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(54) CHAFING DISH-LIKE DEVICE

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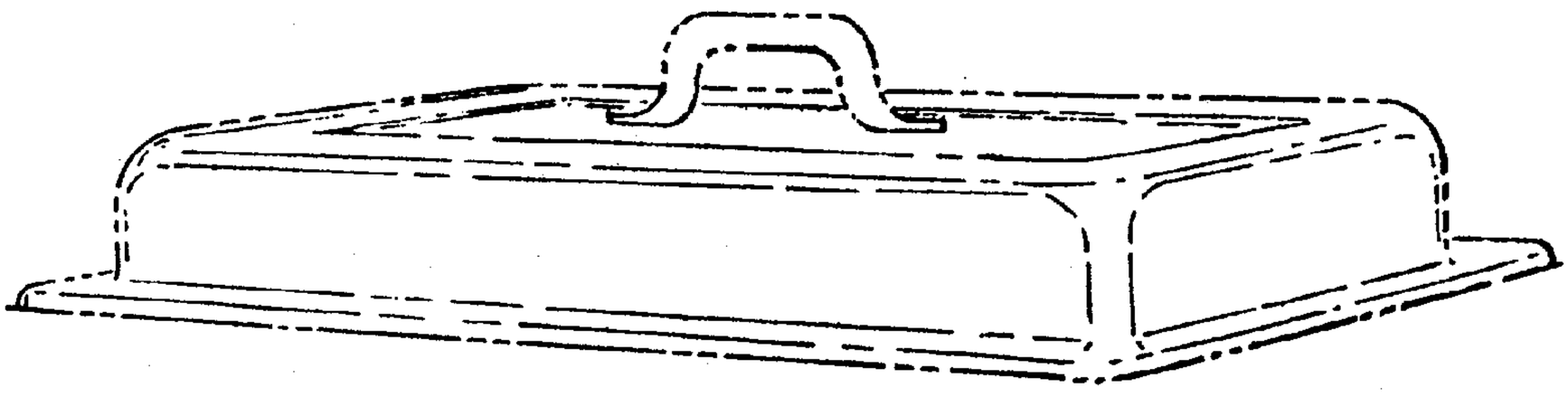
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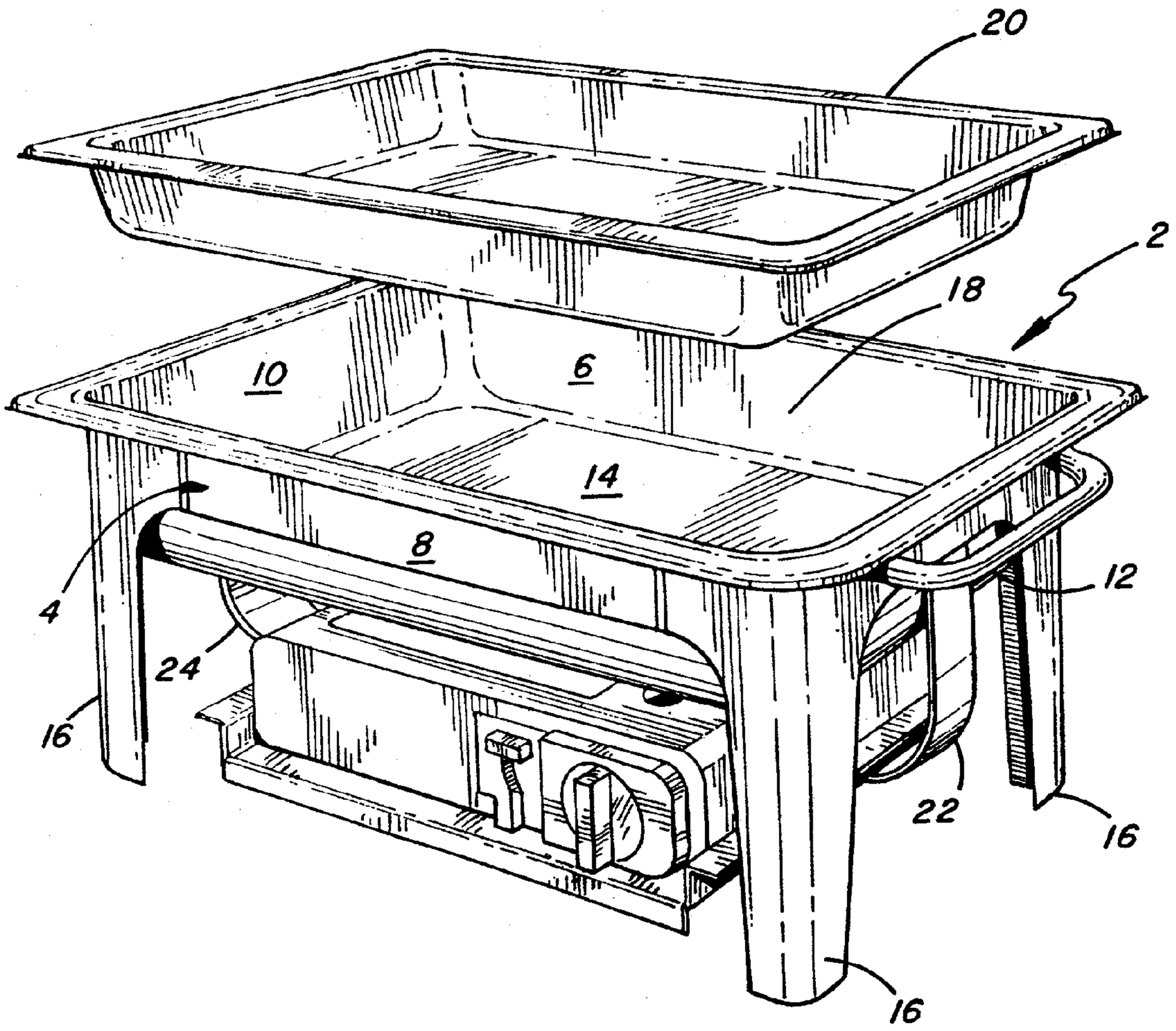
(51) **Int. Cl.**[7] **F24C 3/08**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **126/33**; 126/50; 126/40

