



(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Chiang et al.

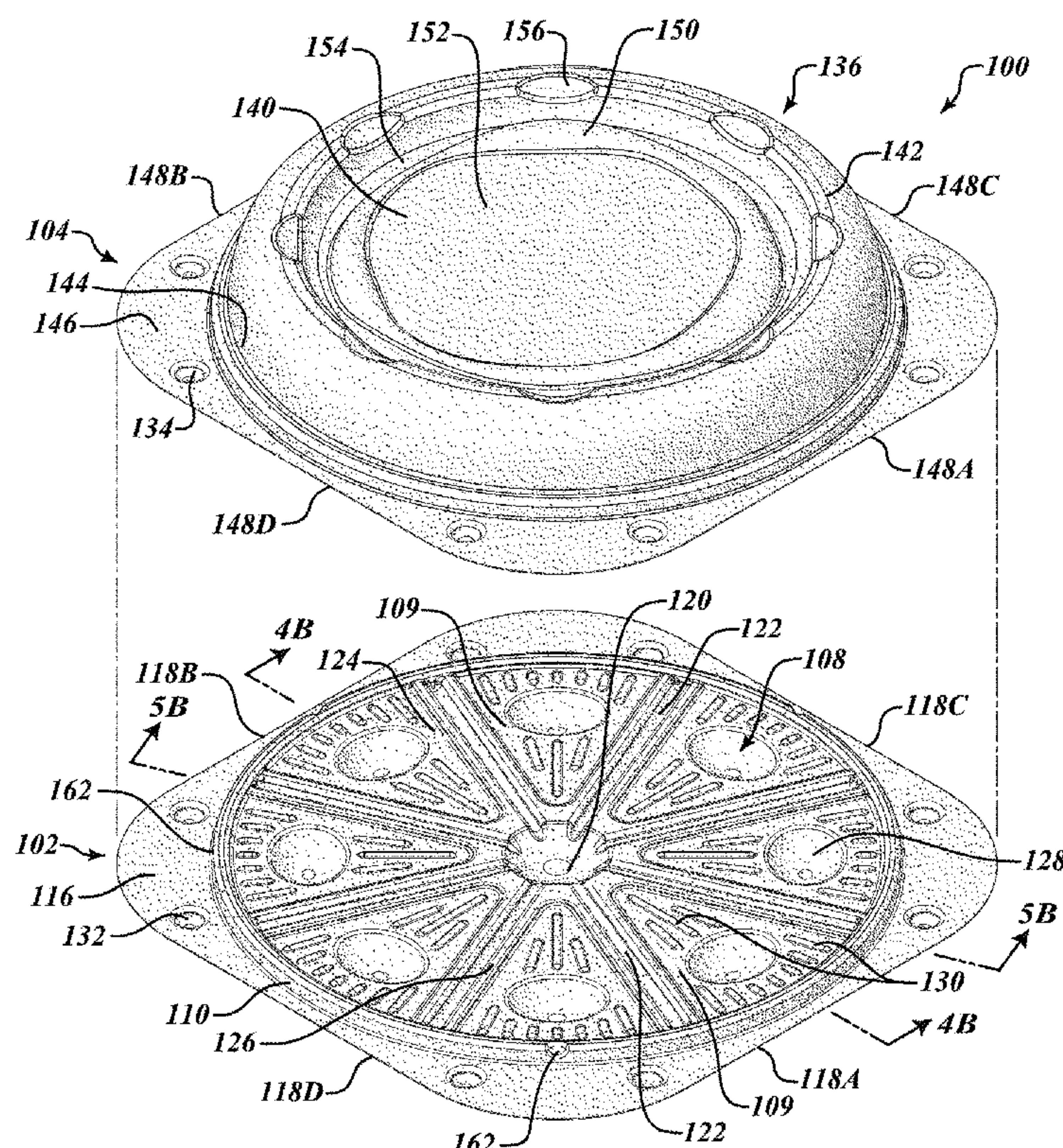
(10) **Pub. No.: US 2021/0002055 A1**
(43) **Pub. Date: Jan. 7, 2021**

47/145 (2013.01)

ABSTRACT

Systems and methods for providing compostable food containers which preserve the quality of a food product for an extended duration of time, and which optionally allow for cooking of the food product therein. In some implementations, the food containers are sturdy, stackable, insulating, and require minimal or no manual labor to assemble. In some implementations, the food container includes a base and a cover which cooperate to form a closed chamber for supporting, protecting, insulating and optionally cooking a food product, such as a pizza. The base and cover may each be formed of a single layer of material including, but not limited to, molded sugarcane fiber (“bagasse”), molded wood fiber, molded bamboo fiber, molded paper or plastic.

