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Furio

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(54) **CONTAINER CARRIER APPARATUS AND METHODS OF MAKING AND USING THE SAME**

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USPC 229/103, 103.2, 103.3, 107, 101, 229/108–116, 123, 148, 130, 117.14, 229/117.15, 128, 149, 150, 155–158
See application file for complete search history.

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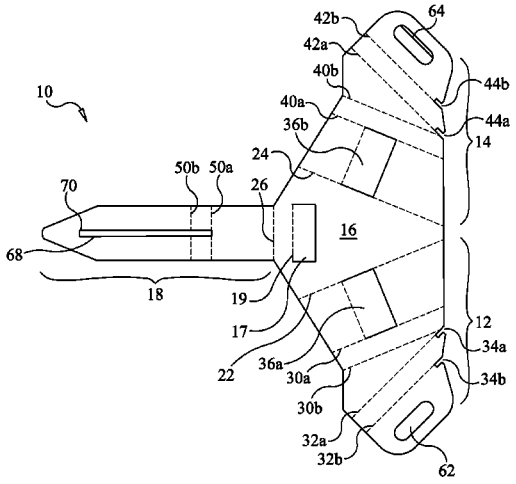
(57) **ABSTRACT**

The present disclosure relates to a carrier apparatus primarily for carrying containers having food products therein; but secondarily for carrying containers having any type of products contained therein. Specifically, the carrier apparatus of the present invention allows a user to transport various amounts and types of containers securely, minimizing disturbance to products, such as food products, contained therein. More specifically, the carrier apparatus of the present invention comprises a first configuration for carrying a first amount of containers and a second configuration for carrying a second amount of containers.

14 Claims, 11 Drawing Sheets



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B65D 85/00	(2006.01)
A45F 5/10	(2006.01)
B65D 71/12	(2006.01)
B65D 71/38	(2006.01)
B65D 67/00	(2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

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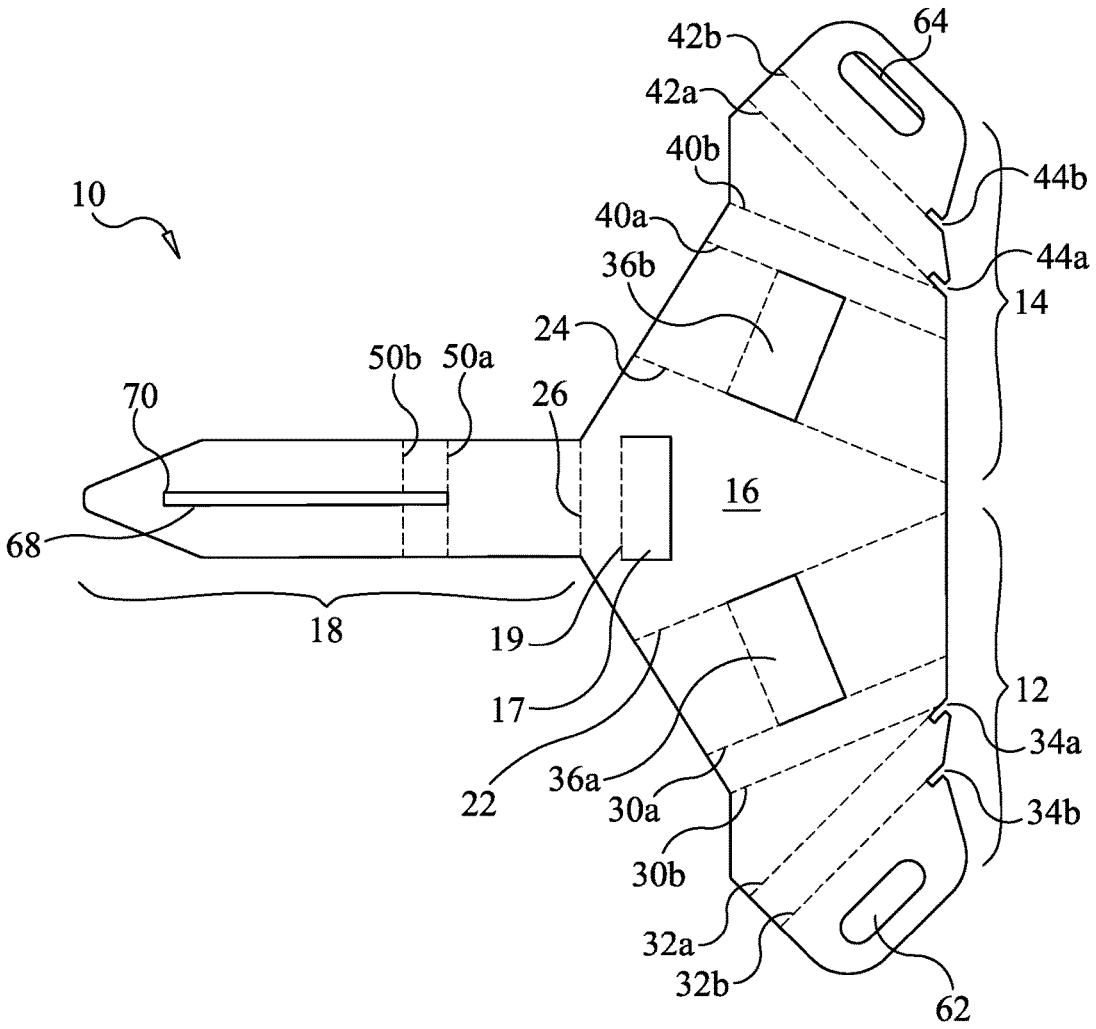
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44b
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24
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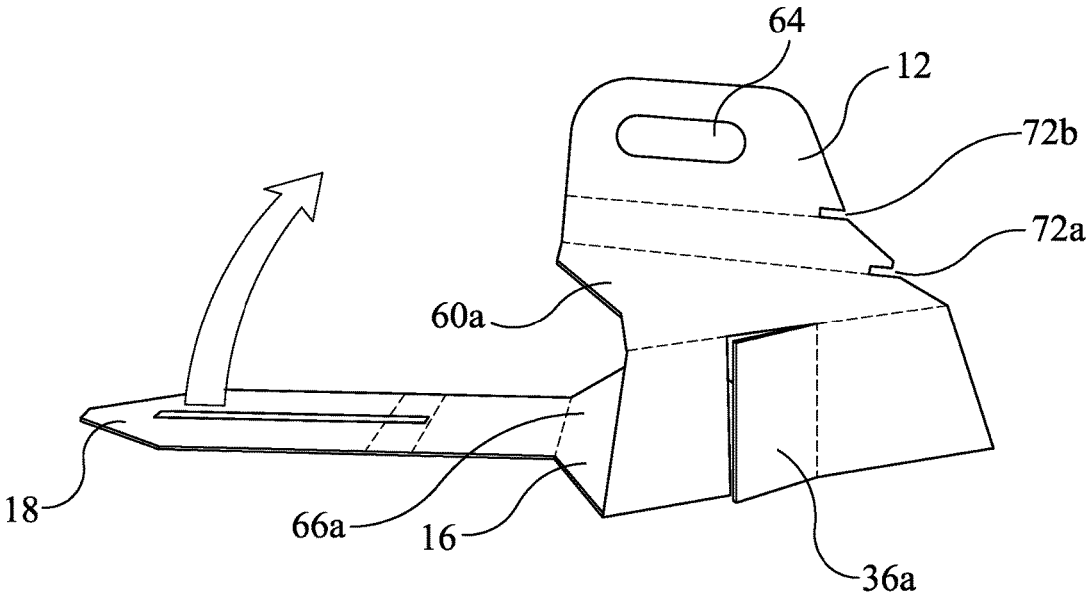
17
12
22
36a
34a
30a
34b
30b
32a
32b
62

FIG. 1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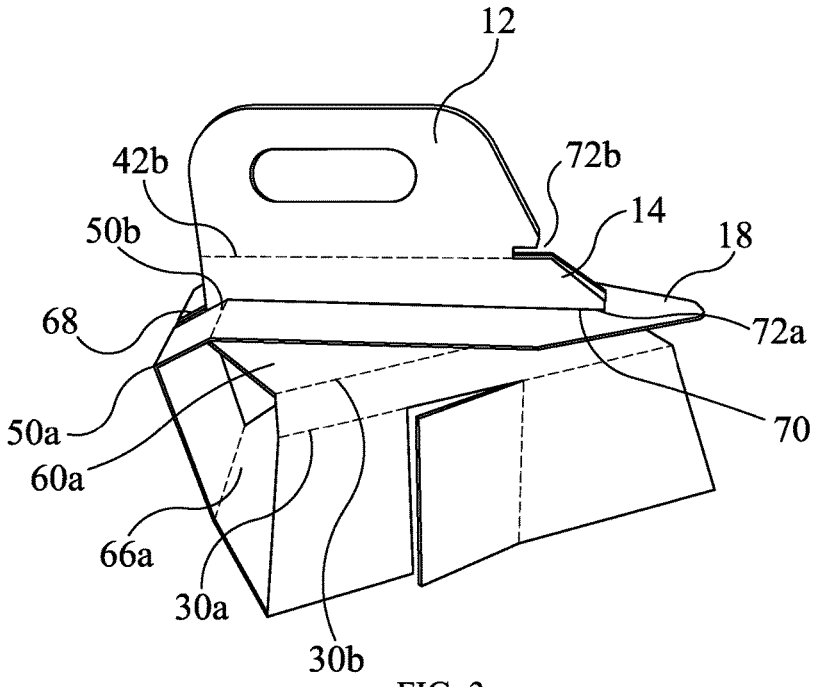
16
36a

