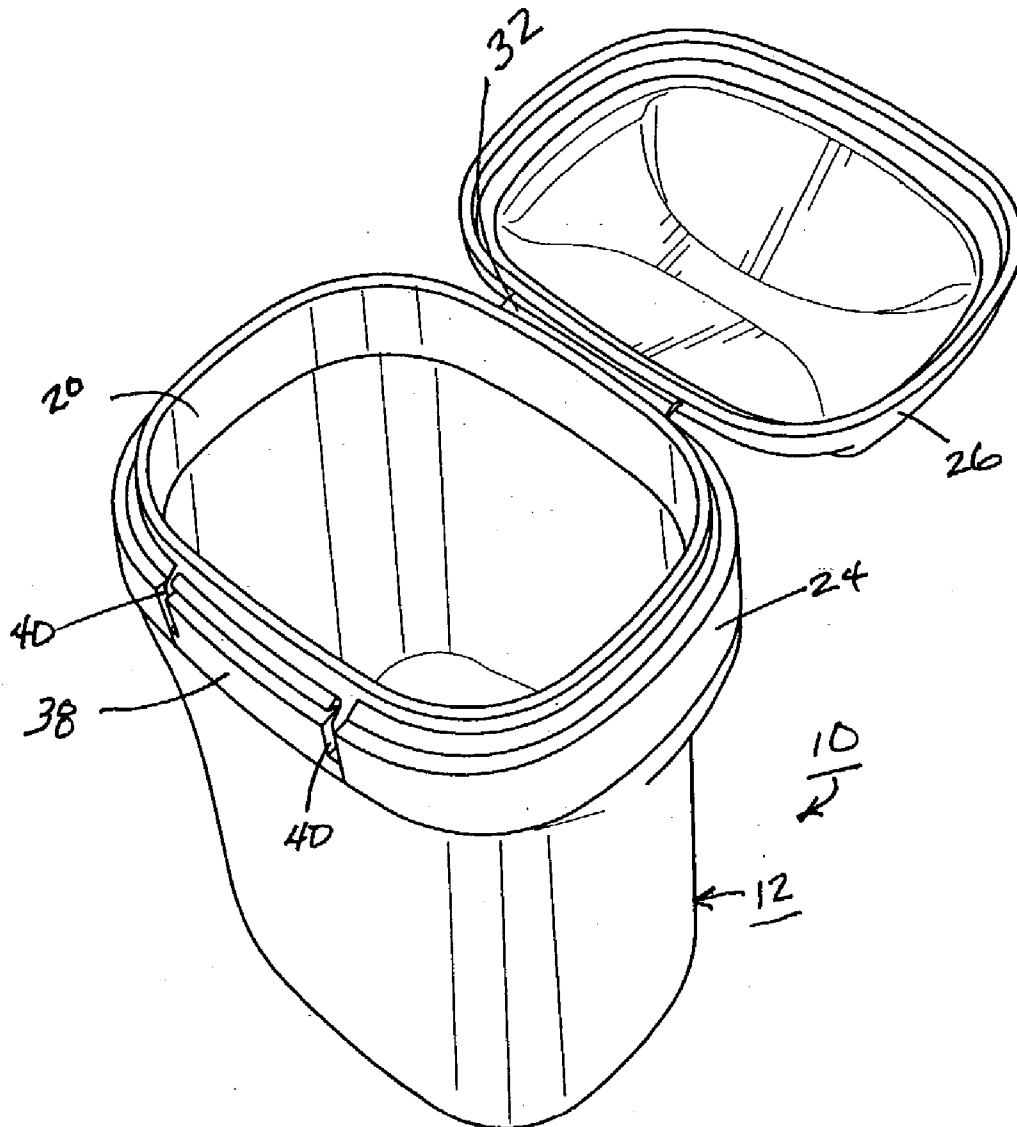
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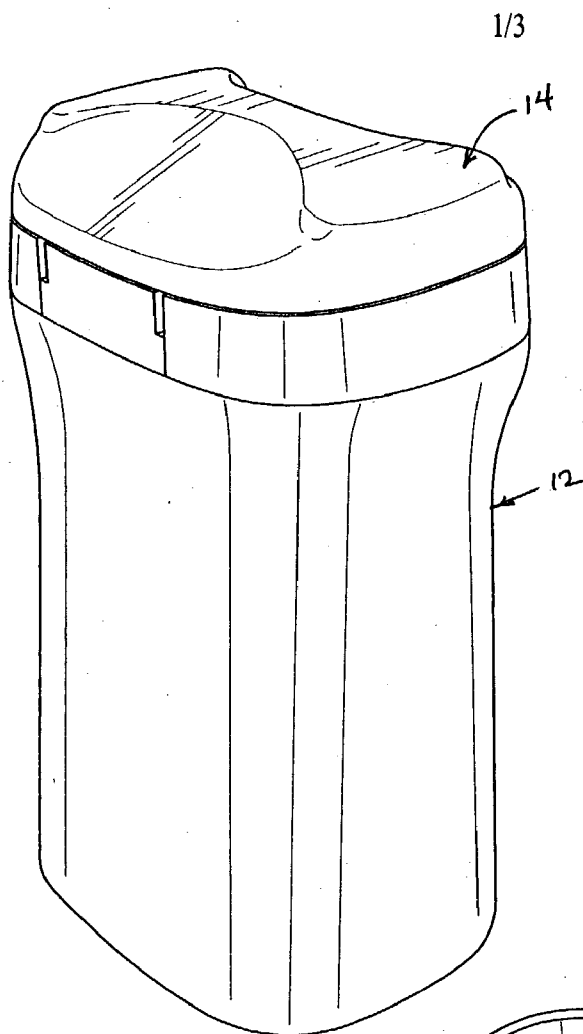
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A container has a container base and a container enclosure. The container enclosure includes a base ring, a hinged cover and a latch mechanism. The latch mechanism includes a stationary catch portion and a deflectable latch portion. The deflectable latch portion is sufficiently deflectable to allow the finger of a user to deflect the deflectable latch portion away from the stationary catch portion so that the hinged cover can be moved from a closed position to an open position.