B65D 21/02 (2006.01)



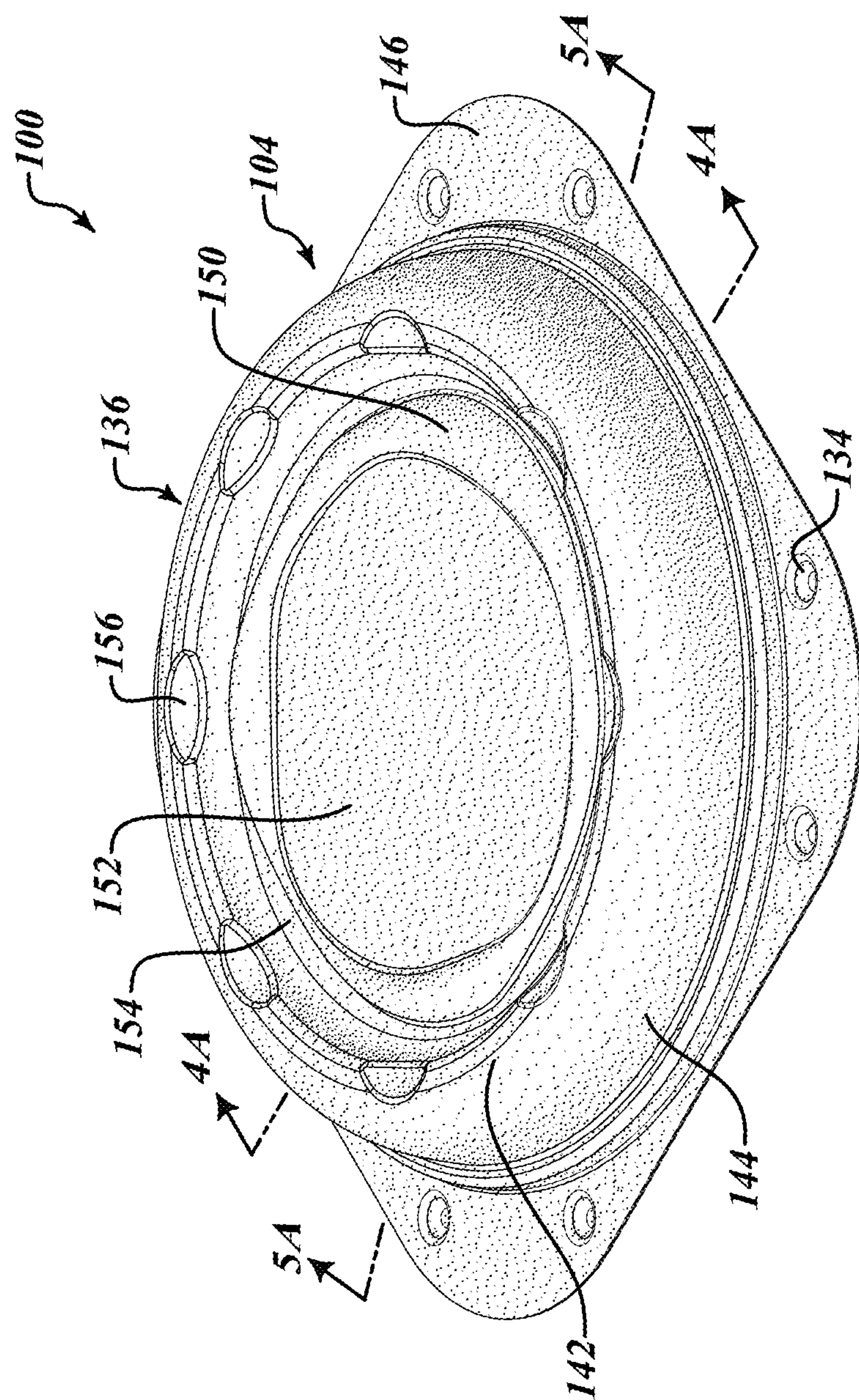


FIG. 1A