FIG. 2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30a
30b

FIG. 3

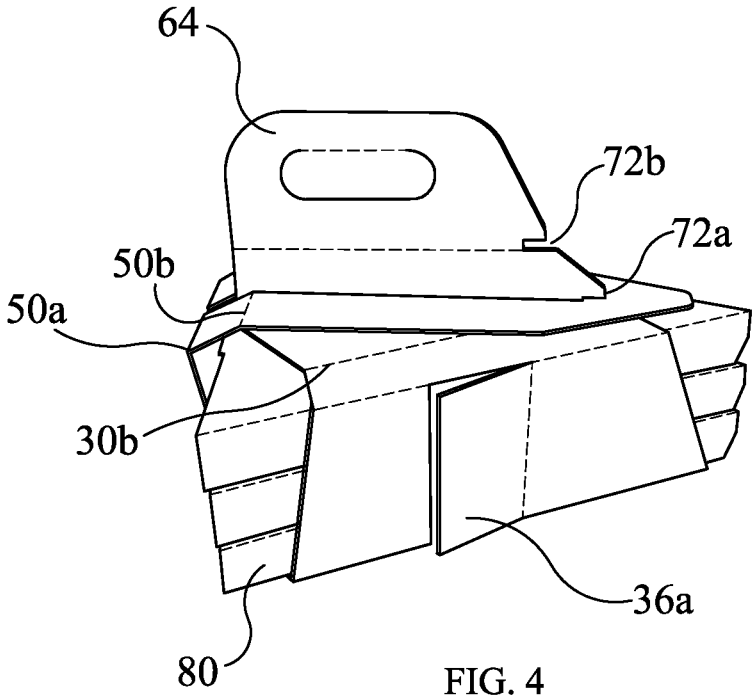


FIG. 4

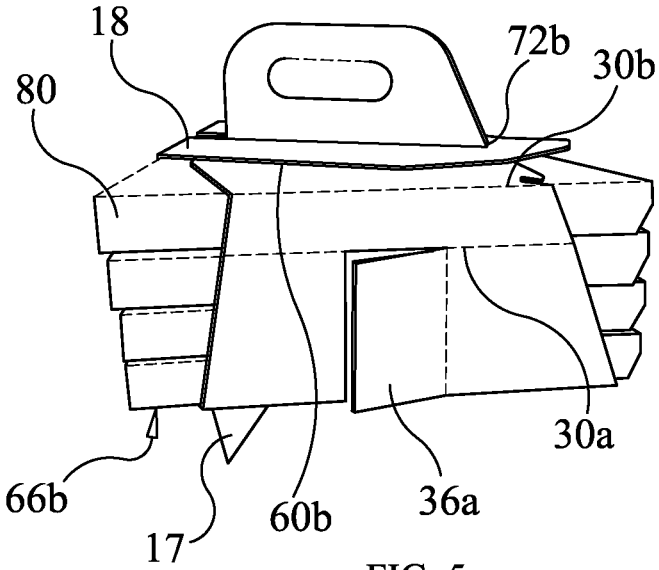


FIG. 5

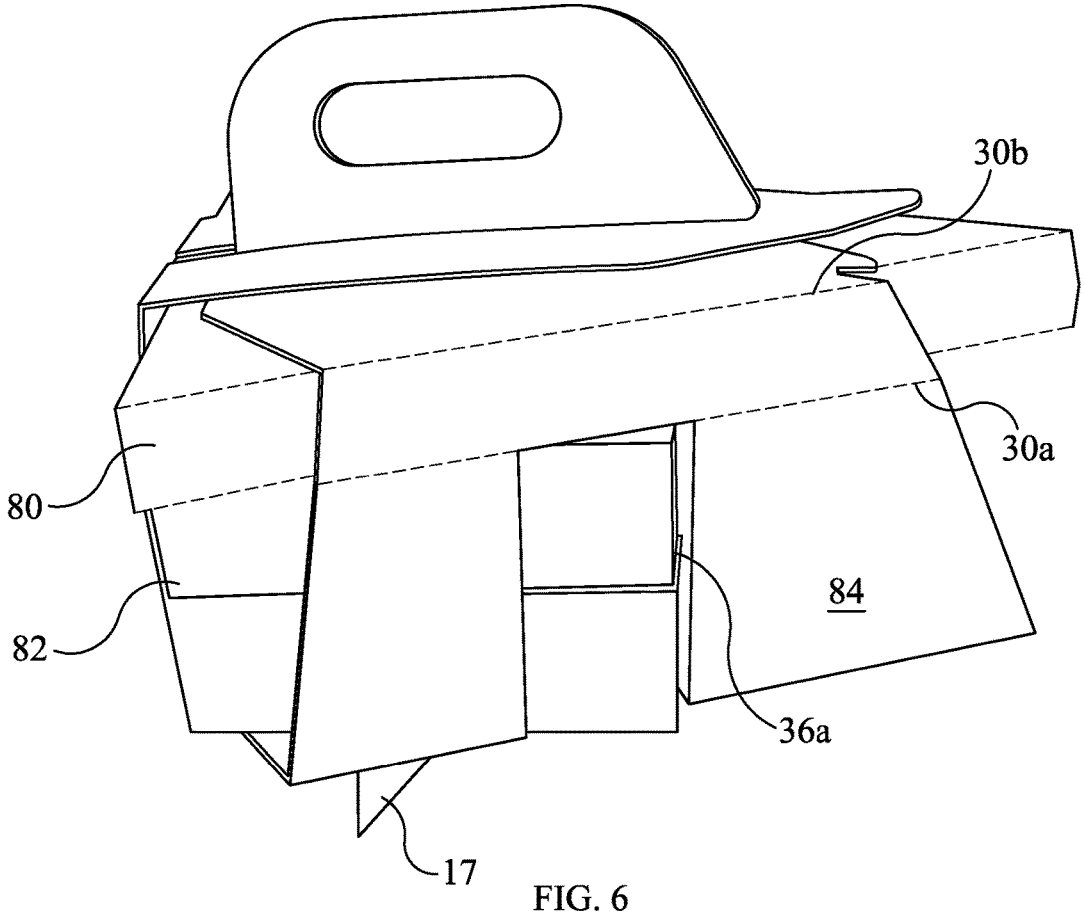
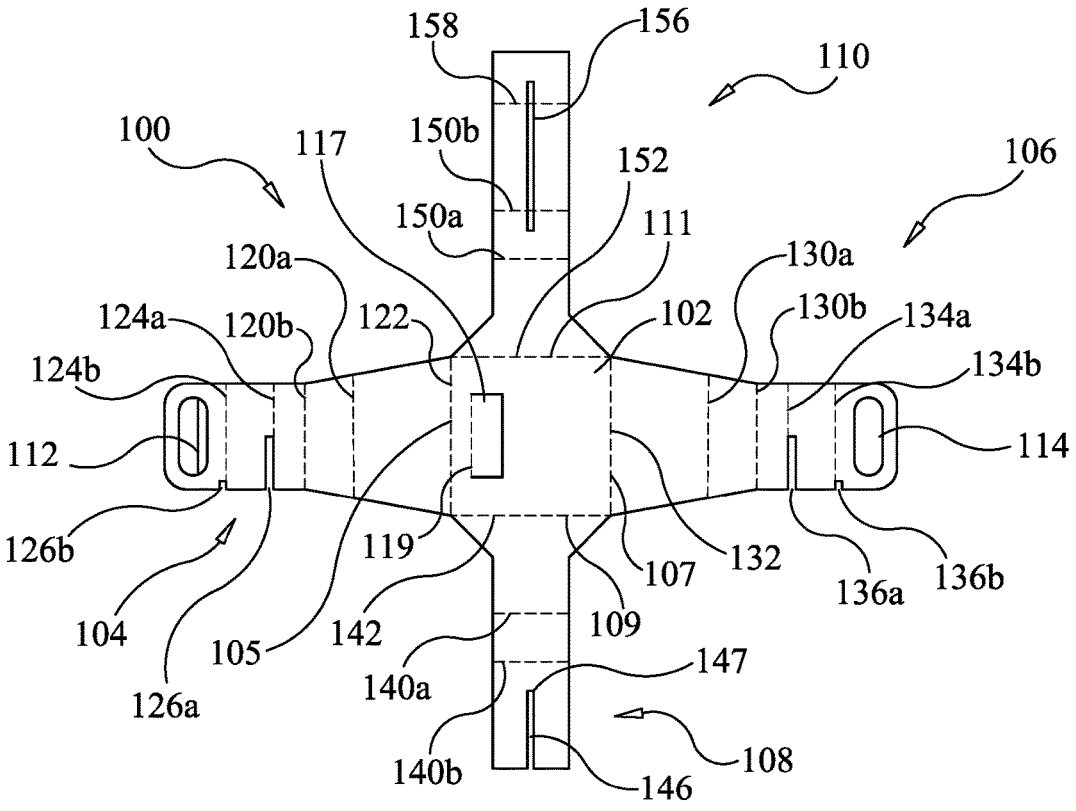