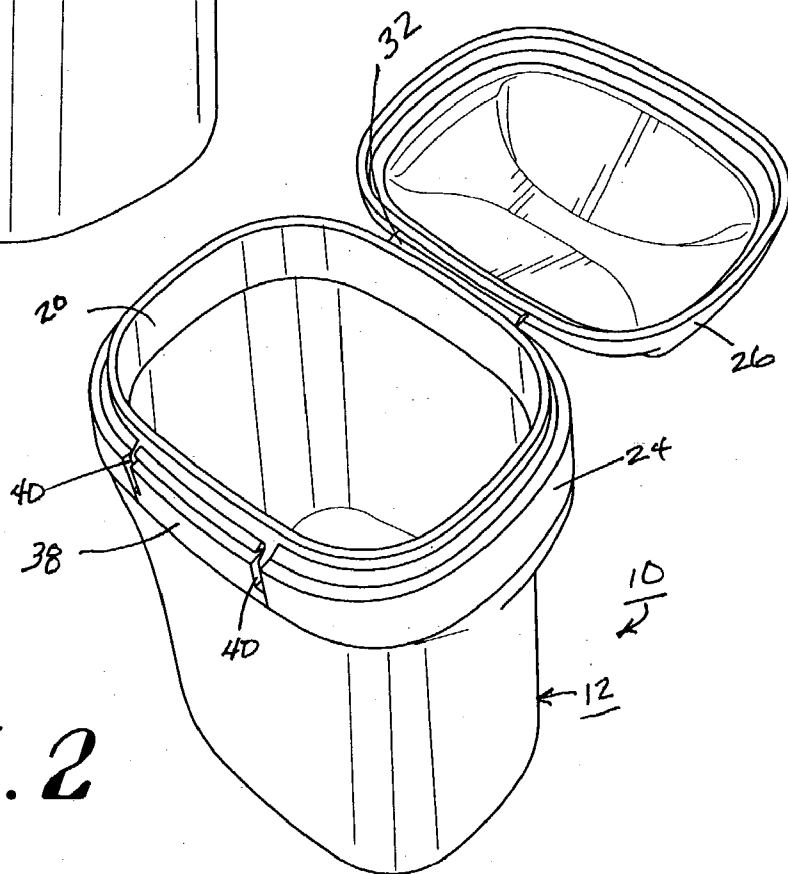
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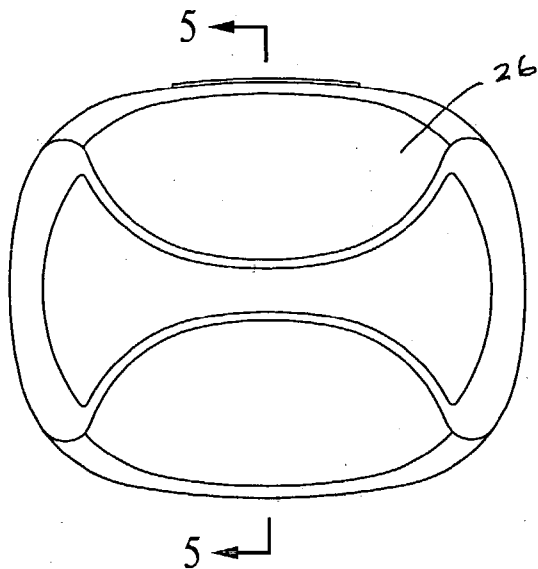