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A chafing dish having a depending shelf of unique configurations so as to receive a conventional heating unit in sufficiently retained relationship to make the assemblage easily asportable.





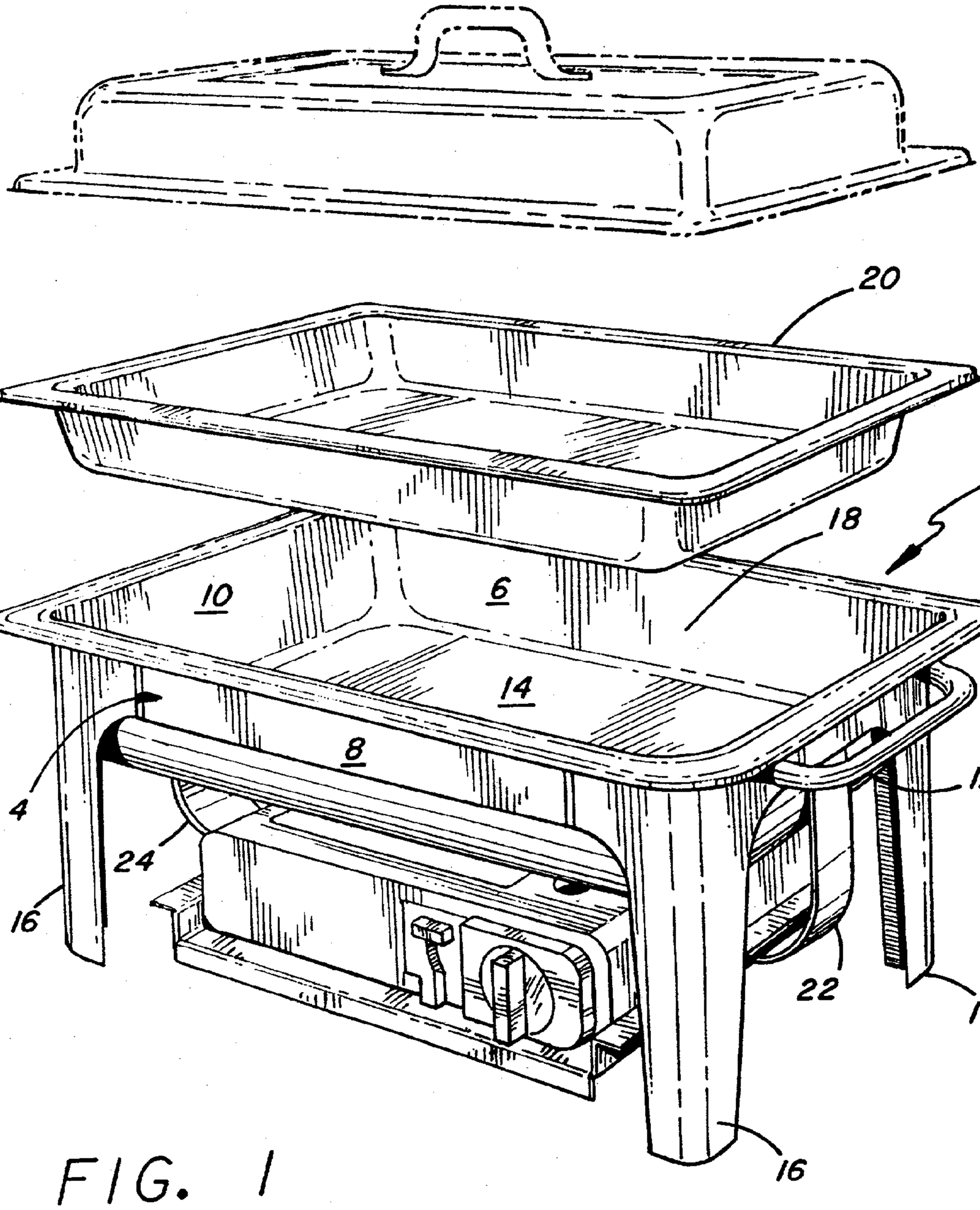


FIG. 1

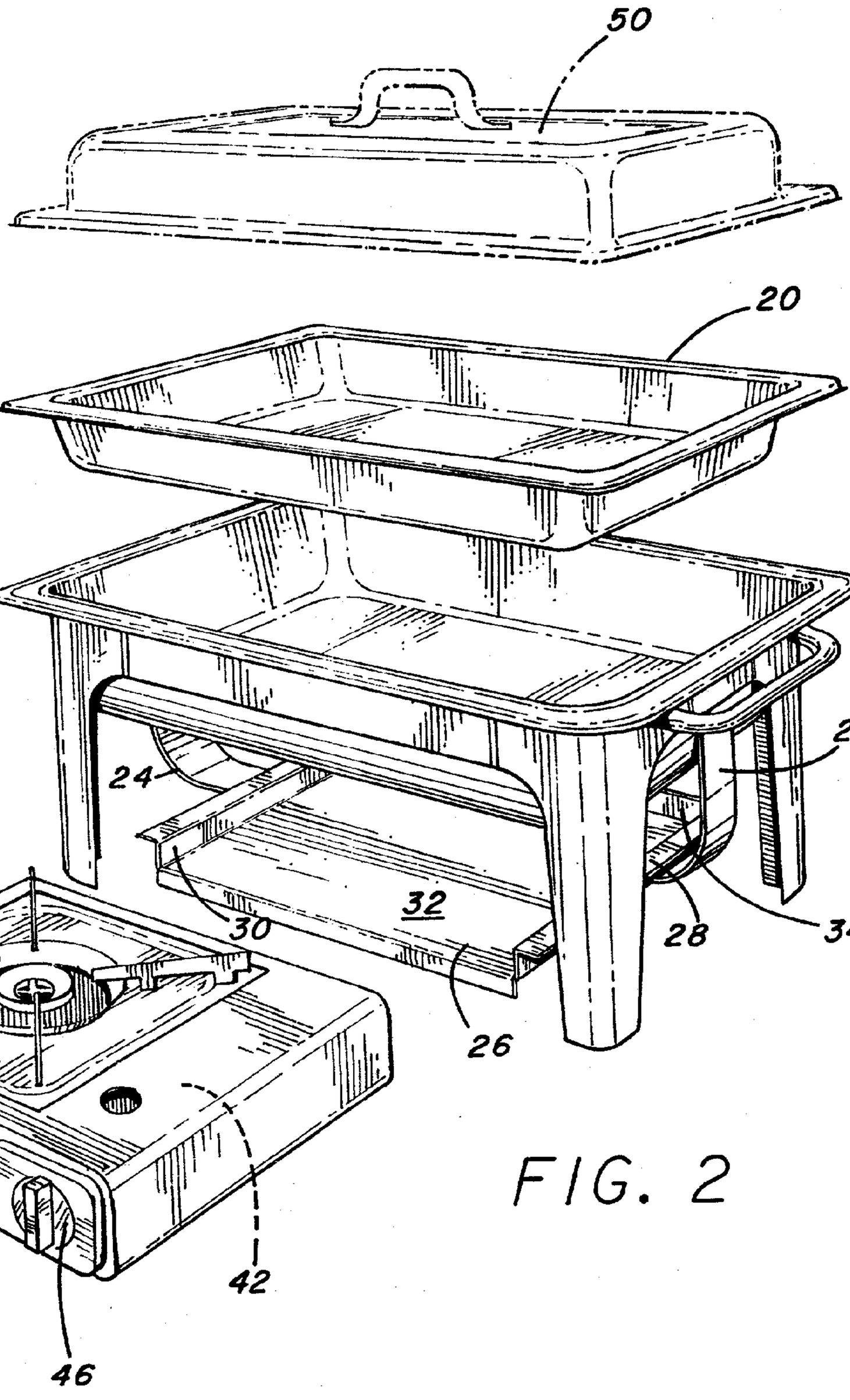


FIG. 2

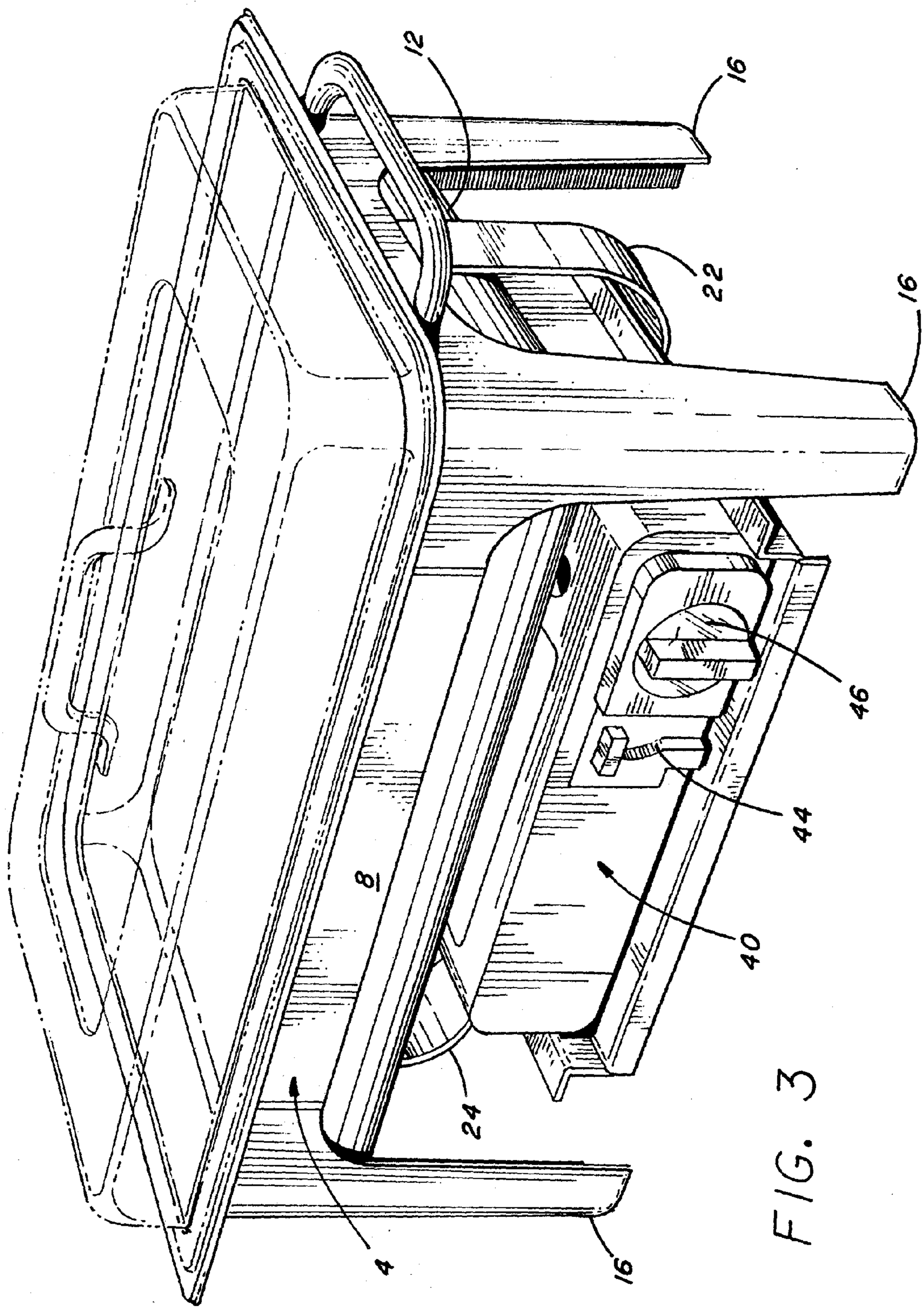


FIG. 3

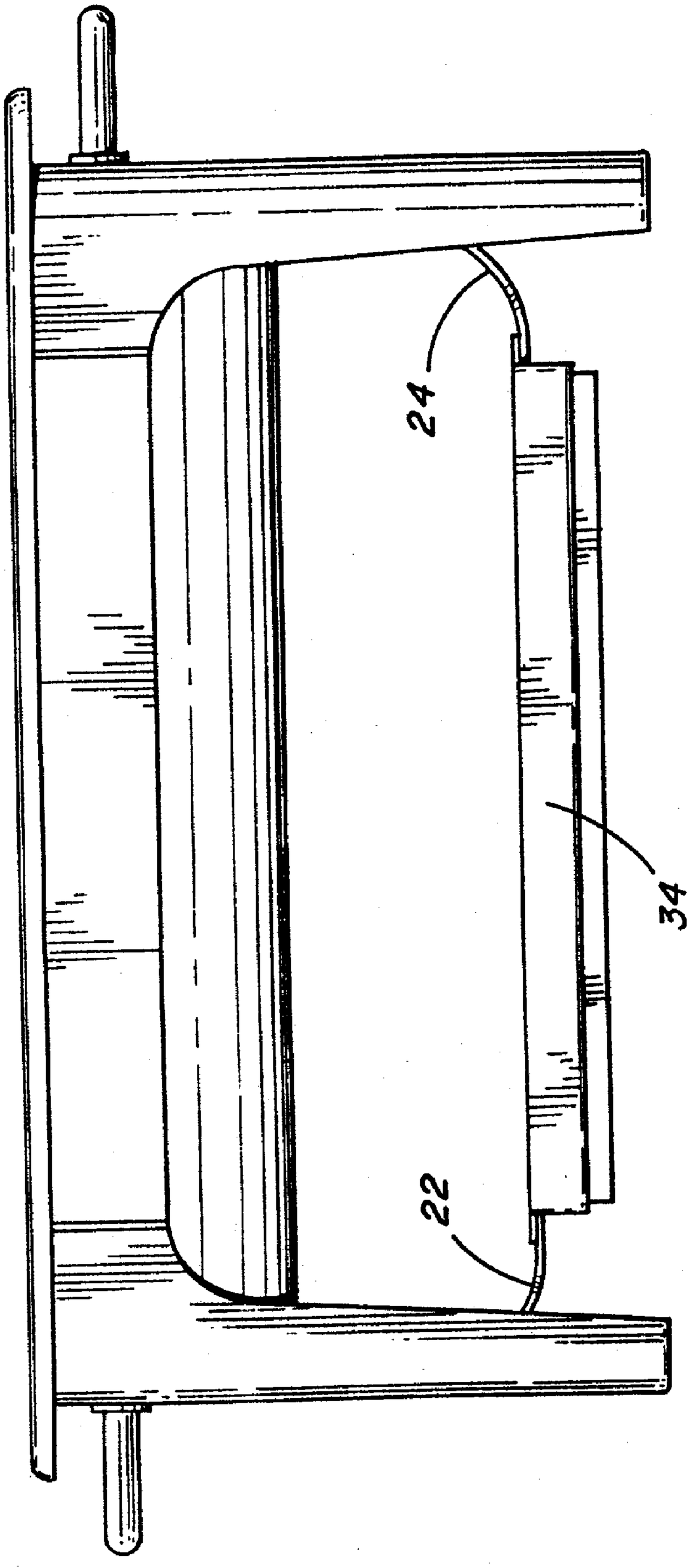


FIG. 4

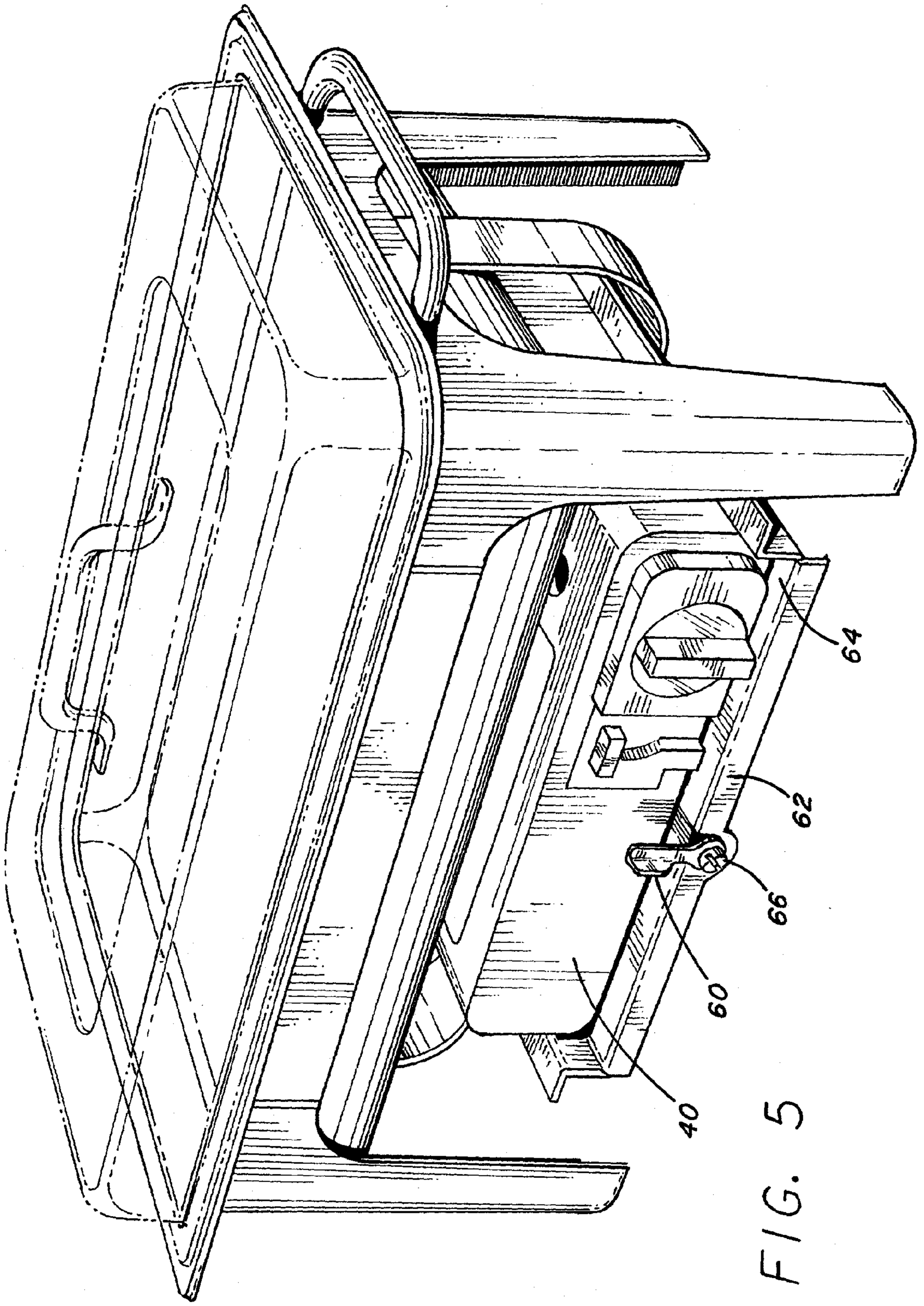


FIG. 5

CHAFING DISH-LIKE DEVICE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] This invention pertains to