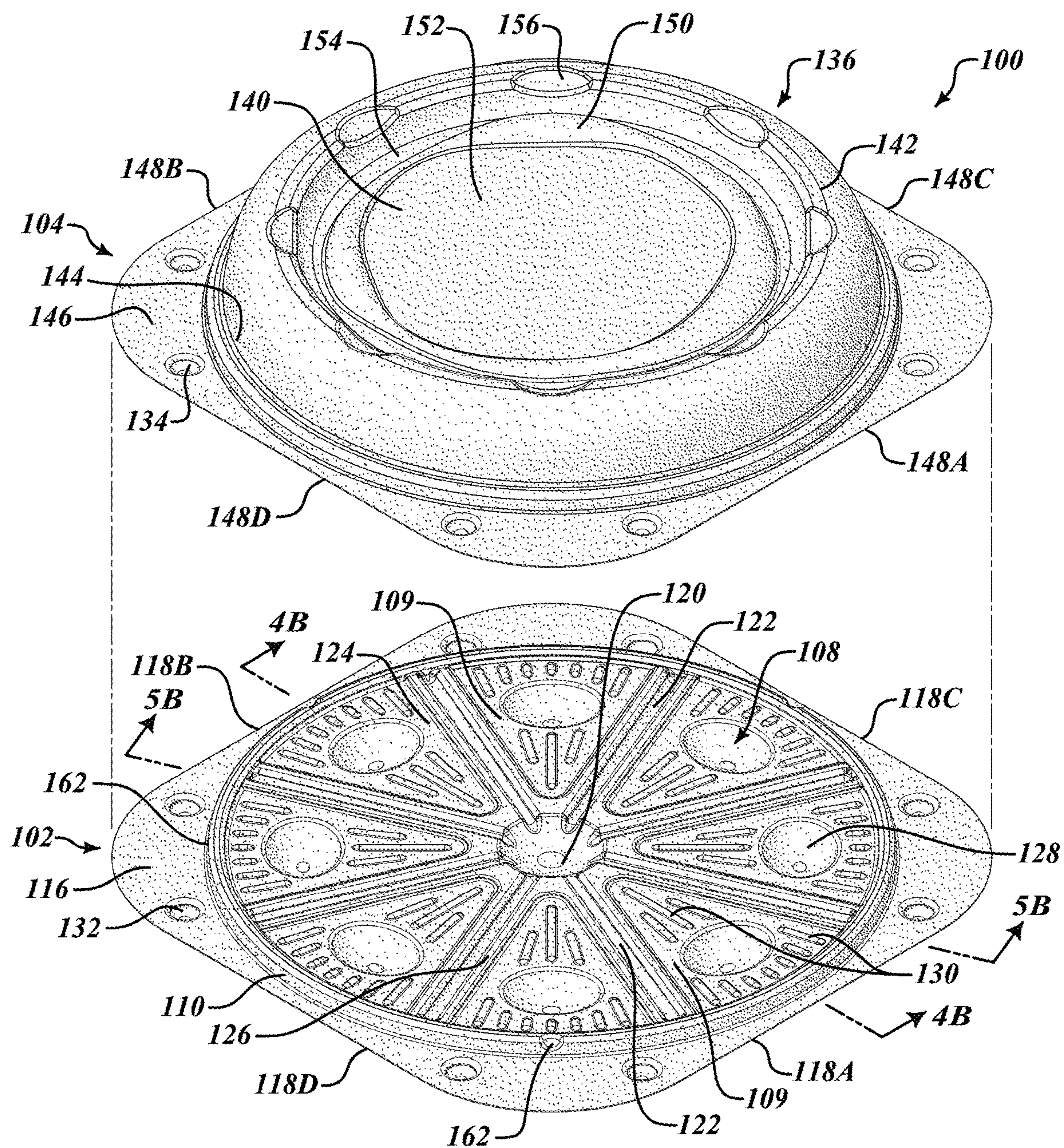


FIG. 1B

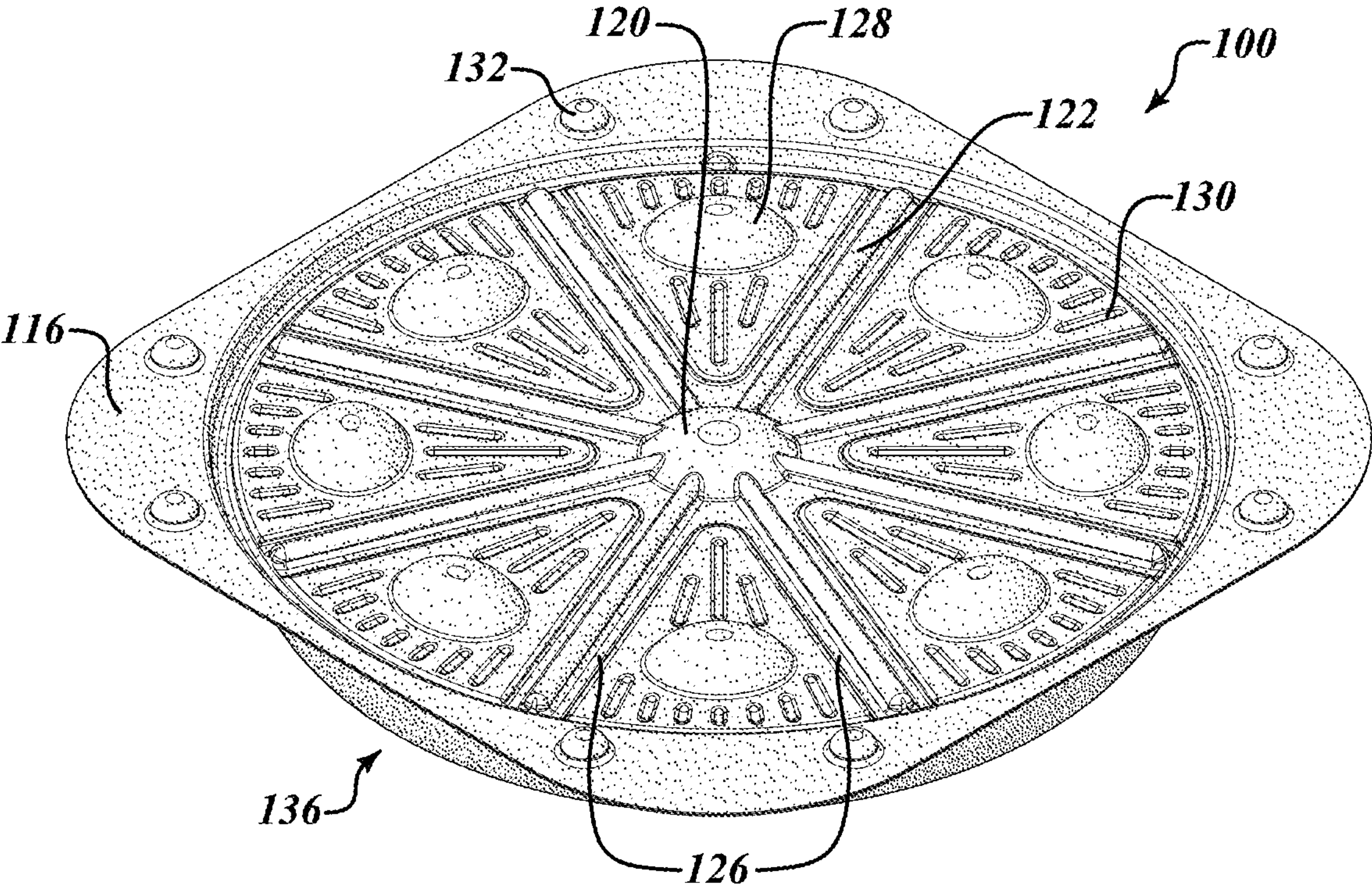


FIG. 2A