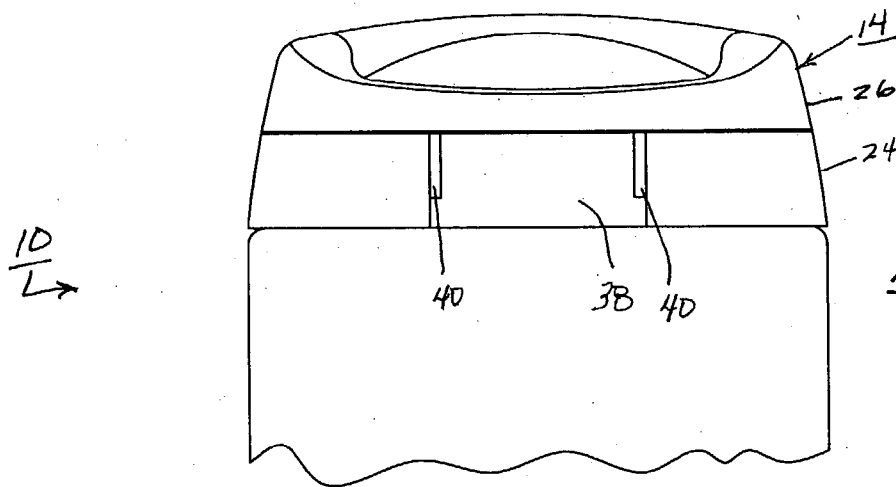
**FIG. 1**



**FIG. 2**



*FIG. 3*



*FIG. 4*

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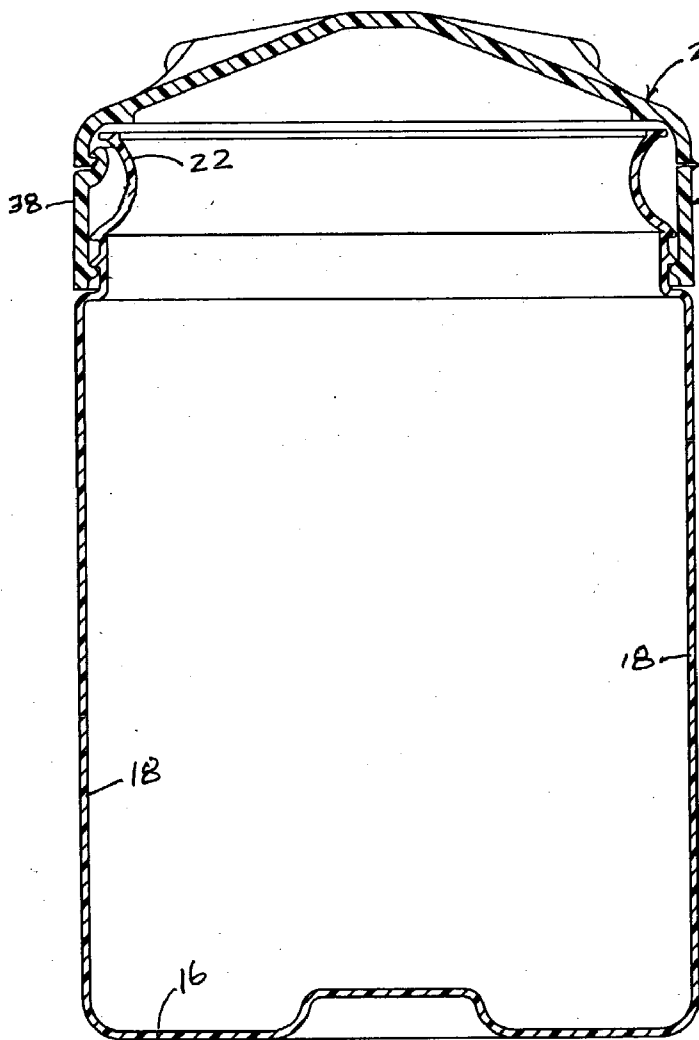


FIG. 5

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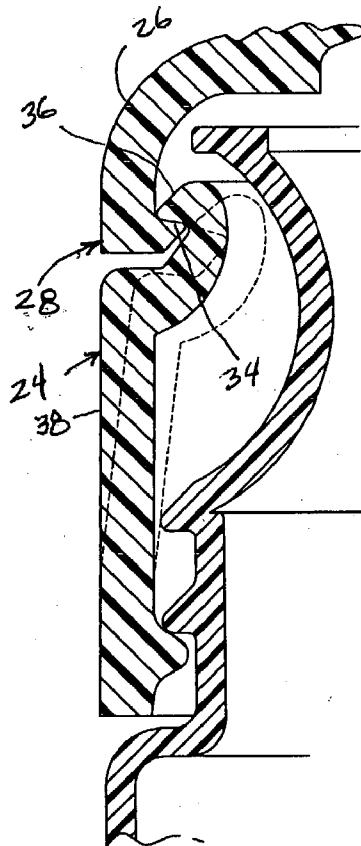


FIG. 6

## CONTAINER WITH HINGED COVER

### FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates generally to small containers, such as containers for retaining instant coffee and, more specifically, to such containers having a separate cover.

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Small containers for retaining objects and materials, such as food stuffs, have been known for centuries.

[0003] In recent years, such small containers made from a plastic material have become popular. Typically, such containers have a cover which is secured in place by a threaded connection. Unfortunately, such covers are only useable with containers having a round access opening.

[0004] Accordingly, there is a need for a container having a secure cover mechanism which does not require a threaded connection.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The invention satisfies this need. The invention is a container comprising a container base and a container encloser. The container encloser includes (a) a base ring attached around the access opening of the container base, (b) a hinged cover attached to the base ring by a hinge such that the hinged cover can alternatively be moved between a closed position wherein the access opening is covered by the hinged cover and an open position wherein the access opening is not covered by the hinged cover, and (c) a latch mechanism having a stationary catch portion and a deflectable latch portion, one of the two portions being disposed on the base ring and the other of the two portions being disposed on the hinged cover such that, when the hinged cover is in the closed position, the deflectable latch portion is retained by the catch portion and the hinged cover is thereby held firmly by the base ring in the closed position, the deflectable latch portion being sufficiently deflectable to allow the finger of a user to deflect the deflectable latch portion away from the stationary catch portion so that the hinged cover can be moved from the closed position to the open position.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] These and other features, aspects and advantages of the present invention will become better understood with reference to the following description, appended claims and accompanying drawings where:

[0007] FIG. 1 is a perspective drawing of a container having features of the invention;

[0008] FIG. 2 is a second perspective drawing of the container illustrated in FIG. 1;

[0009] FIG. 3 is a top view of the container illustrated in FIG. 1;

[0010] FIG. 4 is a front view detail of the container illustrated in FIG. 1;

[0011] FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional side view of the container illustrated in FIG. 1, taken along line 5-5 in FIG. 3; and

[0012] FIG. 6 is a cross-sectional detail view of the container illustrated in FIG. 1.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0013] The following discussion describes in detail one embodiment of the invention and several variations of that embodiment. This discussion should not be construed, however, as limiting the invention to those particular embodiments. Practitioners skilled in the art will recognize numerous other embodiments as well.

[0014] The invention is a container 10 comprising a container base 12 and a unique container encloser 14.

[0015] The container base 12 is typically made from a plastic material, although other materials can be used as well. In one embodiment, the container base 12 is made from a polypropylene/UVOH/polypropylene layered plastic material.

[0016] The container base 12 has a bottom wall 16, one or more side walls 18 and an access opening 20. Typically, the access opening 20 is disposed at the uppermost portions 22 of the side walls 18. In the embodiment illustrated in the drawings, the container base 12 has a generally rectangular cross-section and the access opening 20 is generally rectangular in shape.

[0017] The unique container encloser 14 comprises a base ring 24, a hinged cover 26 and a latch mechanism 28.

[0018] In a typical embodiment, the container encloser 14 is made from a plastic material, such as from a polypropylene plastic. Other suitable materials can also be used.

[0019] The base ring 24 is attached around the access opening 20 of the container base 12. In the embodiment illustrated in the drawings, the container base 12 is made from a soft plastic and the base ring 24 can be snap-fitted around the access opening 20 and thereafter be retained around the access opening 22.

[0020] The hinged cover 26 is attached to the base ring 24 by a hinge 32 such that the hinged cover 26 can alternatively move between a closed position and an open position. In the closed position, the access opening 20 in the container base 12 is covered by the hinged cover 26 and in the open position the access opening 20 is not covered by the hinged cover 26.

[0021] The hinge 32 can be any of the many hinge designs known in the art. In a typical embodiment, such as that which is illustrated in the drawings, the hinge 32 is simply a pliable portion of plastic, sufficiently pliable to allow the rear edge of the hinged cover 26 to rotate with respect to the top portion of the container base 12.

[0022] As illustrated in the drawings, the latch mechanism 28 is typically disposed opposite the hinge 32. The latch mechanism 28 comprises a stationary catch portion 34 and a deflectable latch portion 36. One of the two portions 34 or 36 is disposed on the base ring 24 and the other of the two portions 34 and 36 is disposed on the hinged cover 26. Both portions 34 and 36 are disposed with respect to one another such that, when the hinged cover 26 is in the closed position, the deflectable latch portion 36 is retained by the catch portion 34 and the hinged cover 26 is thereby held firmly by the base ring 24 in the closed position.

[0023] The deflectable latch portion 36 is sufficiently deflectable to allow the finger of a user to deflect the deflectable latch portion 36 away from the stationary catch portion 34 so that the hinged cover 26 can be moved from the closed position to the open position.

[0024] In the embodiment illustrated in the drawings, the deflectable latch portion 36 is disposed on the base ring 24 and the catch portion 34 is disposed on the hinged cover 26.