FIG. 6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124b
134b
112
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126a
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140b
146
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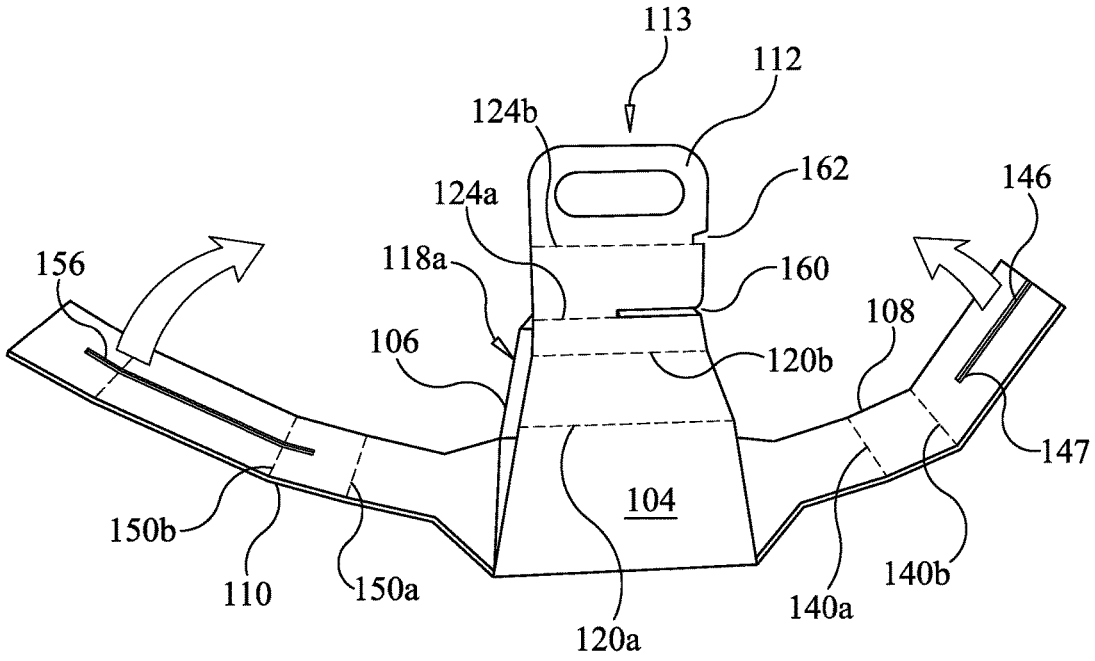
FIG. 7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140a
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FIG. 8

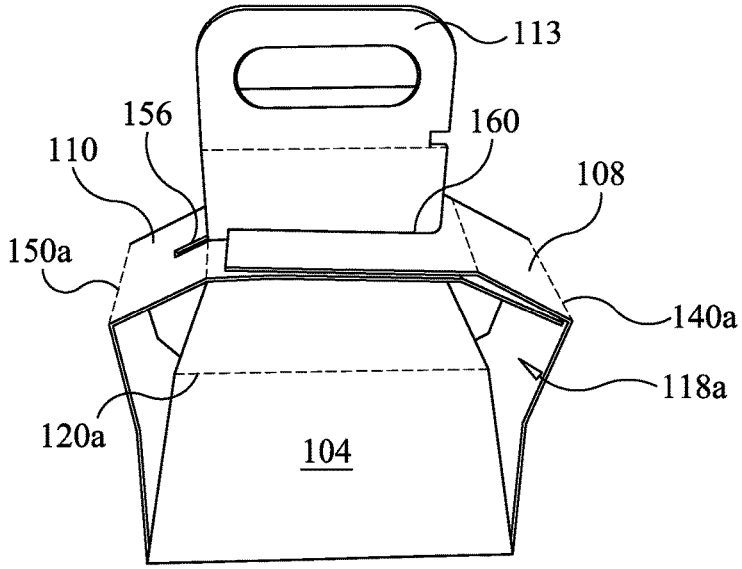
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FIG. 9

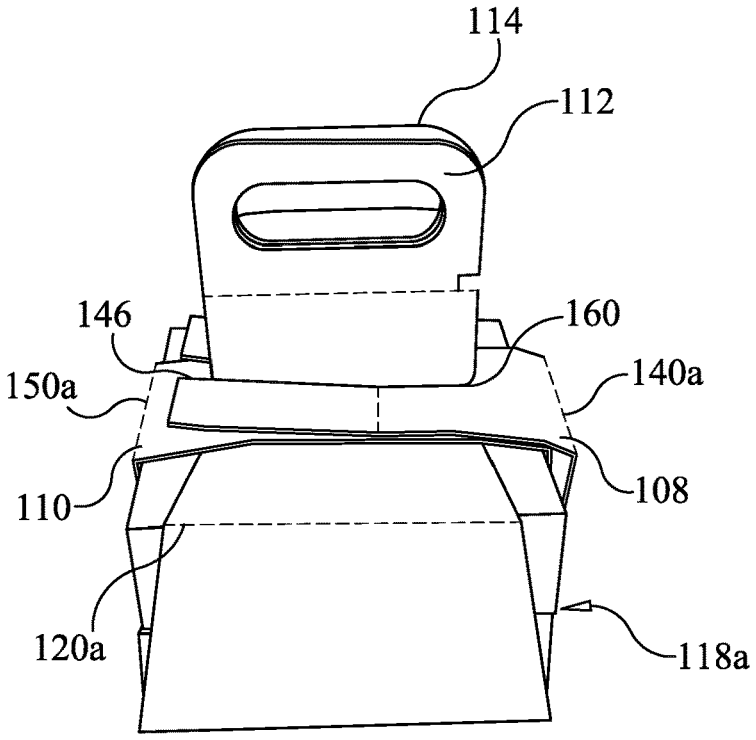
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FIG. 10

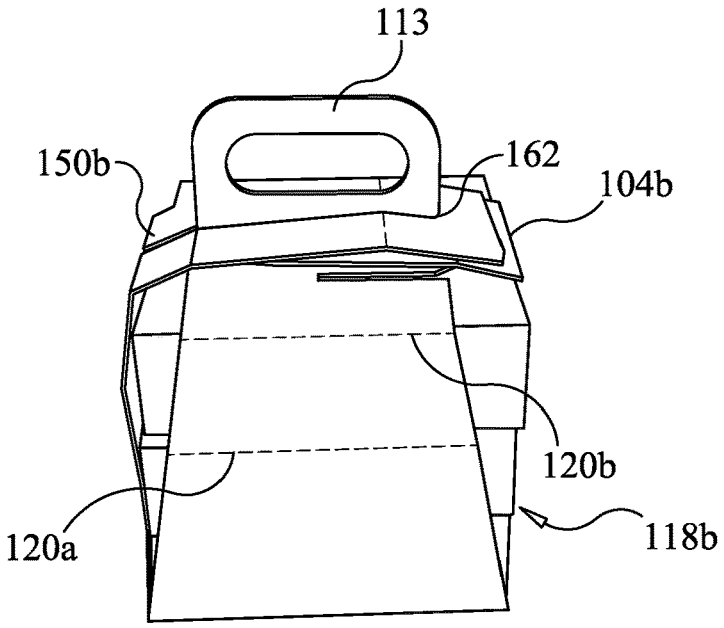
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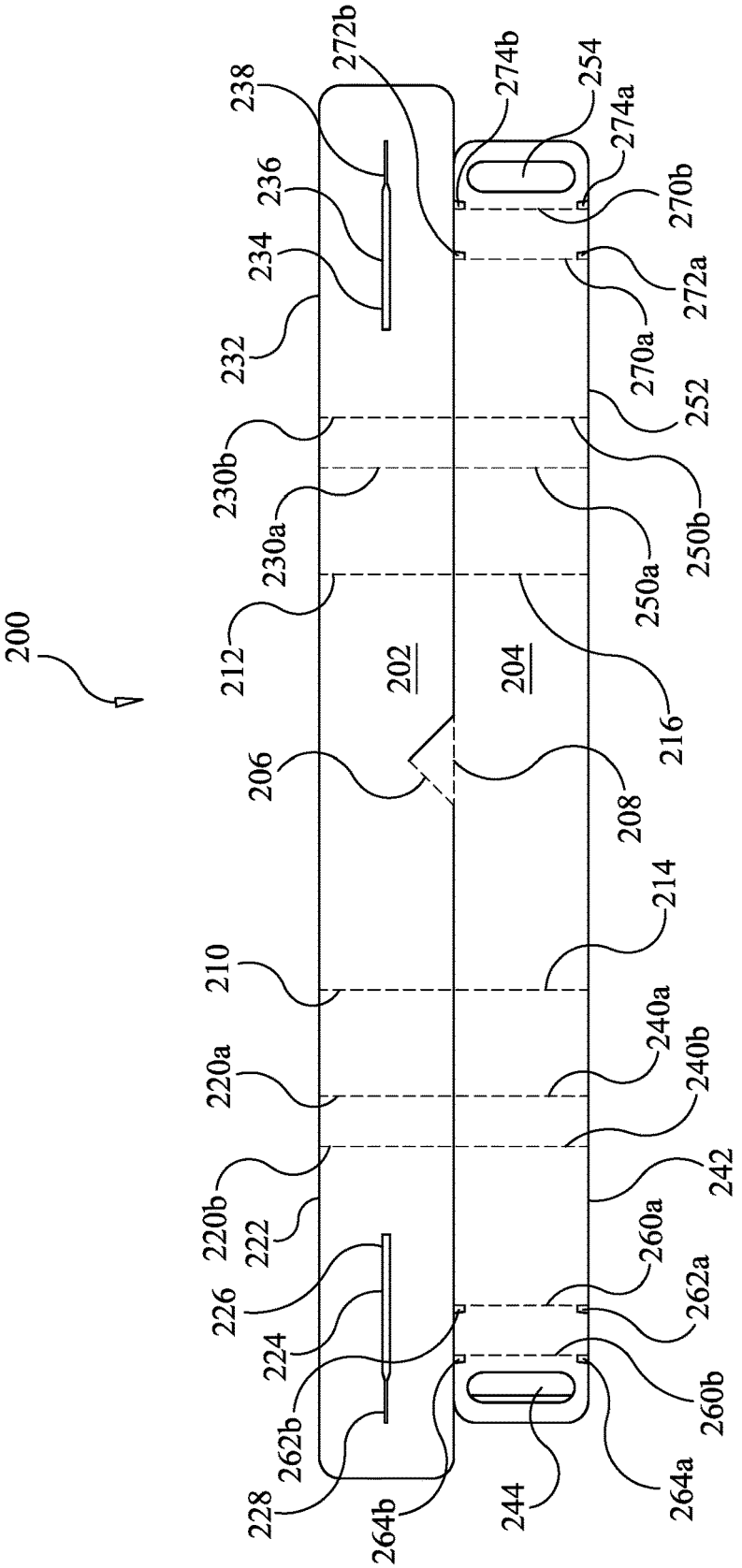
FIG. 11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250a
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272b
274a
274b