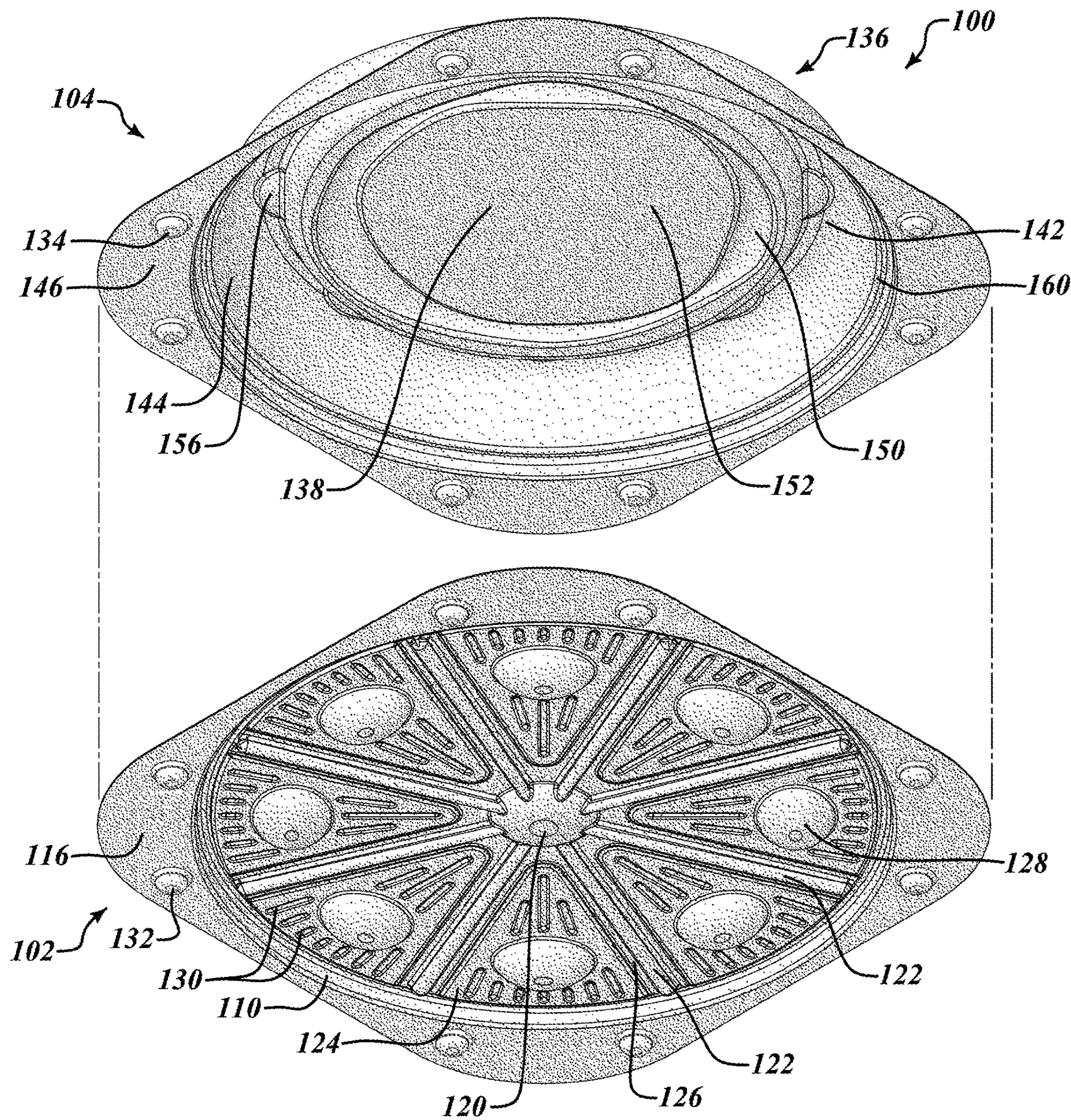


FIG. 2B

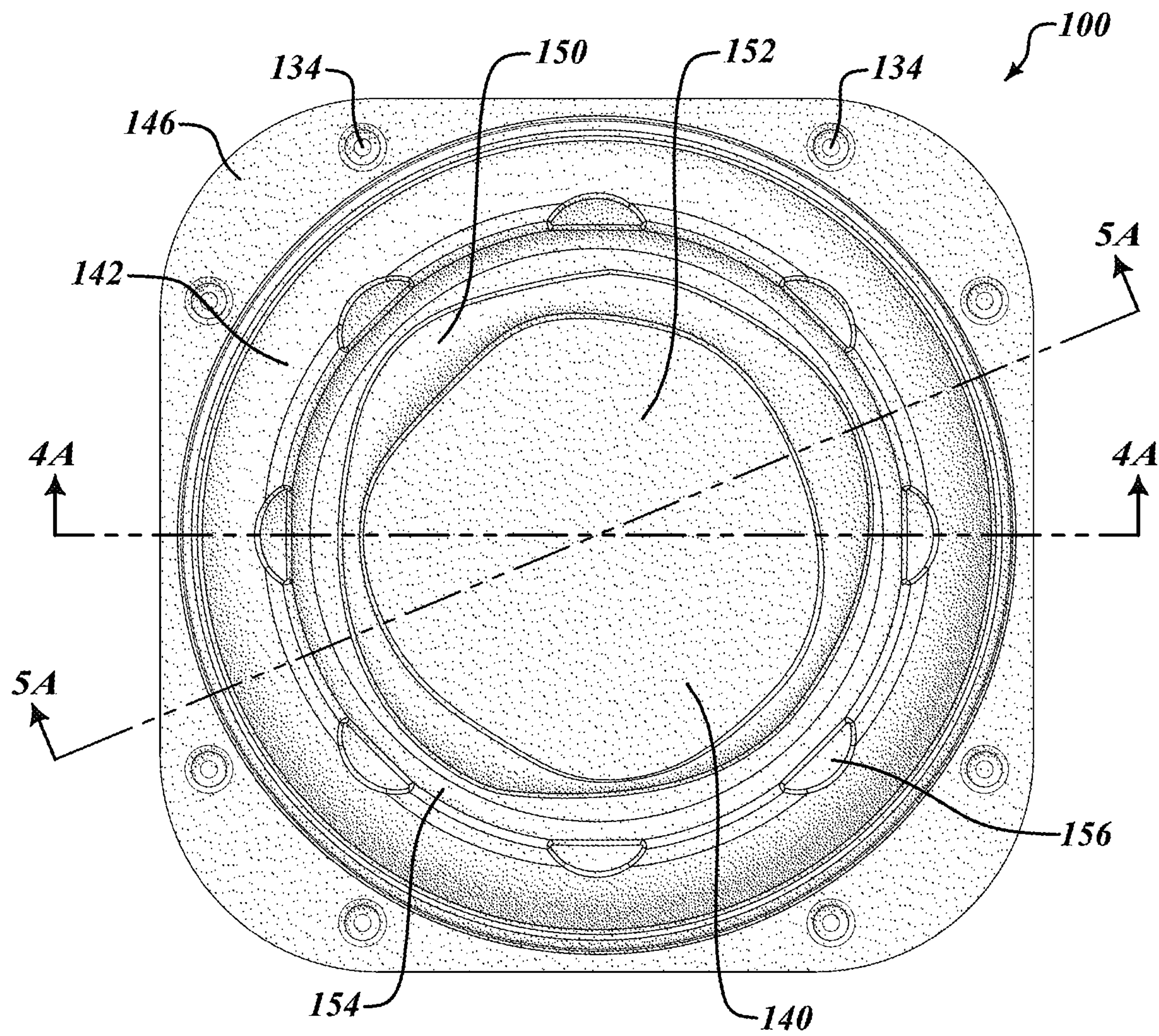