[0025] In the embodiment illustrated in the drawings, the deflectable latch portion 36 is provided by a deflectable portion 38 of the base ring 24. The deflectable portion 38 of the base ring 24 is disposed between a pair of vertical slits 40 in the base ring 24. The length of the vertical slits 40 is chosen so that the deflectable portion 38 of the base ring 24 is sufficiently deflectable to allow the finger of a user to deflect the deflectable portion 38 of the base ring 24 away from the stationary catch portion 34.

[0026] Preferably, the materials of the latch mechanism 28 and the configuration and dimensions of the deflectable latch portion 36 and the stationary catch portion 34 are chosen such that, when the hinge cover 26 is closed, the engagement of the deflectable latch portion 36 with the stationary catch portion 34 emits an audible "click" to assure the user that the hinge cover 26 is properly closed and locked.

[0027] The invention provides a container with a simple and inexpensive, but effective, closure system. The invention is especially effective with containers having a volume of less than about one gallon and having an access opening with an open area of less than about 25 square inches. Since the closure system does not require a threaded connection, the closure system can be used with containers which do not have a round access opening.

[0028] Having thus described the invention, it should be apparent that numerous structural modifications and adaptations may be resorted to without departing from the scope and fair meaning of the instant invention as set forth hereinabove and as described hereinbelow by the claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A container comprising (i) a container base with a bottom wall, one or more side walls and an access opening, and (ii) a container enclosure, the container enclosure comprising:

- (a) a base ring attached around the access opening of the container base;
- (b) a hinged cover attached to the base ring by a hinge such that the hinged cover can alternatively be moved between a closed position wherein the access opening is covered by the hinged cover and an open position wherein the access opening is not covered by the hinged cover; and
- (c) a latch mechanism having a stationary catch portion and a deflectable latch portion, one of the two portions being disposed on the base ring and the other of the two portions being disposed on the hinged cover such that, when the hinged cover is in the closed position, the

deflectable latch portion is retained by the catch portion and the hinged cover is thereby held firmly by the base ring in the closed position, the deflectable latch portion being sufficiently deflectable to allow the finger of a user to deflect the deflectable latch portion away from the stationary catch portion so that the hinged cover can be moved from the closed position to the open position.

2. The container of claim 1 wherein the hinged cover is made of a plastic.

3. The container of claim 1 wherein the deflectable latch portion is disposed on the base ring.

4. The container of claim 1 wherein the deflectable latch portion is provided by a deflectable portion of the base ring disposed between a pair of opposed vertical slits.

5. The container of claim 1 wherein the materials of the latch mechanism and the configuration and dimensions of the deflectable latch portion and the stationary catch portion are chosen such that, when the hinge cover is moved from the open position to the closed position, the engagement of the deflectable latch portion with the stationary catch portion emits an audible click.

6. A container comprising (i) a container base with a bottom wall, one or more side walls and an access opening, and (ii) a plastic container enclosure, the container enclosure comprising:

- (a) a base ring attached around the access opening of the container base;
- (b) a hinged cover attached to the base ring by a hinge such that the hinged cover can alternatively be moved between a closed position wherein the access opening is covered by the hinged cover and an open position wherein the access opening is not covered by the hinged cover; and
- (c) a latch mechanism having a stationary catch portion and a deflectable latch portion, the deflectable latch portion being disposed on the base ring and the catch portion being disposed on the hinged cover such that when the hinged cover is in the closed position, the deflectable latch portion is retained by the catch portion and the hinged cover is thereby held firmly by the base ring in the closed position, the deflectable latch portion being provided by a deflectable portion of the base ring disposed between a pair of opposed vertical slits, the deflectable latch portion being sufficiently deflectable to allow the finger of a user to deflect the deflectable latch portion away from the stationary catch portion so that the hinged cover can be moved from the closed position to the open position.

7. The container of claim 6 wherein the materials of the latch mechanism and the configuration and dimensions of the deflectable latch portion and the stationary catch portion are chosen such that, when the hinge cover is moved from the open position to the closed position, the engagement of the deflectable latch portion with the stationary catch portion emits an audible click.

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