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(54) **PATIO UMBRELLA COOLER APPARATUS**

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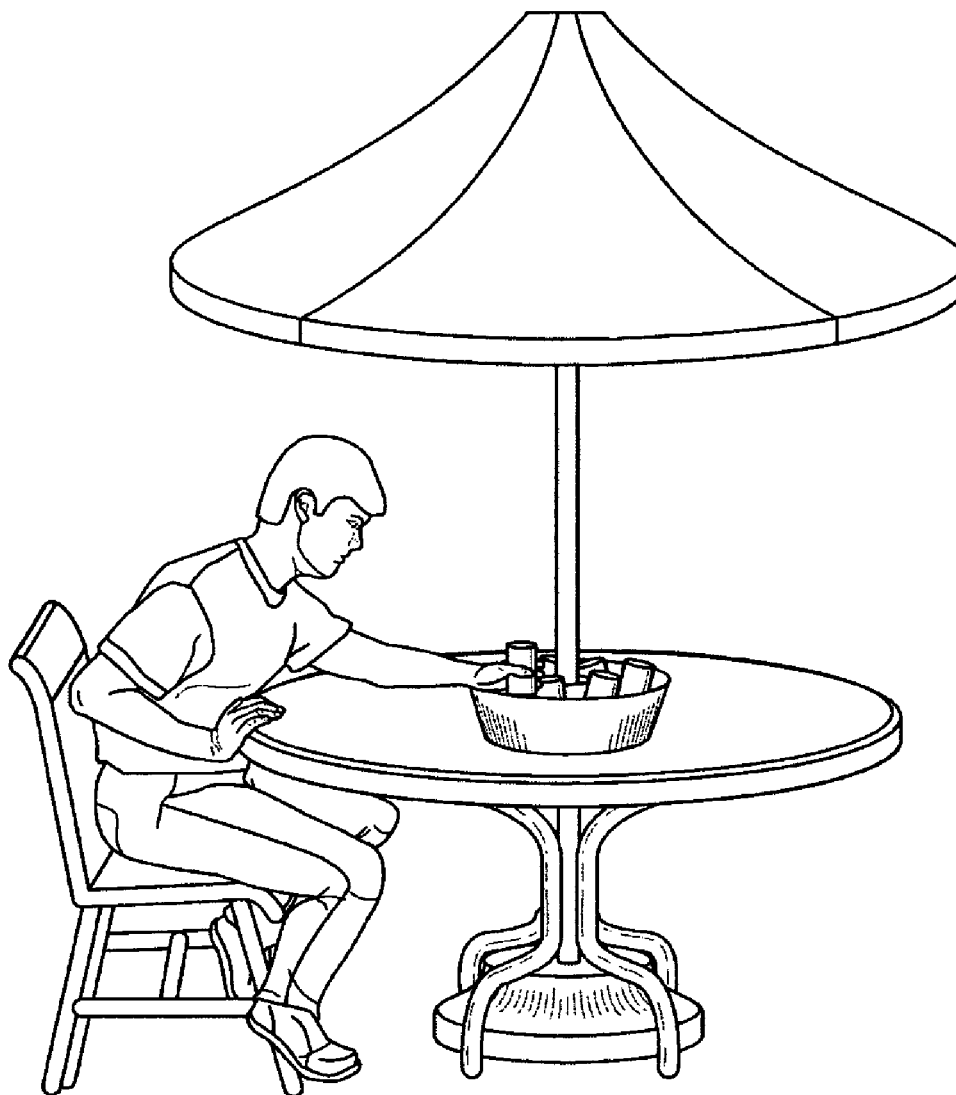
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

(21) Appl. No.: **11/183,094**

A leak proof patio table cooler unit adapted to receive ice, beverage containers, and that has a centrally located passageway in the cooler unit so that a patio umbrella mast can pass through the center of the cooler unit.