FIG. 12

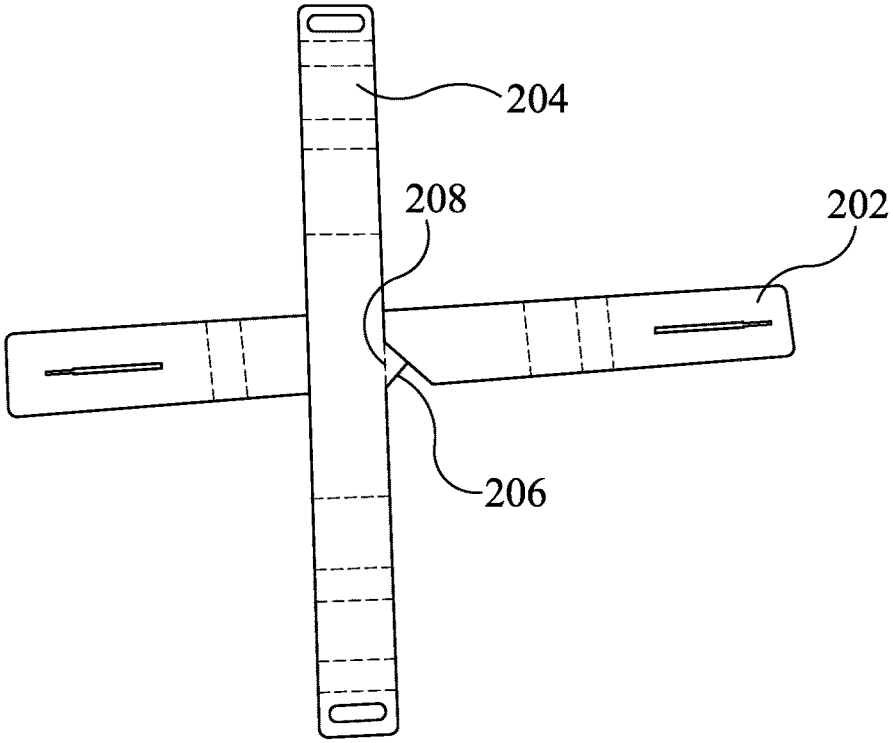

FIG. 13A

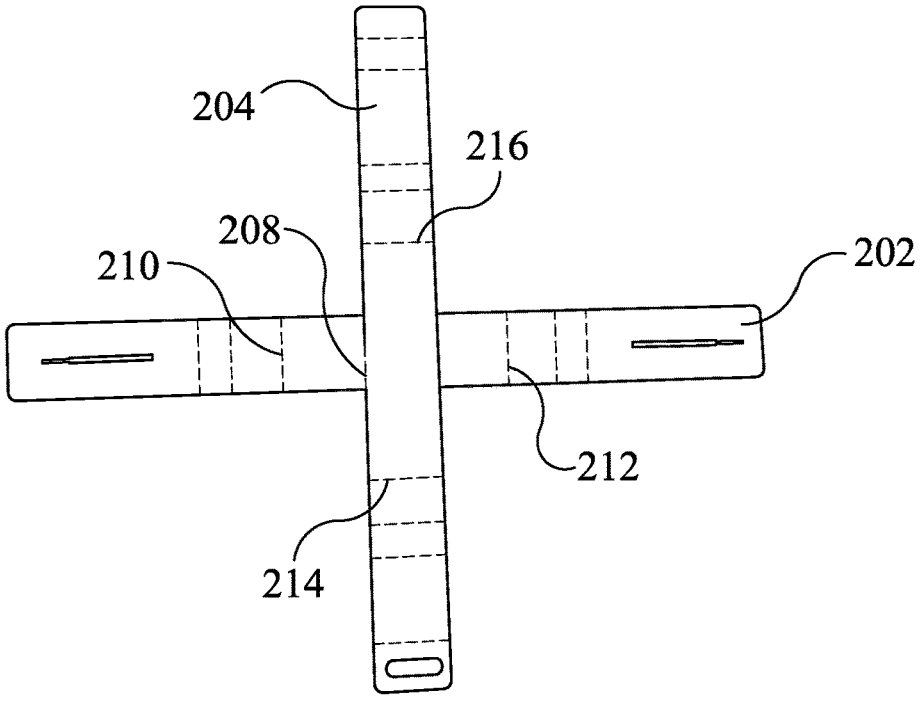

FIG. 13B

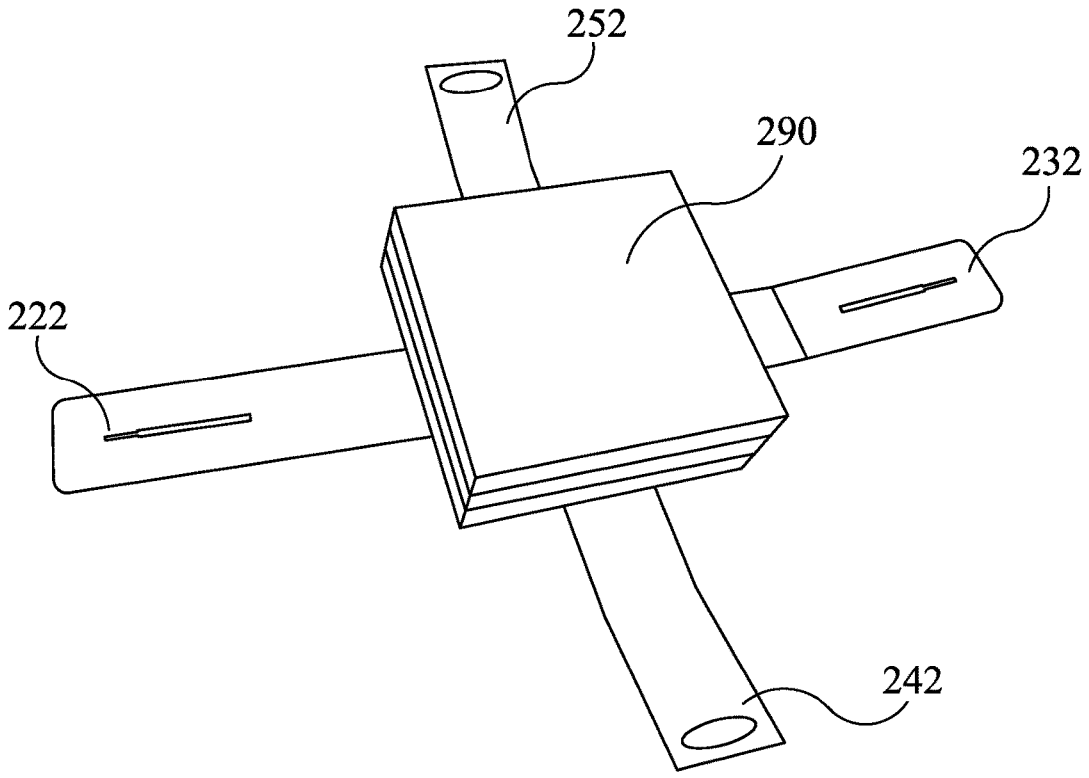

FIG. 13C

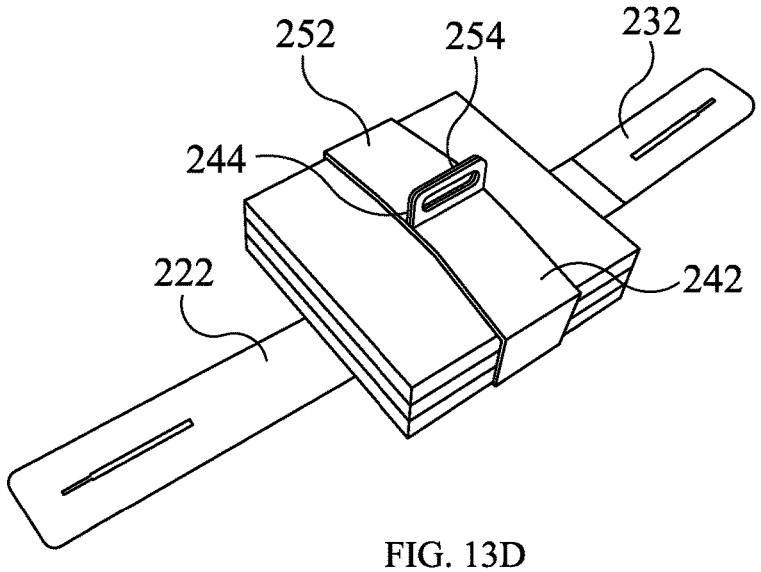

FIG. 13D

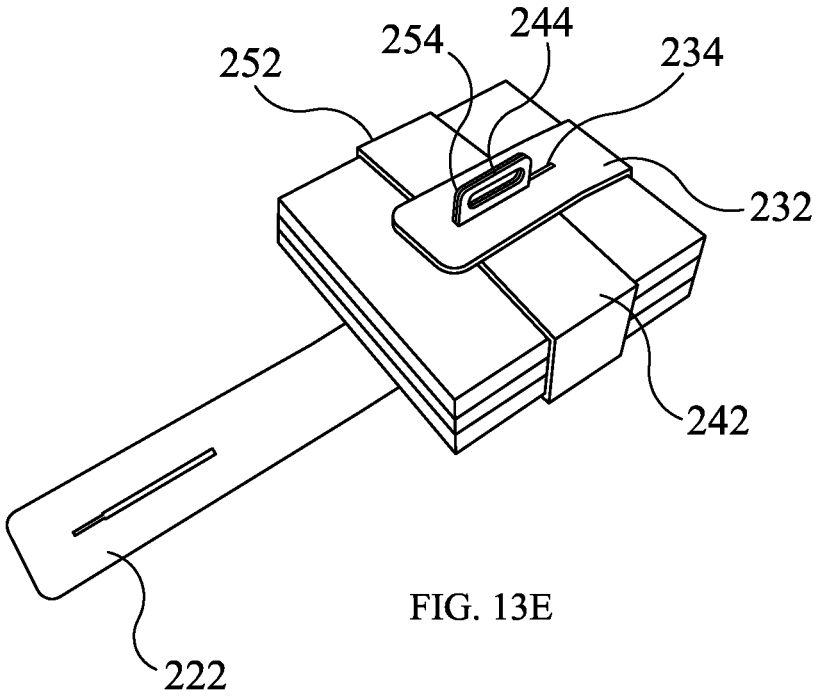

FIG. 13E

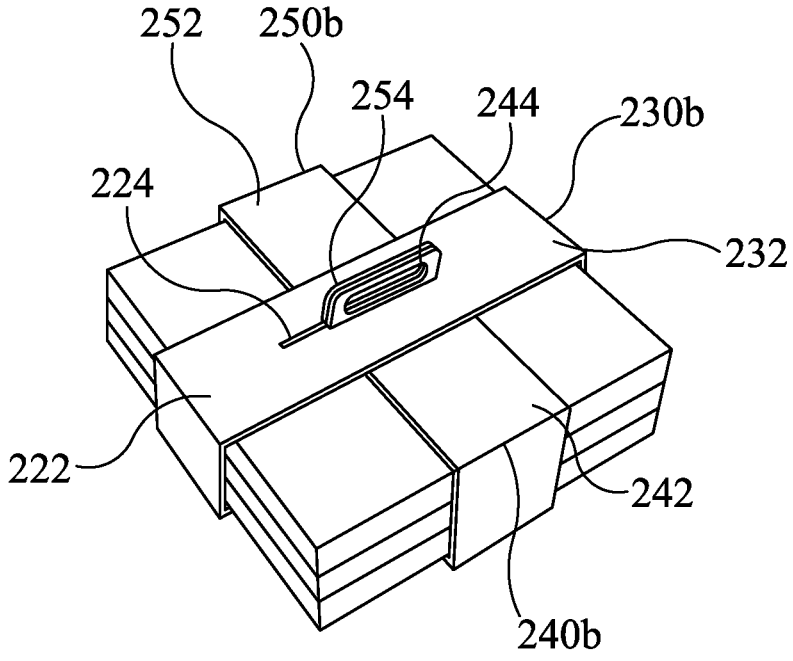

FIG. 13F

CONTAINER CARRIER APPARATUS AND METHODS OF MAKING AND USING THE SAME

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present disclosure relates to a carrier apparatus primarily for carrying containers having food products therein; but secondarily for carrying container having any type of products contained therein. Specifically, the carrier apparatus of the present invention allows a user to transport various amounts and types of containers securely, minimizing disturbance to products, such as food products, contained therein. More specifically, the carrier apparatus of the present invention comprises a first configuration for carrying a first amount of containers and a second configuration for carrying a second amount of containers.

BACKGROUND

It is, of course, generally known to utilize carriers to carry products, such as food products. A need, however, exists for a carrier apparatus that allows for the transport of a plurality of different amounts and types of containers. For example, pizzas are known to be transported in square or round cardboard containers, and more specifically, pizza slices are individually contained within triangular "slice"-shaped cardboard containers. Packaging individual slices may be desired where hungry people wish to each have their own pizza slice that may be different than the others. Indeed, it is often the case that individuals wish to have a pizza slice having toppings specific to their tastes, without having to compromise by ordering a full pizza in which everyone can agree.

Commonly, a flexible bag is often used to carry one or more containers for products, such as food products. However, flexible bags do not provide sufficient rigidity and strength to ensure that containers maintain their upright position so as not to upset the products contained therein. Carrying a flexible bag containing product containers therein is often difficult and awkward, and if handled incorrectly, may upend products contained therein. Moreover, flexible bags do not provide a clean, flat surface for graphics, logos, advertising, etc. that may be clearly discerned by a user. A need, therefore, exists for a carrier apparatus that maintains product containers in desired upright positions so as not to upset products contained therein. Further, a need exists for a carrier apparatus that includes a flat surface for presentation of graphics, logos, advertising, or other like indicia.

While it may be relatively easy to transport a single full pizza within a relatively large pizza box, it may be difficult to easily and securely carry and transport a plurality of pizza slice containers in the same manner. A need, therefore, exists for a carrier apparatus designed specifically to carry one or more pizza slice containers securely and safely. In addition, individuals may desire to order one or more pizza slices and other food products, such as salads, garlic bread, cheeses, spices, sauces, and other like products. Likewise, individuals may further desired to further transport utensils, napkins, wipes, and other like non-food products with their food. A need, therefore, exists for a carrier apparatus that allows for the safe and secure transport of different kinds of food products together, or food products and non-food products at the same time.

Likewise, other food products are also difficult to transport, and a need exists for a carrier apparatus that maintains products, such as food products, within individual containers

in an upright position without tipping. Oftentimes, individual pizzas, such as single serve pizzas, deep dish pizza pies, bakery pies, cakes, cupcakes, and other like products may be packaged in cardboard containers for transport, and it is often desired to maintain these products in a certain position or orientation to avoid damage to the food products. A need, therefore, exists for a carrier apparatus that easily and effectively maintains products contained therein in upright desired position or orientation. Specifically, a need exists for a carrier apparatus that minimizes or even prevents damage to products, such as food products, within containers during transport of the same.