dish-like devices commonly referred to as chafing dishes, which are used to contain and dispense food primarily in a heated manner. Prior art chafing dishes have suffered in that they have not utilized heating elements that are readily compatible considering the nature of the function to be achieved. That is, chafing dishes have traditionally been heated via cans of combustible gel or the like which are placed underneath the chafing dish to provide a heat source or, alternately, a heating means attached to an external source of fuel has been placed under the bottom of the chafing dish or on a shelf provided therefor. These prior art uses have been cumbersome particularly considering the ambulatory nature of chafing dishes when they are used by caterers and the like.

[0003] The chafing dish of the instant invention solves many of these problems by providing a chafing dish with a shelf having continuous surface and of adequate size to receive a conventional heating unit wherein the heating unit may contain a source of fuel supply within itself.

[0004] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0005] Horewitch U.S. Pat. No. 4,899,722 pertains to BURNER ASSEMBLY FOR HEATING CHAFING DISHES wherein a chafing dish is disclosed having a discontinuous shelf supported therebeneath having the ubiquitous chafing dish with openings **33** and **35** dimensioned to receive wick-type or open canister-type of heaters which normally contain combustible material which are lighted when heat is desired. This patented chafing dish requires an external heating member that is positioned outside of the confines of the chafing dish assembly or unit itself.

[0006] Schwartz U.S. Pat. No. 5,211,157 discloses a PORTABLE FOOD WARMING DEVICE ASSEMBLY which is again illustrative of the type of chafing dish heretofore found in the prior art having a shelf supported beneath the bottom of the chafing dish but configured to receive canisters or cans of combustible material which are ignited but in the instant invention of the patent utilizes an externally located heater for heating the contents of the chafing dish.

[0007] The foregoing references, as well as other references cited in the Information Disclosure Statement filed concurrently herewith illustrate chafing dishes which are cumbersome to use, expensive to manufacture and still have certain shortcomings which the invention of the instant patent application overcomes.