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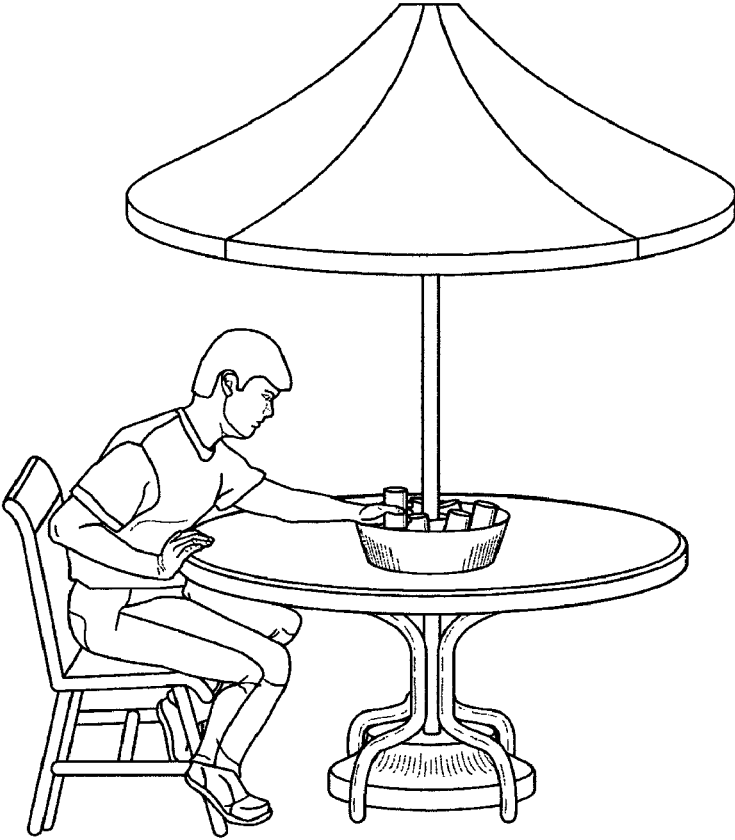