FIG.3

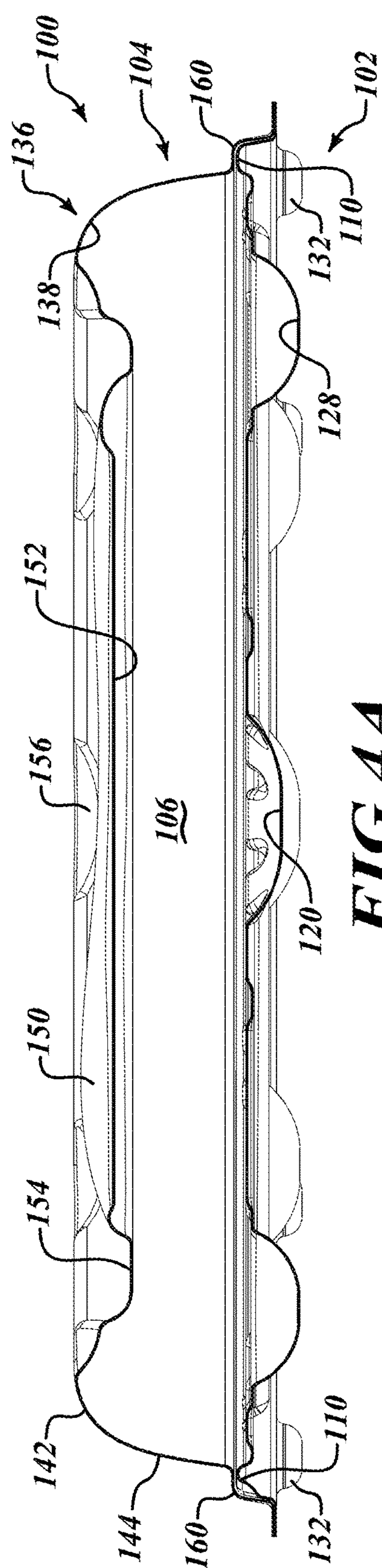


FIG. 4A

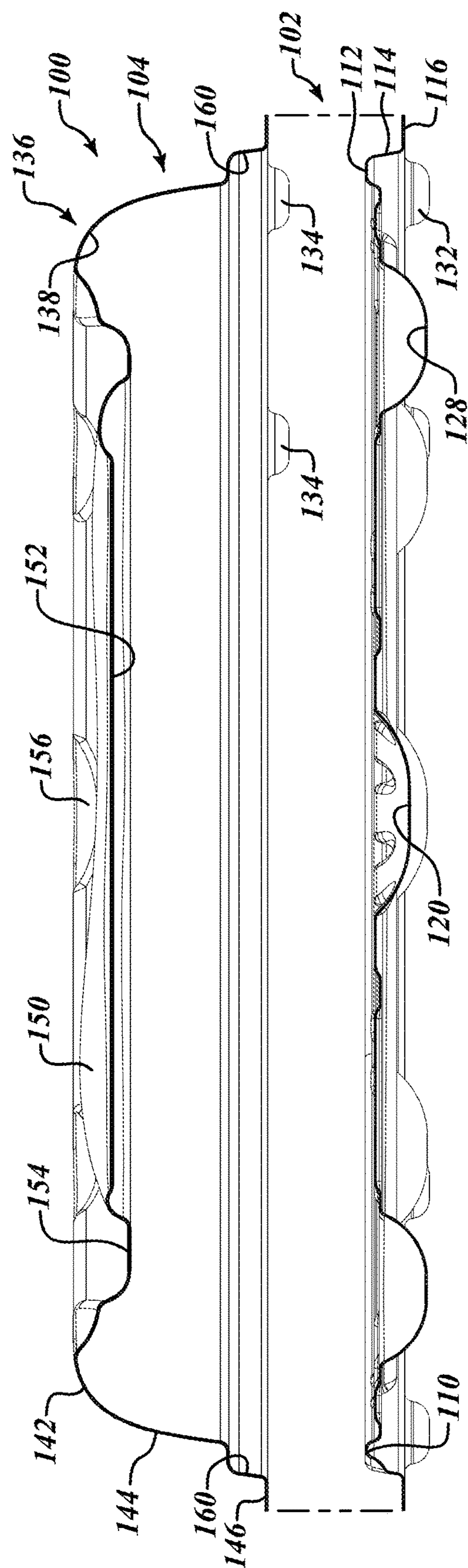