It is further often difficult to transport a plurality of containers at the same time when the containers are of different shapes and/or sizes. Specifically, in the example above, a user may order a pizza slice that may be contained within a triangular-shaped pizza slice container, and a salad, pie, cake or other food product that may be contained within a square container. Likewise, a user may order another product, whether a food product or otherwise, that may be contained in a round container. A need exists for a carrier apparatus that can effectively and securely carry and transport a plurality of containers of different types and sizes, such as triangular-shaped, square, round, or other geometric shape, at the same time using one or more carrier apparatuses. More specifically, a need exists for a carrier apparatus that allows a user to mix and match different types and sizes of containers depending on the products transported therein.

Moreover, a need exists for a carrier apparatus that is easy to manufacture using inexpensive materials. Specifically, a need exists for a method of making a carrier apparatus that is easily manufactured for one or more specific types and/or sizes of containers. More specifically, a need exists for a method of using a carrier apparatus that allows a user to adopt a first configuration for a first amount and/or type of containers, and/or adopt a second configuration for a second amount and/or type of containers.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present disclosure relates to a carrier apparatus primarily for carrying containers having food products therein; but secondarily for carrying containers having any type of products contained therein. Specifically, the carrier apparatus of the present invention allows a user to transport various amounts and types of containers securely, minimizing disturbance to products, such as food products, contained therein. More specifically, the carrier apparatus of the present invention comprises a first configuration for carrying a first amount of containers and a second configuration for carrying a second amount of containers.

To this end, in an embodiment of the present invention, a carrier apparatus is provided. The carrier apparatus comprises a base section, a first wing, a second wing, and an extended slotted lock flap, wherein the first wing and the second wing are foldable along a first set of fold lines wherein folding at the first set of fold lines and engaging with the extended slotted lock flap in a first location forms a first internal space having a first volume, and a second set of fold lines, wherein folding at the second set of fold lines and engaging with the slotted lock flap in a second location forms a second internal space having a second volume. In an embodiment, the carrier apparatus comprises three wings. In an embodiment, the carrier apparatus comprises four wings.

It is, therefore, an advantage and objective of the present invention to provide a carrier apparatus that allows for the transport of a plurality of different amounts and types of containers.

More specifically, it is an advantage and objective of the present invention to provide a carrier apparatus designed specifically to carry one or more pizza slice containers securely and safely.

Generally, it is an advantage and objective of the present invention to provide a carrier apparatus that allows for the safe and secure transport of different kinds of food products together, or food products and non-food products at the same time.

Still further, it is an advantage and objective of the present invention to provide a carrier apparatus that includes a flat surface for presentation of graphics, logos, advertising, or other like indicia.

Moreover, it is an advantage and objective of the present invention to provide a carrier apparatus that easily and effectively maintains products contained therein in an upright position.

Specifically, it is an advantage and objective of the present invention to provide a carrier apparatus that minimizes or even prevents damage to products, such as food products, within containers during transport of the same.

In addition, it is an advantage and objective of the present invention to provide a carrier apparatus that can effectively and securely carry and transport a plurality of containers of different types and sizes.

More specifically, it is an advantage and objective of the present invention to provide a carrier apparatus that allows a user to mix and match different types and sizes of containers depending on the products transported therein.

Moreover, it is an advantage and objective of the present invention to provide a carrier apparatus that is easy to manufacture using inexpensive materials.

Specifically, it is an advantage and objective of the present invention to provide a method of making a carrier apparatus that is easily manufactured for one or more specific types and/or sizes of containers.