[0008] For example, the chafing dish of the instant application has a depending shelf positioned so as to adequately receive a conventional heating unit with a self-contained source of fuel, much like those heating units found in camping situations, and wherein the burner of the heating unit is in close proximity to the bottom wall of the chafing dish itself. Additionally, in other embodiments, a lip or flange or other retaining means may be positioned on one or two of the long sides of the shelf in order to maintain the singularity of chafing dish and associated heating unit so as to make the same easily portable for use by, as for example, caterers, restaurateurs and the like.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] The invention is directed to a dish-like device from which food is to be dispensed, comprising the combination of an open topped member defining a container having side and bottom walls and being adapted to contain food therein. The open topped member has depending legs adapted to be supported from a support surface. A shelf having lateral edges is cooperatively supported from the open topped member a predetermined distance from the bottom wall thereof and defines a space of predetermined size with the shelf in one instance or embodiment of the invention having an upraised projection on at least one of the lateral edges in order to be able to act as an abutment stop where a heating unit or member is associated with the dish-like device.

OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

[0010] It is an object of the present invention to provide a chafing dish-like device which has a shelf having a continuous surface suspended beneath a bottom wall of the chafing dish and which is adapted to receive a heater unit therein.

[0011] It is another important object of the invention to provide a dish-like device which has a shelf supported therefrom and which is sized to accommodate conventionally found heating units of the type having a self-contained source of fuel.

[0012] It is another important object of the invention to provide a chafing dish wherein the chafing dish is of metal construction and has a dependedly supported shelf of a size to accommodate a conventionally found burner or heating unit wherein the burner is positionable in close proximity to the bottom wall of the chafing dish.

[0013] It is another more important specific object of the invention to provide a chafing dish having a depending supported shelf which is adapted to receive a heating unit, and wherein the heating unit is retained in position by means of an abutment stop or the like on the shelf for ease of transportation of the chafing dish.

[0014] These and other objects and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent from the hereinafter following commentary taken in conjunction with the drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] **FIG. 1** is a front perspective view showing the chafing dish of the invention with the conventional food container being shown in the exploded position and with the conventional cover for the chafing dish being shown in phantom line;

[0016] **FIG. 2** illustrates the chafing dish of the invention shown in **FIG. 1** but with the heating unit extracted from its position beneath the bottom wall of the chafing dish;

[0017] **FIG. 3** illustrates the chafing dish as shown in **FIG. 1** but in more detail;

[0018] **FIG. 4** illustrates the back view of the chafing dish shown in **FIG. 1**; and

[0019] **FIG. 5** illustrates the chafing dish of **FIG. 3** but showing another retaining means or abutment stop for the heating unit.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BEST EMBODIMENTS CONTEMPLATED

[0020] The detailed description set forth below in connection with the appended drawings is intended as a description of presently-preferred embodiments of the invention and is not intended to represent the only forms in which the present invention may be constructed and/or utilized. The description sets forth the functions and the sequence of steps for constructing and operating the invention in connection with the illustrated embodiments. However, it is to be understood that the same or equivalent functions and sequences may be accomplished by different embodiments that are also intended to be encompassed within the spirit and scope of the invention.

[0021] Referring to the drawings wherein like numerals of reference refer to like elements throughout, it will be seen that the chafing dish **2** of the invention comprises a first container **4** having long side walls **6** and **8** with short side walls **10** and **12** with bottom wall **14** and having depending spaced legs **16** and forming a recess or interior volume **18** to receive dish **20** of congruent shape to chafing dish **2**.

[0022] In this particular instance, chafing dish **2** is of metal construction and has depending lateral supports **22** and **24** which in this particular instance are welded or otherwise secured, as by means or bolts, to the side walls **10** and **12** of chafing dish **2**. It will be noted that the lateral supports **22** and **24** terminate in suspended shelf **26** having side walls **28** and **30** with continuous surface **32** and with the rearward edge of shelf **26**, as best seen in **FIG. 2**, having an upraised lip or flange **34** extending the length thereof. Obviously the lip or flange **34** may not necessarily extend the entire length of the rearward edge but instead may be spaced tabs or even a single, centered upraised abutment.