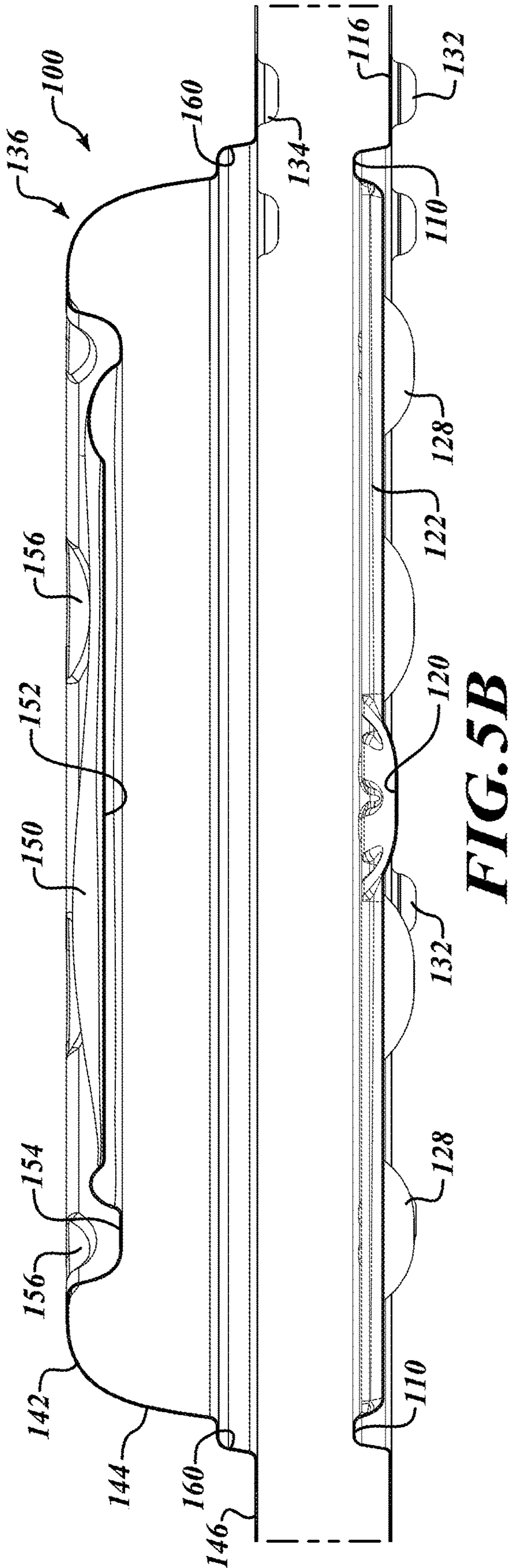
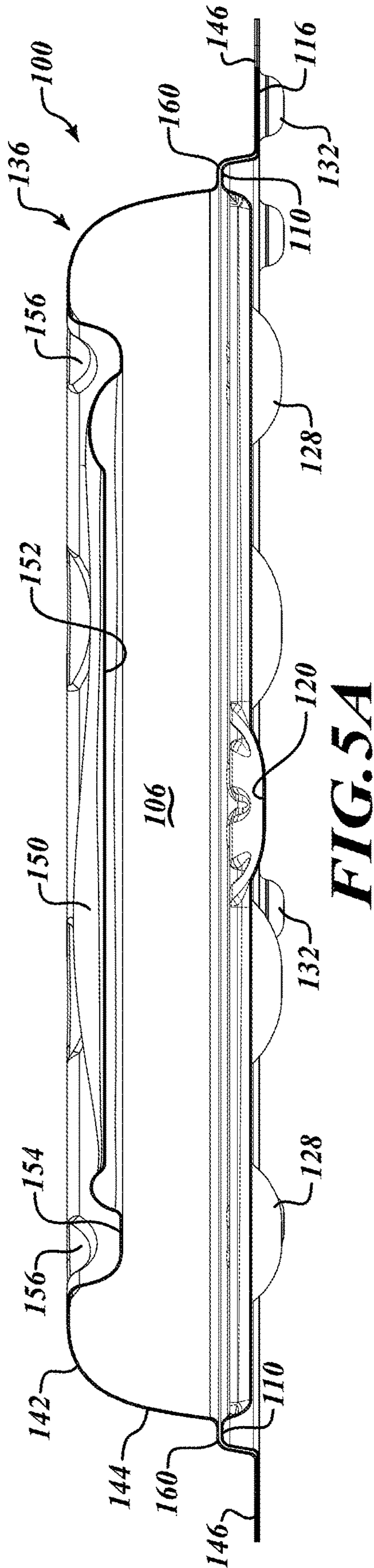