FIG. 1

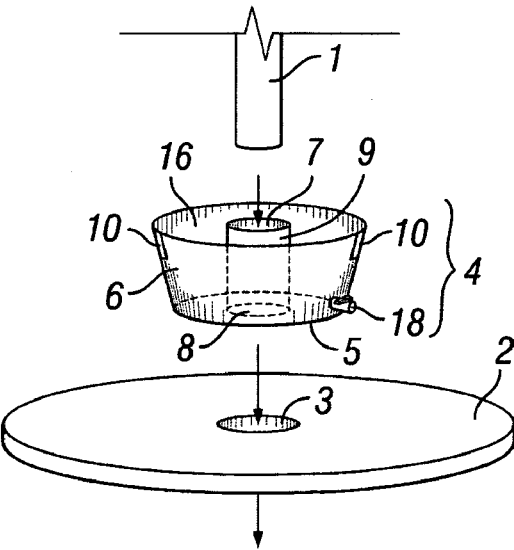


FIG. 2

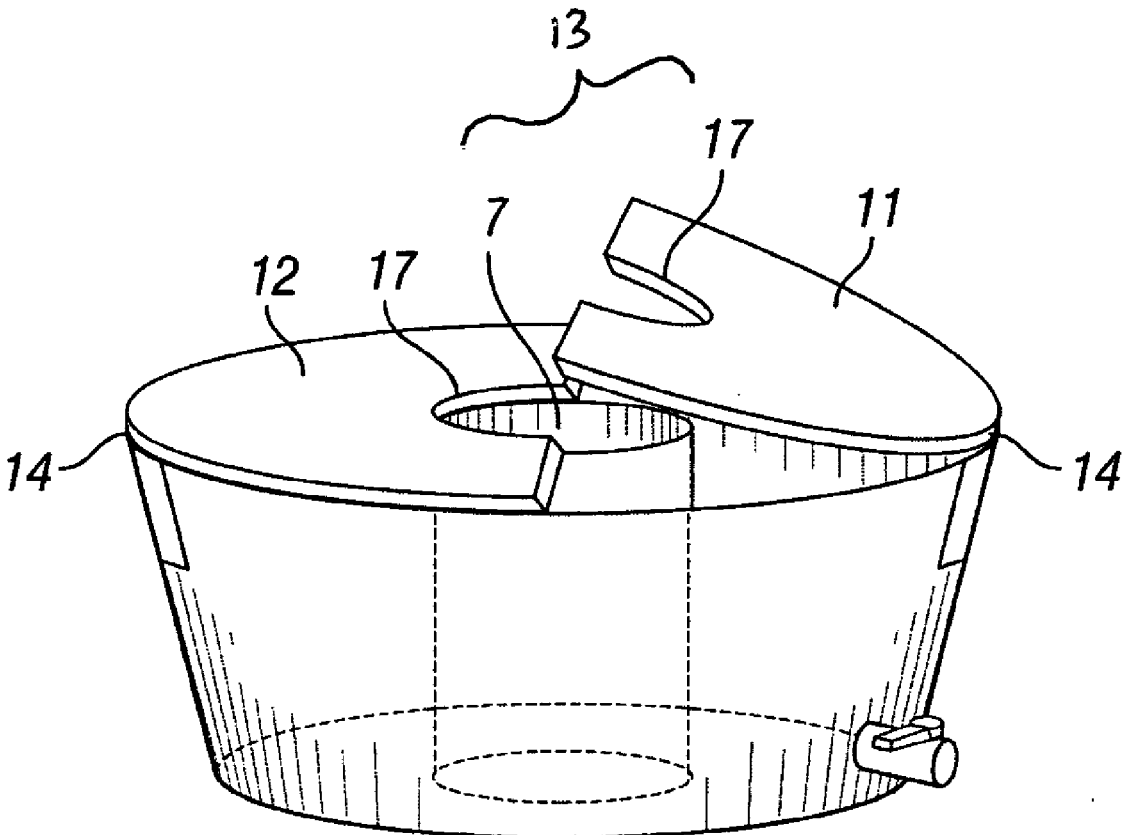


FIG. 3

PATIO UMBRELLA COOLER APPARATUS**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

[0001] Not applicable.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

[0002] Not applicable.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] 1. Field of Invention

[0004] The present invention relates to the field of patio umbrellas and coolers adapted for use with patio umbrella and table units.

[0005] 2. Description of Prior Art

[0006] There are a variety of beverage coolers on the market that have been designed to work in conjunction with an umbrella, a grill, or other recreational utilities, however, none thus far have adequately addressed the situation encountered by the user of a patio table not otherwise built to receive a beverage cooler. For example, Samuel Patarra (U.S. Pat. No. 6,374,839) invented a portable cooler with an umbrella mounting means that is essentially a rectangular ice chest with numerous attachments to receive umbrellas, drinks, etc. Similarly, the Trepedi ice chest (U.S. Pat. No. 6,474,097), Sharp (U.S. Pat. No. 6,536,733), Karpinski (U.S. Pat. No. 6,474,244) and Kopmar (U.S. Pat. No. 2,805,109) patents have suggested novel modifications of coolers and tables that work with picnic umbrellas. U.S. Pat. No. 6,199,570, also to Patarra, describes a portable umbrella/cooler unit, but that is structurally and materially different from the present invention, which is a separate cooler unit adapted to fit around commercially available patio furniture.

[0007] While all of the above references are good ideas and useful to the consuming public, they do not address the problems solved by the present invention. Commercially available patio furniture is not typically sold with built in beverage coolers, although the need is present and the feature is desirable and not available to the public. Users of patio furniture are generally using the patio furniture because to do so is relaxing. Any additional expenditures of energy by the user tend to disrupt the leisurely enjoyment of the patio furniture. Also, it is customary for users of patio furniture to enjoy a beverage, or several, while lounging. However, it is both annoying and cumbersome for a user to be compelled to return to a kitchen or to get up from his or her patio chair to bend over and open the top of most ice chest coolers to get a new beverage. The present invention solves the present leisure crisis of commercially available patio furniture and enhances the convenience of the user of patio furniture by providing a bucket styled cooler apparatus that is adapted to be used with most commercially available umbrella and patio table units. Further, the present invention will not obstruct typical uses of patio furniture table units.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] Accordingly, it is the objective of the present invention to provide a beverage cooler that has an umbrella mast passageway and which device is adapted to rest on top

of the user's patio table. The beverage cooler is adapted to fit most commercially available patio furniture, it does not leak, avoids condensation dripping, and optionally has a lid to maintain temperature.

[0009] It is a further objective of the present invention to provide a preferable embodiment that is insulated.

[0010] It is a further objective of the present invention to provide a cooler made from any of the group of materials which may include metal, sealed metal, galvanized metal, plastic, plastic, polystyrene, plastic-polystyrene combinations, or collapsible and insulated fabric materials that are commonly known in the cooler industry.

[0011] It is a further object of the present invention to enhance convenience and leisure of use to the user of patio furniture and to minimize expenditure of energy required to get a beverage.

[0012] It is further an object of the present invention to provide a cooler that is easy to install, inexpensive and of durable construction.

[0013] Other objectives of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art once the invention has been shown and described.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

[0014] The manner in which these objectives and other desirable characteristics can be obtained is explained in the following description and attached drawings in which:

[0015] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a person enjoying the benefits of the present invention.

[0016] FIG. 2 is a three-dimensional view of the table cooler unit as it is typically used with a patio table and with an umbrella mast.