More specifically, it is an advantage and objective of the present invention to provide a method of using a carrier apparatus that allows a user to adopt a first configuration for a first amount and/or type of containers, and/or adopt a second configuration for a second amount and/or type of containers.

Additional features and advantages of the present invention are described in, and will be apparent from, the detailed description of the presently preferred embodiments and from the drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The drawing figures depict one or more implementations in accord with the present concepts, by way of example only, not by way of limitations. In the figures, like reference numerals refer to the same or similar elements.

FIG. **1** illustrates a top view of a carrier apparatus **10** in an unassembled configuration in an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **2** illustrates a carrier apparatus in a partially formed first configuration in an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **3** illustrates a carrier apparatus in a fully formed first configuration in an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **4** illustrates a carrier apparatus having containers therein in a first configuration in an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **5** illustrates a carrier apparatus having containers therein in a second configuration in an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **6** illustrates a carrier apparatus having different sizes and types of containers therein in a second configuration in an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **7** illustrates a top view of a carrier apparatus in an unassembled configuration in an alternate embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **8** illustrates a carrier apparatus in a partially formed first configuration in an alternate embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **9** illustrates a carrier apparatus in a partially formed first configuration in an alternate embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **10** illustrates a carrier apparatus in a fully formed first configuration in an alternate embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **11** illustrates a carrier apparatus in a fully formed second configuration in an alternate embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **12** illustrates a carrier apparatus in an unassembled configuration in an alternate embodiment of the present invention.

FIGS. **13**A-**13**F illustrate a carrier apparatus transforming from an unassembled configuration to a fully formed configuration.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENTLY PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present disclosure relates to a carrier apparatus primarily for carrying containers having food products therein; but secondarily for carrying containers having any type of products contained therein. Specifically, the carrier apparatus of the present invention allows a user to transport various amounts and types of containers securely, minimizing disturbance to products, such as food products, contained therein. More specifically, the carrier apparatus of the present invention comprises a first configuration for carrying a first amount of containers and a second configuration for carrying a second amount of containers.

Referring now to the figures, wherein like numerals refer to like parts, FIG. **1** illustrates a top view of a carrier apparatus **10** in an unfolded, or flat, unassembled configuration, such as how the carrier apparatus **10** may exit a die-cutting machine or other like machine of manufacture. Specifically, the carrier apparatus **10**, in a preferred embodiment, may be made from a single piece of flat material, such as, preferably, corrugated fiberboard, cardboard, card stock, or other like material, although any material may be utilized as apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art, such as plastic, metal, wood, wood pulp, composite material, or other like material, and the present invention should not be limited as described herein. The carrier apparatus **10** may be utilized, as apparent in the following figures, to hold and transport containers that are triangular in shape, preferably, or square in shape, as described herein, although the carrier apparatuses described herein may be formed to hold any shaped-containers.

The carrier apparatus **10** may comprise a first wing **12** and a second wing **14** that may extend outwardly from two sides, respectively, of a triangular-shaped main body portion **16**, and an extending flap **18** that may extend from the third side

of the triangular-shaped main body portion **16**. The first wing **12** may be folded upwardly from the main body portion **16** via fold line **22** that may be disposed on a first side of the triangular-shaped main body portion **16**. The second wing **14** may be folded upwardly from the main body portion **16** via fold line **24** that may be disposed on a second side of the triangular-shaped main body portion **16**. Finally, the extending flap **18** may be folded upwardly from the main body portion **16** via fold line **26** that may be disposed on a third side of the triangular-shaped main body portion **16**. The first wing **12**, the second wing **14** and the extending flap **18** may work in conjunction to form an internal space thereby encasing a container that may be disposed therein, as described in more detail below.

The first wing **12**, the second wing **14**, and the extending flap **18** may have a plurality of fold lines that provide optional configurations for holding and transporting a first quantity of containers or a second quantity of containers. Specifically, first wing **12** may comprise fold lines **30***a*, **30***b* and **32***a*, **32***b* that optionally are used depending on the quantity of containers within the carrier apparatus **10** when in a fully folded, assembled configuration. Likewise, second wing **14** may comprise fold lines **40***a*, **40***b* and **42***a*, **42***b* that optionally are used depending on the quantity of containers within the carrier apparatus **10** when in a fully folded, assembled configuration. Finally, extending flap **18** may comprise fold lines **50***a*, **50***b* that optionally are used depending on the quantity of containers within the carrier apparatus **10**.

In a first configuration, shown in FIGS. **2-4**, the first and second wings **12**, **14** may be folded upwardly relative to the main body portion **16**. As illustrated in FIGS. **2-4**, only first wing **12** is illustrated, but it should be noted that second wing **14** may also be folded upwardly to mirror the first wing **12**. In the first configuration, the first wing **12** may be folded along fold line **30***a* and the second wing may be folded along fold line **40***a* inwardly and parallel with the main body portion **16** to form a top **60***a* for the carrier apparatus **10**. The first and second wings **12**, **14** may converge in the center of the top **60***a*, and may further be folded along fold lines **32***a*, **42***a* so that the remaining portions of the first and second wings **12**, **14** are disposed upwardly and adjacent each other.

First wing **12** may comprise a handle slot **62**, and second wing **14** may comprise a foldable handle portion **64**. When the remaining portions of the first and second wings **12**, **14** converge and are disposed together upwardly, the foldable handle portion **64** may be pushed within the handle slot **62**, and folded therewith to hold the adjacent and upwardly extending remaining portions of the first and second wings together, as illustrated in FIG. **2**.

The first and second wings **12**, **14** thus form an interior space **66***a* in which a plurality of containers may be placed, as illustrated in FIG. **4**. Once containers (not shown in FIGS. **2-3**) are placed therein, extending flap **18** may be folded upwardly, and slot **68** within extending flap **18** may be disposed over the remaining portions of the first and second wings **12**, **14** such that the remaining portions **12**, **14** are disposed through the slot **68** of the extending flap **18**.

When the first and second wings **12**, **14** are disposed adjacent each other and upwardly, as illustrated in FIG. **2**, a first engaging end **70** of the extending flap may engage one of two catch slots **72***a*, **72***b* that may be formed when the first and second wings **12**, **14** come together. Specifically, catch slot **72***a* may be formed from slot **34***a* and **44***a* of the first and second wings **12**, **14**, respectively, and catch slot **72***b* may be formed from slot **34***b* and **44***b* of the first and second wings **12**, **14**, respectively. Extending flap **18** may therefore be folded at fold line **50***a*, as illustrated in FIG. **3**, to enclose the interior space **66***a*. Further, as illustrated in FIG. **3**, the extending flap **18** is shown disposed over the first and second wings **12**, **14** such that the first and second wings **12**, **14** are disposed through the slot **68** in the extending slot, and the first end **70** of the slot **68** is engaged with the catch slot **72***a*.

In the first configuration, the interior space **66***a* may have a size and a shape to hold a first plurality of containers. As illustrated in FIG. **4**, the interior space **66***a* is shown to hold three pizza slice containers **80**. The interior space **66***a* may have the shape and volume of a triangular prism to hold the plurality of triangular-shaped containers therein. Because fold lines **30***a*, **40***a*, **32***a*, **42***a* and **50***a*, and catch slot **72***a*, are utilized, the interior space **66***a* may have a configuration to hold snugly and securely the plurality of pizza slice containers **80**, as needed. In the first configuration, fold lines **30***b*, **40***b*, **32***b*, **42***b* and **50***b* are not used.

In a second configuration, illustrated in FIG. **5**, fold lines **30***b*, **40***b*, **32***b*, **42***b*, and **50***b*, and catch slot **72***b* may be utilized to form an interior space **66***b* that may be larger than the interior space **66***a*, as described above and shown in FIGS. **2-4**. Specifically, in the second configuration, fold lines **30***a*, **40***a*, **32***a*, **42***a* and **50***a*, as well as catch slot **72***a*, are not used. The interior space **66***b*, therefore, is larger in volume than the interior space **66***a* and can thus hold a different quantity of containers therein. For example, as illustrated in FIG. **5**, the interior space **66***b* can hold four pizza slice containers **80** instead of just three, as illustrated in FIG. **4**. The interior space **66***b* further has a top **60***b* formed from the first and second wings **12**, **14**, respectively, that is formed by different portions of the first and second wings **12**, **14**. Moreover, the first engaging end **70** of the extending flap **18** may engage catch slot **72***b* as opposed to catch slot **72***a*. Therefore, the second configuration may hold a different quantity of containers therein than the first configuration.

First and second wings **12**, **14** may further have side flaps **36***a*, **36***b* that may be folded inwardly, as illustrated in FIG. **6**, or otherwise removed to provide spaces **38***a*, **38***b* in the first and second wings **12**, **14**. The spaces **38***a*, **38***b* may allow corners of one or more square containers **82** to be disposed therethrough so that the interior spaces **66***a* and **66***b* may hold the square containers **82** snugly and securely. An additional interior space **84** may be formed in front of the square containers **82** that may be utilized for holding items, such as condiments, utensils, and the like.

Therefore, as illustrated in FIGS. **4-6**, the carrier apparatus **10** may be alternately configured to hold a first quantity of containers, a second quantity of containers, or a mix of types of containers, such as triangular-shaped containers and square containers. The containers may contain any product, such as, preferably, food products like pizza slices, salads, garlic bread, desserts, such as pies, cakes, cupcakes, or other like food products. Moreover, the carrier apparatus **10** may further have spaces disposed around the various parts thereof that may be printed thereon with advertising, instructions, graphics, text, or other like indicia, as apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art.