FIG. 4B



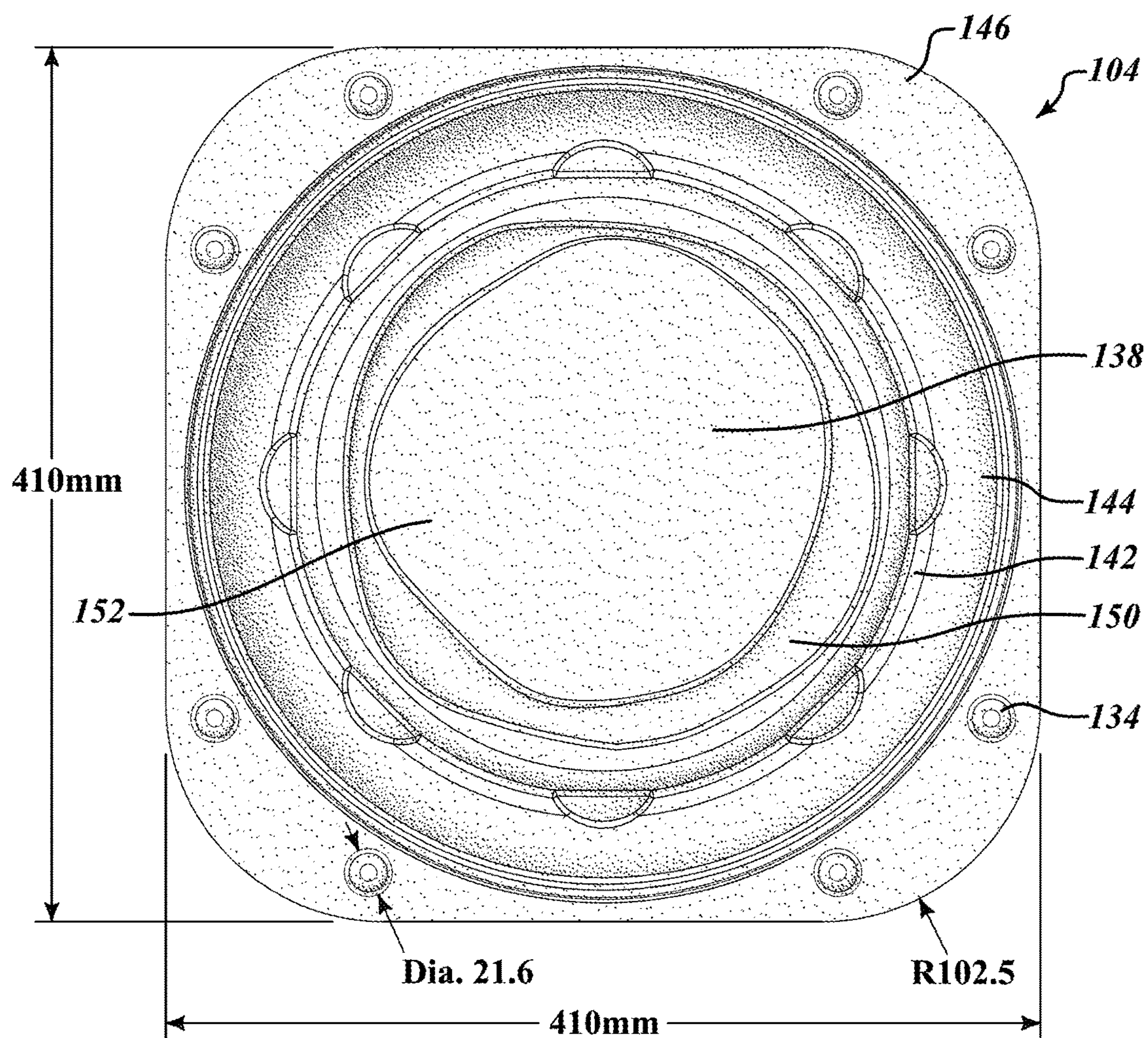


FIG. 6