[0017] FIG. 3 is a three-dimensional view of an optional embodiment of the circular beverage cooler with a hinged lid unit.

[0018] It is to be noted, however, that the appended drawings illustrate only typical embodiments of this invention and are therefore not to be considered limiting of its scope, for the invention may admit to other equally effective embodiments.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0019] FIG. 1 is a three-dimensional view of patio table cooler unit ("cooler unit") 4 as it typically appears when placed on a patio table 2 and used in conjunction with an umbrella mast 1. The cooler unit 4 is adapted to receive an umbrella mast 1 of a patio set umbrella through a mast passageway 9 located at a midpoint of the cooler unit 4. When properly used, the umbrella mast 1 will pass through the entire cooler unit 4 by way of the mast passageway 9 in much the same fashion as an axle would pass through a wheel. The mast passageway 9 is preferably defined by an overall tubular shape and connects a top aperture 7 and a bottom aperture 8. The mast passageway 9 has an inside wall and an outside wall, with the inside wall forming the guide for umbrella mast 1 as it passes through mast passageway 9 of the cooler unit 4. The outside wall of mast passageway 9 forms one wall of the beverage receiving channel 16 of the

cooler unit 4. The bottom aperture 8 of mast passageway 9 also forms an aperture at a midpoint of cooler bottom 5, which is where an umbrella mast 1 finally passes through the mast passageway 9 and down through the patio table 2 at table aperture 3 to the base of a patio table 2 where the umbrella mast 1 is typically secured. The cooler bottom 5 forms a preferable circular plane extending outward from and preferably perpendicular to mast passageway 9. The cooler unit 4 is preferably watertight as with the other surface interfaces of the present invention and as further described in this specification. Cooler bottom 5 extends outward on a horizontal plane from bottom aperture 8 until it interfaces with cooler wall 6. Cooler wall 6 extends upward from cooler bottom 5 and forms an outermost wall of the cooler unit 4. Also shown in FIG. 1 is the preferable embodiment of a drain 18, which extends through the cooler wall 6 to permit drainage of melted ice or other liquids. This drain is selectively open or closed by the user and can be as simple as a plug apparatus, or it may also take the form of a spigot, valve, tap, or faucet. Alternately the drain may be located through the cooler bottom 5. The drain is an important preferable feature because it permits draining of the cooler unit 4 without the need to remove the umbrella mast 1 from the patio table 2.

[0020] The overall preferable appearance of the cooler unit 4 is that of a bucket, through the center of which passes an umbrella mast 1. The umbrella passes through a defined mast passageway 9. The cooler unit 4 is preferably open at its top so that ice and beverages may be loaded from the top into the unit. The user's preferable content, ice, beers, etc., is loaded into the beverage receiving channel 16, which is the space inside the circular cooler unit 4. The beverage receiving channel 16 form is defined by the cooler bottom 5, the cooler wall 6 (forming the outermost wall of the cooler unit 4) and with the outer wall of mast passageway 9 forming the inside wall of said beverage receiving channel 16. The beverage receiving channel 16 is the part of the unit that ultimately holds ice, beverages, cold food, etc. In another preferred use of the invention, a user may elect to fill the apparatus with dry goods, or even plants that may not require refrigeration.

[0021] The entire cooler unit apparatus is preferably of uniform construction and may be cast in metal, molded in plastic form, polystyrene, machined and welded, galvanized metal, or interfacing surfaces (e.g., cooler wall, cooler bottom, interior wall) are sealed with watertight resins or glues. Other preferable constructions include walls made from plastic reinforced polystyrene, and as used on most commercially available ice chests. Yet another preferable material would be of more flexible watertight fabrics as are used on commercially available expandable coolers. A typical example of this flexi fabric would be as used by the ice chest product sold under Igloo® Soft 6™ mark, which has an impermeable nylon liner.

[0022] The cooler unit 4 has a preferable cooler bottom 5 of a diameter of range of six (6) to forty-eight (48) inches, to accommodate most commercially available patio furniture. A preferable diameter of both the top aperture 7 and bottom aperture 8 would be in the range of one (1) inch to seven (7) inches in diameter. The height of the cooler unit wall 6, from the cooler bottom 5 to the maximum height would be in the range of two (2) inches to twenty-four (24) inches. This invention discloses yet three (3) additional

preferences wherein the mast passageway may be either (1) of the same height of the cooler unit wall; (2) where the mast passageway 9 is taller than the maximum height of the cooler unit wall 6 and extends above the top of the cooler unit wall 6; and (3) a preference where the mast passageway 9 is less than the maximum height of the cooler unit wall 6. Each of these preferences are desirable embodiments from the perspective of controlling leakage and condensation from the cooler unit 4. It is further disclosed that the mast passageway 9 could preferably extend in the range of zero (0) to eight (8) inches above the maximum cooler wall 6 height and could be less in the range of zero (0) to four (4) inches beneath the maximum height of the cooler wall 6.