Referring again to FIG. **1**, the carrier apparatus **10** may have a flap **17** or a plurality of flaps disposed in the main body portion **16** that may extend downwardly from the main body portion **16** to form a leg or prop for the carrier apparatus **10**, as illustrated in FIGS. **5** and **6**, so that the carrier apparatus **10** may be set on an inclined surface and yet still maintain a horizontal disposition. Therefore, any items contained within containers carried by the carrier apparatus **10** may not slide due to gravity, and may therefore

maintain their positions within the containers. For example, the carrier apparatus **10** may contain a plurality of pizza slice containers having pizza slices contained therein. The carrier apparatus **10** may be placed on an automobile seat that may have a generally inclined surface. By extended the flap **16** from the main body portion along fold line **17**, the flap **16** may act as a leg or prop to maintain the pizza slices within the containers in a generally horizontal configuration, preventing the pizza sliced from sliding and causing damage to the pizza slices.

Now referring to FIGS. **7-11**, an alternate embodiment of a carrier apparatus **100** is shown and described herein. The carrier apparatus **100** is similar to the carrier apparatus **10**, as described above and shown in FIGS. **1-6**, except the carrier apparatus **100** is primarily designed to hold square, rectangular or round containers therein. The carrier apparatus **100** comprises a square-shaped base portion **102**, a first wing **104** extending from a first side **105** of the square-shaped base portion **102**, a second wing **106** extending from a second side **107** of the square-shaped base portion **102** opposite the first side **105**, a third wing **108** extending from a third side **109** of the square-shaped base portion **102**, and a fourth wing **110** extending from a fourth side **111** of the square-shaped base portion **102** opposite the third side **109**. Each of the wings **102**, **104**, **106**, **108** may have a plurality of fold lines for forming a first or a second internal space, as disclosed in more detail below.

The first wing **104** may have a first handle portion **112** on an end thereof, and the second wing **106** may have a second handle portion **114** on an end thereof, such that the first wing **104** and the second wing **106** may fold in a manner to be adjacent each other so that the first and second handle portions **112**, **114** align together forming a handle **113**, as illustrated in FIG. **8**. The first wing **104** may have a first fold line **120***a* and a second fold line **120***b* at different locations on the first wing **104**. Likewise, the second wing **106** may have a first fold line **130***a* and a second fold line **130***b* at different locations on the second wing **106**. The third wing **108** may further have a first fold line **140***a* and a second fold line **140***b* at different locations on the third wing **108**. And the fourth wing **110** may have a first fold line **150***a*, a second fold line **150***b* and a third fold line **158** at different locations on the fourth wing **110**.

Each of the first, second, third and fourth wings **102**, **104**, **106**, **108** may have a fold line **122**, **132**, **142**, **152**, respectively, disposed at the first, second, third and fourth sides **105**, **107**, **109**, **111**, respectively, of the square-shaped base portion **102**. The fold lines **122**, **132**, **142**, **152** allow each of the wings **104**, **106**, **108**, **110** to fold upwardly and form sides for an internal space **118***a* or **118***b*, as illustrated in FIGS. **8-11**.

More specifically, the carrier apparatus **100** may be configured to have either a first internal space **118***a* or a second internal space **118***b* (as shown in FIG. **11**), depending on whether fold lines **120***a*, **130***a*, **140***a*, **150***a* are used, or whether fold lines **120***b*, **130***b*, **140***b*, **150***b* are used. If fold lines **120***a*, **130***a*, **140***a*, **150***a* are folded, as shown in FIGS. **9-10**, then the internal space **118***a* may be formed. If fold lines **1220***b*, **130***b*, **140***b*, **150***b* are folded, as shown in FIG. **11**, then internal space **118***b* may be formed. Internal space **118***b* has a greater height than the internal space **118***a* forming a greater volume, allowing for one or more additional containers to be placed therein, as illustrated in FIG. **11**.

As illustrated in FIGS. **8-9**, the first and second wings **104**, **106** may be folded upwardly from the base section **102**, and, for forming internal space **118***a*, the first and second wings **104**, **106** may be folded at fold lines **120***a* and **130***a*. The first wing **104** may further have a fold line **124***a* and the second wing **106** may have a fold line **134***a* that may be folded so that the first and second wings **104**, **106** may be disposed upwardly where the first and second wings **104**, **106** converge. Thus, handle portions **112**, **114** may be disposed adjacent each other, and together may form the handle **113** that may be used by a user to carry the carrier apparatus **100**. In addition, first wing **104** may have an open-ended first slot **126***a* and an open-ended second slot **126***b* disposed at different locations on the first wing **104**. Likewise, the second wing **104** may have an open-ended first slot **136***a* and an open-ended second slot **136***b* disposed at different locations on the second wing **106**. When the first and second wings **104**, **106** converge, the first open-ended slots **126***a*, **136***a* may align together to form first catch slot **160**, and second open-ended slots **126***b*, **136***b* may align together to form second catch slot **162**, as illustrated in FIGS. **8-11**.

As illustrated in FIG. **9**, third wing **108** and fourth wing **110** may be folded upwardly at fold lines **142**, **152**, respectively, to form the remaining two sides of the internal space **118***a* (or **118***b*, as shown in FIG. **11**). Third wing **108** may contain an open-ended slot **146** disposed therein that may extend to the terminal end of the third wing **108**, and fourth wing **110** may contain a closed slot **156** that may extend between the ends of the fourth wing **110**.

To form internal space **118***a*, the third wing **108** may be folded at fold line **140***a* and fourth wing **110** may be folded at fold line **150***a*. Preferably, the fourth wing **110** is folded first, and disposed over the handle **113** so that the handle **113** and portion of first and second wings **104**, **106** are disposed through the closed slot **156**. Fourth wing **108** may further have a fold line **158** that may be folded downwardly adjacent to a container within internal space **118***a*, as illustrated in FIG. **10**. After fourth wing **110** is disposed in the manner described above, the third wing **108** may be folded at fold line **140***a* such that the handle **113** is disposed through open-ended slot **146**. Open-ended slot **146** may be disposed through catch slot **160**, and may further have an engaging end **147** that may catch in catch slot **160**, as illustrated in FIG. **10** to fully form the internal space **118***a* for one or a plurality of containers. As illustrated in FIG. **10**, the internal space **118***a* may have sufficient room for two square containers, although it should be noted that the internal space **118***a* may be sized in any manner to hold any number of desired containers, as needed.

Importantly, internal space **118***b* may be formed in a similar manner, and because internal space **118***b* is larger, may be used to hold more containers therein as compared to internal space **118***a*. To form internal space **118***b*, first and second wings **104**, **106** may be folded at fold lines **120***b*, **130***b*, respectively, instead of at fold lines **120***a*, **130***a* as described above to form internal space **118***a*. In addition, fold lines **124***b*, **134***b* of first and second wings **104**, **106** may be folded, instead of fold lines **124***a*, **134***a*, as described above, to form handle **113**.

Likewise, third and fourth wings **108**, **110** may be folded at fold lines **140***b*, **150***b*, respectively, instead of fold lines **140***a*, **150***a* as described above. Preferably, and as illustrated in FIG. **11**, third wing **108** may first be disposed over handle **113**, such that the handle **113** is disposed through the open-ended slot **146** prior to folding and disposing fourth wing **110** thereon. Thus, open-ended slot **146** may be disposed through and engaging end **147** may engage with catch slot **162** instead of catch slot **160**. Next, fourth wing **110** may be disposed over handle **113** such that the handle **113** is

disposed within slot **156**, thereby fully forming internal space **118***b*. As illustrated in FIG. **11**, internal space **118***b* may be larger than internal space **118***a* and may hold more containers than internal space **118***a*. Specifically, as illustrated in FIG. **11**, internal space **118***b* may hold three containers, whereas internal space **118***a* may hold only two containers, securely. Of course, it should be noted that the internal spaces **118***a*, **118***b* may be designed to hold any number of containers. Further, although containers shown in FIGS. **10** and **11** are square, round containers or containers of other shapes may also be snugly contained therein.

Now referring to FIGS. **12** and **13**A-**13**F, an alternate embodiment of the present invention is shown and described herein. Specifically, FIG. **12** illustrates a plan view of a carrier apparatus **200** in a flat and unconstructed configuration. The carrier apparatus **200** may have a first body **202** and a second body **204** disposed side-by-side. As such, this may be how the carrier apparatus **200** is created, wherein cardboard stock may be cut and perforated to form the various separation lines and fold lines necessary to form the constructed embodiment, as illustrated in FIGS. **13**A-**13**F.

As illustrated in FIG. **12**, the first body **202** may be separable from second body **204**, except along fold line **206** and fold line **208**. The first body **202** and the second body **204** may each have several fold lines disposed therein that may be utilized to fold around containers that may be placed within internal spaces created when the carrier apparatus **200** is in its constructed embodiment. As with the embodiments of the carrier apparatuses **10**, **100**, described above, separate fold lines may be utilized to form either a first internal space or a second internal space, depending on the series of fold lines utilized to form the first or second internal space. Therefore, more or fewer containers may be contained within the first or second internal spaces, respectively.

The first body **202** may have fold lines **210**, **212** and second body **204** may have fold lines **214**, **216**, each of which may form a base **218** on which containers may be placed and/or stacked, as illustrated in FIG. **13**B. First body **202** may have fold lines **220***a*, **220***b* on a first side **222** of first body **202** and first body **202** may further have fold lines **230***a*, **230***b* on a second side **232** of first body **202**. First body **202** may also have a first slot **224** disposed on the first side **222** of the first body **202**. The first slot **224** may have a relatively wide portion **226** and a relatively narrow portion **228**, which can be used to frictionally hold other elements of the carrier apparatus **200**, as described in more detail below. First body **202** may further have second slot **234** disposed on the second side **232** of the first body **202**. Second slot **234** may have a relatively side portion **236** and a relatively narrow portion **238**, which also can be used to frictionally hold other elements of the carrier apparatus **200**, as described in more detail below.