[0023] The shelf **26** is of sufficient size and is supported a sufficient distance beneath bottom wall **14** of chafing dish **2** so as to accommodate conventionally available heater unit **40** having self-contained source of fuel such as a can of butane **42** within the compartment or space formed in heating unit **40**. It will be noted that in unit **40** is the conventional piso electric ignition starter **44** control for butane fuel **46** and burner assembly **48**, and those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that upon actuation the heating unit **40** emits butane fueled flames in the burner area **48** so that when heating unit **40** is positioned on surface **32** of shelf **26** the bottom wall **14** and hence food (not shown) contained within container **20** are heated. The heater unit **40** of course is adequately retained in position as shown in **FIGS. 1, 3** and **4** and is helped to maintain the positioning by reason of lateral lip or flange **34**. Cover **50** completes the commonly found assemblage of a chafing dish that is utilized for containing food to be heated and from which food is to be dispensed.

[0024] While the chafing dish **2** with the received heating unit **40** may be adequately carried from place to place without the burner **40** falling off the shelf **26**, in most instances it has been found that by providing the lip or flange **34** it is easier to carry the dish **2**. In other instances it may be desirable to more captively receive or retain the heating unit **40** in the assemblage as shown in **FIGS. 1, 3** and **4**. Referring to **FIG. 5 a** retaining member **60** comprising a simple stop member is associated with the front edge **62** of shelf **64** so that by rotating the abutment member **60** into the vertical position as shown in **FIG. 5** the heating unit **40** is adequately retained on the shelf **64** for transport. For removal of the heating unit **40** the abutment **60** is merely rotated 90° about its pivot point or screw **66** in order to allow clearance of the heater **40** therefrom.

[0025] Thus, there has been described and illustrated a chafing dish-like device which is relatively simple in construction, easily manufactured and is primarily and uniquely adapted to receive a conventional heating unit which allows for replenishing of the butane source of fuel and which does away with the hazardous use of open containers of heated and fired flammable substances and further dispenses with the need of having a sophisticated heating member's hoses and connections and wherein the chafing dish in its assembled form with heater is easily carried from place to place in a safe and easy manner. The chafing dish of the invention also allows for compact storage in that the heater and chafing dish are stored and carried as a unit.

[0026] While the dish-like device of the invention has been described with regard to specific elements, those with ordinary skill in the art will recognize that other changes and modifications will be readily apparent as, for example, the chafing dish-like device may not necessarily be rectangularly shaped, but could be square. Additionally, instead of having a lip or flange extending the entire length of the back edge of the shelf, one may have other means of providing an abutment stop so as to allow the heating unit that is conventionally found in the marketplace, is adequately retained within the assemblage and these are matters that will make themselves apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art as will the means of supporting the shelf, whether it be from the side walls of the chafing dish or from the legs. All such changes and modifications are intended to be covered by the appended claims.

[0027] While the present invention has been described with regards to particular embodiments, it should be recognized that additional variations of the present invention may be devised without departing from the disclosed inventive concept.

What is claimed is:

1. A dish-like device from which food is to be dispensed comprising the combination of:

an open topped member defining a container having side and bottom walls and being adapted to contain food, said open topped member having depending legs adapted to be supported from a surface; a shelf having lateral edges and being cooperatively supported from said open topped member a predetermined distance from said bottom wall and defining a space of predetermined size, said shelf having an upraised projection on at least one of said lateral edges.

2. A dish-like device in accordance with claim 1 wherein said upraised projection is a lip extending the length of one of said edges.

3. A dish-like device in accordance with claim 2 wherein said space of predetermined size is adapted to receive and house a heating member.

4. A dish-like device in accordance with claim 3 wherein said device is rectangular in configuration and is fabricated of metal and said heating member is a burner assembly having a self-contained source of fuel.

5. A chaffing dish from which food is to be dispensed comprising the combination of:

an open topped member defining a container having side and bottom walls and adapted to contain food therein;

a plurality of legs cooperatively associated with said container and depending downwardly and being adapted to be supported from a surface; a shelf cooperatively suspended beneath said bottom wall and defining a space therebetween, said shelf having a continuous surface and being about congruently shaped to said bottom wall; said space being sufficient in size to receive within said space, in close tolerance relationship to said bottom wall a heating unit whereby food contained within said chaffing dish may be heated.

6. The chaffing dish in accordance with claim 5 wherein said chaffing dish is rectangular in configuration and said shelf has an upraised lip extending the length of one of its long sides.

7. The chaffing dish in accordance with claim 6 wherein said chaffing dish and plurality of legs are of metal construction.

8. The chaffing dish in accordance with claim 7 wherein said chaffing dish additionally includes a heating unit having a self-contained source of fuel.

9. The chaffing dish in accordance with claim 8 wherein said shelf is supported from said chaffing dish along its short sides.

10. The chaffing dish in accordance with claim 9 wherein said shelf has a heater unit retention member on the long side opposite said upraised lip.

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