[0023] FIG. 2 provides a three-dimensional view of an optional embodiment of the present invention, with the additional novel feature to include the cooler unit 4 being a lid unit 13. This preferable two-piece lid unit is formed of a left lid 12 and a right lid 11, both of which are hingedly attached at a lid hinge 14 on cooler wall 6. The left 12 and right lid 11 units are defined by a cutaway 17 that is adapted to permit an umbrella mast to pass through cooler unit 4. The cutaway 17 of each side of the lid unit 13 forms an aperture that is preferably at least the diameter of the top aperture 7, thereby permitting passage of an umbrella mast 1 through the cooler unit 4. This lid unit 13 is preferably made from all the aforementioned materials that can preferably be used to manufacture the cooler unit 4 described in FIG. 1.

[0024] It is to be noted, however, that the appended drawings illustrate only typical embodiments of this invention and are therefore not to be considered limiting of its scope, for the invention may admit to other equally effective embodiments which will be recognized by those reasonably skilled in this industry.

I claim:

1. A table cooler unit comprising:
 - (a) a centrally fixed mast passageway with a top aperture and a bottom aperture, said mast passageway adapted to permit passage of an umbrella mast,
 - (b) said cooler unit having a beverage receiving channel;
 - (c) whereby said cooler unit sits centrally upon a patio table despite the presence of an umbrella mast extending down through said table.
2. The table cooler unit of claim 1 further comprising a drain.
3. The table cooler unit of claim 1 wherein said cooler unit features a cooler wall with handles permanently affixed to said cooler wall to permit easy carrying of said cooler unit.
4. The table cooler unit of claim 1 formed from any of the groups of materials consisting of metal, plastic, polystyrene, galvanized metal, plastic reinforced polystyrene, or flexi-fabric featuring an impermeable nylon liner
5. The table cooler unit of claim 1, wherein a cooler bottom has a diameter in the range of 6 to 48 inches to accommodate most commercially available patio furniture.
6. The table cooler unit of claim 1, wherein said top aperture and bottom apertures are in the range of 1 to 7 inches in diameter.

7. The table cooler unit of claim 1, wherein the height of a cooler unit wall from a cooler bottom to the maximum height is in the range of 2 inches to 24 inches.

8. The table cooler unit of claim 1, wherein said mast passageway is the same height as a cooler unit wall.

9. The table cooler unit of claim 1, wherein said mast passageway is taller than the maximum height of a cooler unit wall and extends above the top of said cooler unit wall.

10. The table cooler unit of claim 1, wherein said mast passageway is less than the maximum height of a cooler unit wall.

11. A table cooler unit comprising:

(a) a centrally fixed mast passageway with a top aperture and a bottom aperture, said mast passageway adapted to permit passage of an umbrella mast,

(b) said cooler unit having a beverage receiving channel; and,

(c) a lid unit.

12. The table cooler unit of claim 11 further comprising a lid unit featuring a left lid and a right lid hingedly connected to said cooler unit.

13. The table cooler unit of claim 11 further comprising a drain.

14. The table cooler unit of claim 11 wherein a cooler wall features handles permanently affixed to said cooler wall to permit easy carrying of said cooler unit.

15. The table unit of claim 11 wherein said cooler wall is formed from any of the groups of materials consisting of metal, plastic, polystyrene, galvanized metal, plastic reinforced polystyrene, or flexi-fabric featuring an impermeable nylon liner

16. The table cooler unit of claim 11, wherein a cooler bottom has a diameter in the range of 6 to 48 inches to accommodate most commercially available patio furniture.

17. The table cooler unit of claim 11, wherein said top aperture and bottom apertures is in the range of 1 to 7 inches in diameter.

18. The table cooler unit of claim 11, wherein the height of a cooler unit wall from a cooler bottom to the maximum height is in the range of 2 inches to 24 inches.

19. The table cooler unit of claim 11, wherein said mast passageway is the same height as a cooler unit wall.

20. The table cooler unit of claim 11, wherein the mast passageway is taller than the maximum height of the cooler unit wall and extends above the top of the cooler unit wall.

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