Likewise, second body **204** may have fold lines **240***a*, **240***b* on a first side **242** of the second body **204** and the second body **204** may have further have fold lines **250***a*, **250***b* on a second side **252** of the second body **204**. The first side **242** of the second body **204** may further have fold lines **260***a*, **260***b*, wherein fold line **260***a* may have catch slots **262***a*, **262***b* disposed on opposite sides thereof, and fold line **260***b* may have catch slots **264***a*, **264***b* disposed on opposite sides thereof. Further, first side **242** of the second body **204** may have a handle portion **244** disposed therein. Second side **252** of the second body **204** may have fold lines **270***a*, **270***b*, wherein fold line **270***a* may have catch slots **272***a*, **272***b* disposed on opposite sides thereof, and fold line **270***b* may have catch slots **274***a*, **274***b* disposed on opposite sides thereof. First, second side **252** of the second body may have a handle portion **254** disposed therein for matching with handle portion **244** when the carrier apparatus **200** is constructed, as illustrated in FIGS. **13**A-**13**F, described in more detail below.

FIGS. **13**A-**13**F illustrate steps for forming or constructing the carrier apparatus **200** into a form that may be utilized to carry one or more containers therein. As illustrated in FIG. **13**A, after first body **202** and second body **204** are separated from each other, except along fold lines **206**, **208**, the fold line **206** may be folded, which causes second body **204** to rotate 90 degrees and be placed atop first body **202**. In a second step, illustrated in FIG. **13**B, the fold line **208** may be folded along fold line **208** so that the second body **204** is centrally and perpendicularly on first body **202**. When disposed in this position illustrated in FIG. **13**B, the first body **202** and the second body **204** form the base **218** on which one or more containers may be disposed and/or stacked. Indeed, the base **218** may be the area on the first and second bodies **202**, **204** within fold lines **210**, **212**, **214** and **216**, respectively. As illustrated in FIG. **13**C, a plurality of pizza boxes **290** may be positioned, although it should be noted that any containers may be disposed thereon and the present invention should not be limited as described herein.

As illustrated in FIG. **13**D, first side **242** and second side **252** of the second body, forming wings, may be folded along lines **214**, **216**, respectively, and again at fold lines **240***a*, **240***b*, respectively, to then meet one another on a top of the boxes **290**. When mated thereon, the handle portions **244**, **254** may meet as the first and second sides **242**, **252** are folded at fold lines **260***b*, **270***b*, respectively. Thus, the first and second sides **242**, **252** may wrap around the pizza boxes **290** around the sides and along the top thereof.

As illustrated in FIG. **13**E, second side **232** of first body **202** may be folded at fold line **212** and **230***b* to wrap around the side and along the top of the pizza boxes. The slot **234** may be disposed over the handle portions **244**, **254**, wherein the handle portions **244**, **254** may be disposed through the slot **234**. To aid in the positioning of the handle portions **244**, **254** through the slot **234**, the wide portion **236** of the slot may easily allow the handle portions **244**, **254** to slide therethrough, and the narrow portion **238** may frictionally lock the slot onto the handle portions **244**, **254**. Moreover, an end of the slot **234** may further engage the catch slots **264***b*, **274***b* that may be mated together when handle portions **244**, **254** meet holding the second side **232** over the handle portions **244**, **254**.

Likewise, as illustrated in FIG. **13**F, first side **222** of first body **202** may be folded at fold line **210** and **220***b* to wrap around the side and along the top of the pizza boxes. The slot **224** may be disposed over the handle portions **244**, **254**, wherein the handle portions **244**, **254** may be disposed through the slot **224**. To aid in the positioning of the handle portions **244**, **254** through the slot **224**, the wide portion **226** of the slot may easily allow the handle portions **244**, **254** to slide therethrough, and the narrow portion **228** may frictionally lock the slot onto the handle portions **244**, **254**. Moreover, an end of the slot **224** may further engage the catch slots **264***a*, **274***a* that may be mated together when handle portions **244**, **254** meet holding the second side **232** over the handle portions **244**, **254**.

The above description is apt when a specific sized container or a plurality of containers that fit therein. However, alternate fold lines may be utilized on the first and second bodies **202**, **204** to hold a different sized container or different number of containers. Specifically, instead of three pizza boxes **290**, as illustrated in FIGS. **13**A-**13**F, only two

pizza boxes may cause alternate fold lines **220***a*, **230**, **240***a*, **240***b* and **260***a*, **260***b* to be utilized, allowing fewer containers to be disposed therein.

Further, a flap (not shown) may be disposed in one of the bodies **202**, **204** that may extend and form a leg or prop that may allow the carrier apparatus **200** to be disposed horizontally when disposed on an inclined surface, such as an automobile seat. Specifically, the flap may be a cut-out having a fold line that may be pushed downwardly to extend from the base **218** (as illustrated in FIG. **13**B).

Described herein are two exemplary embodiments showing a plurality of containers that may be held by carrier apparatuses **10** and **100**. It should be noted that the shapes of the carrier apparatuses and/or the positions of the fold lines may be changed without detracting from the scope of the present invention, to form various carrier apparatuses for additional types, sizes, shapes, etc. of containers, and the present invention should not be limited as described herein.

The carrier apparatuses **10** and **100**, as noted above, may be made via any manufacturing method, including but not limited to, die cutting, laser scoring, or other like manufacturing techniques. Preferably, the carrier apparatus **10** may be made from a flat sheet of cardboard or corrugated fiber board that has strategically placed cut lines and fold lines disposed therein to create the functionality described herein.

It should be noted that various changes and modifications to the presently preferred embodiments described herein will be apparent to those skilled in the art. Such changes and modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention and without diminishing its attendant advantages. Further, references throughout the specification to "the invention" are nonlimiting, and it should be noted that claim limitations presented herein are not meant to describe the invention as a whole. Moreover, the invention illustratively disclosed herein suitably may be practiced in the absence of any element which is not specifically disclosed herein.

The invention claimed is:

1. A carrier apparatus for carrying items comprising:

a base panel section;

a first wing extending from a first side of the base panel section, the first wing having a first notch and a second notch;

a second wing extending from a second side of the base panel section, the second wing having a first notch and a second notch; and

a first slotted lock flap extending from a third side of the base panel section comprising a slot,

wherein the first wing and the second wing are each foldable upwardly roughly perpendicular at a first fold line disposed in each of the first wing and the second wing, and further wherein the first wing and the second wing are each foldable towards each other along a second fold line disposed in each of the first wing and the second wing, and further wherein the first wing and the second wing are each foldable at a third fold line in each of the first wing and the second wing wherein folding the first wing and the second wing upwardly roughly perpendicularly at the third fold line aligns the first wing and the second wing adjacent each other above the third fold line,

wherein when the first wing and the second wing are adjacent each other above the third fold line, the first notch in the first wing and the first notch in the second wing align with each other to form a first catch slot, wherein folding the first wing and the second wing at the first fold lines, the second fold lines, and the third fold lines in the first and second wings and engaging the first catch slot with an edge of the slot in the first slotted lock flap forms a first internal space having a first volume,

and further wherein the first wing and the second wing are each foldable towards each other at a fourth fold line disposed in each of the first wing and the second wing, and further wherein the first wing and the second wing are each foldable at a fifth fold line disposed in each of the first wing and the second wing wherein folding the first wing and the second wing upwardly roughly perpendicular at the fifth fold line aligns the first wing and the second wing adjacent each other above the fifth fold line, wherein when the first wing and the second wing are adjacent each other above the fifth fold line, the second notch in the first wing and the second notch in the second wing align with each other to form a second catch slot,

wherein folding the first wing and the second wing at the first fold lines, the fourth fold lines, and the fifth fold lines in the first and second wings and engaging the second catch slot with an edge of the slot in the first slotted lock flap forms a second internal space having a second volume.

2. The carrier apparatus of claim **1** wherein the second volume is larger than the first volume.

3. The carrier apparatus of claim **1** wherein the first fold lines of the first and second wings are disposed in the first and second wings at the location wherein the first and second wings extend from the base panel section.

4. The carrier apparatus of claim **1** wherein the second fold lines of the first and second wings are configured to fold the first and second wings roughly horizontally when the first and second wings are disposed upwardly due to the folding of the first and second wings at the first fold lines.

5. The carrier apparatus of claim **1** wherein the base panel section is triangular.

6. The carrier apparatus of claim **1** wherein the base panel section is a four-sided parallelogram.

7. The carrier apparatus of claim **1** further comprising a flap extending from a bottom surface of the base panel section.

8. The carrier apparatus of claim **1** further comprising:

a second slotted lock flap extending from a fourth side of the base panel section.

9. The carrier apparatus of claim **8** wherein the first internal volume is formed by engaging the first and second wings with both the first slotted lock flap and the second slotted lock flap.

10. The carrier apparatus of claim **9** wherein portions of both the first and second wings are disposed through the slot in the first slotted lock flap and a slot in the second slotted lock flap.

11. The carrier apparatus of claim **1** comprising:

a handle extending from at least one of the first and second wings.

12. The carrier apparatus of claim **11** wherein the first and second wings each comprise a cut-out portion, such that the cut-out portions of the first and second wings form the handle together.

13. The carrier apparatus of claim **1** further comprising:

a flap extending from a side of the first internal volume wherein the flap is configured to open a window through which a portion of a container is disposed when contained within the first internal volume.

14. The carrier apparatus of claim 1 wherein the base panel section is formed from overlapping base panel section portions that are disposed roughly perpendicular to each other.

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