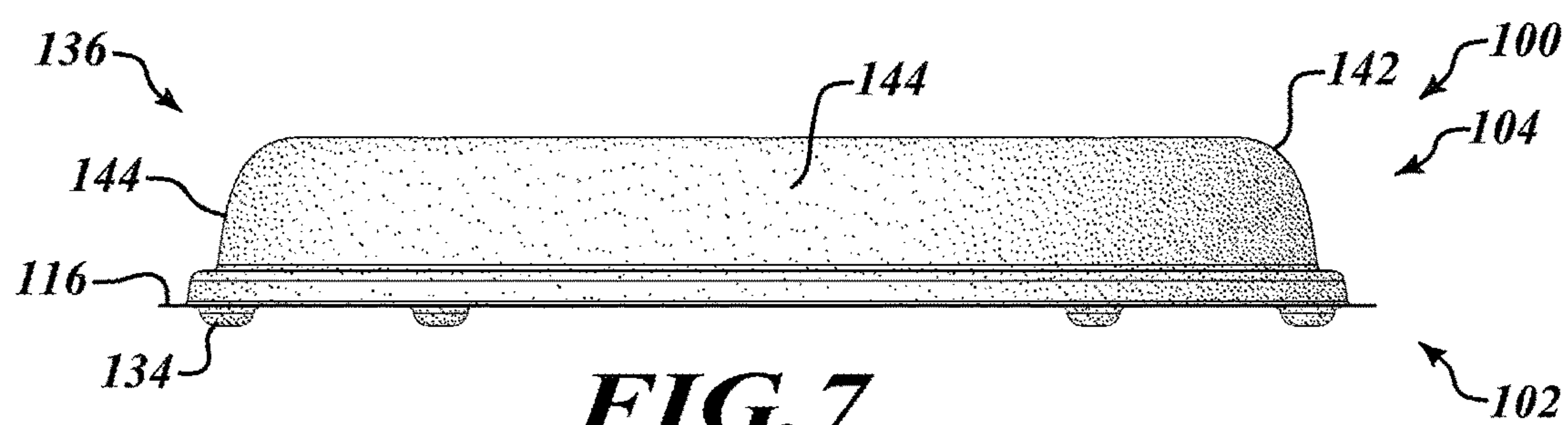


FIG. 7

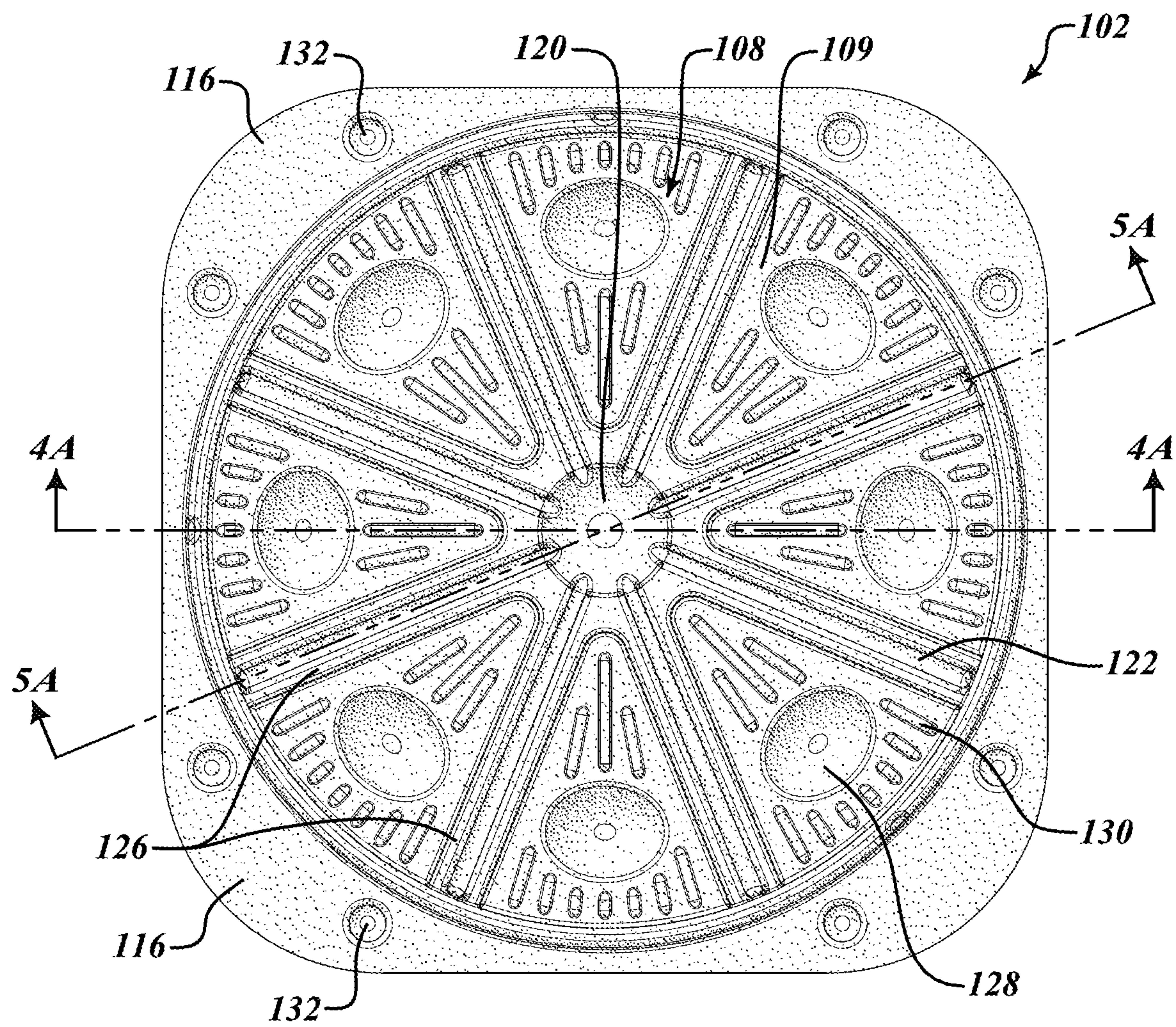


FIG. 8

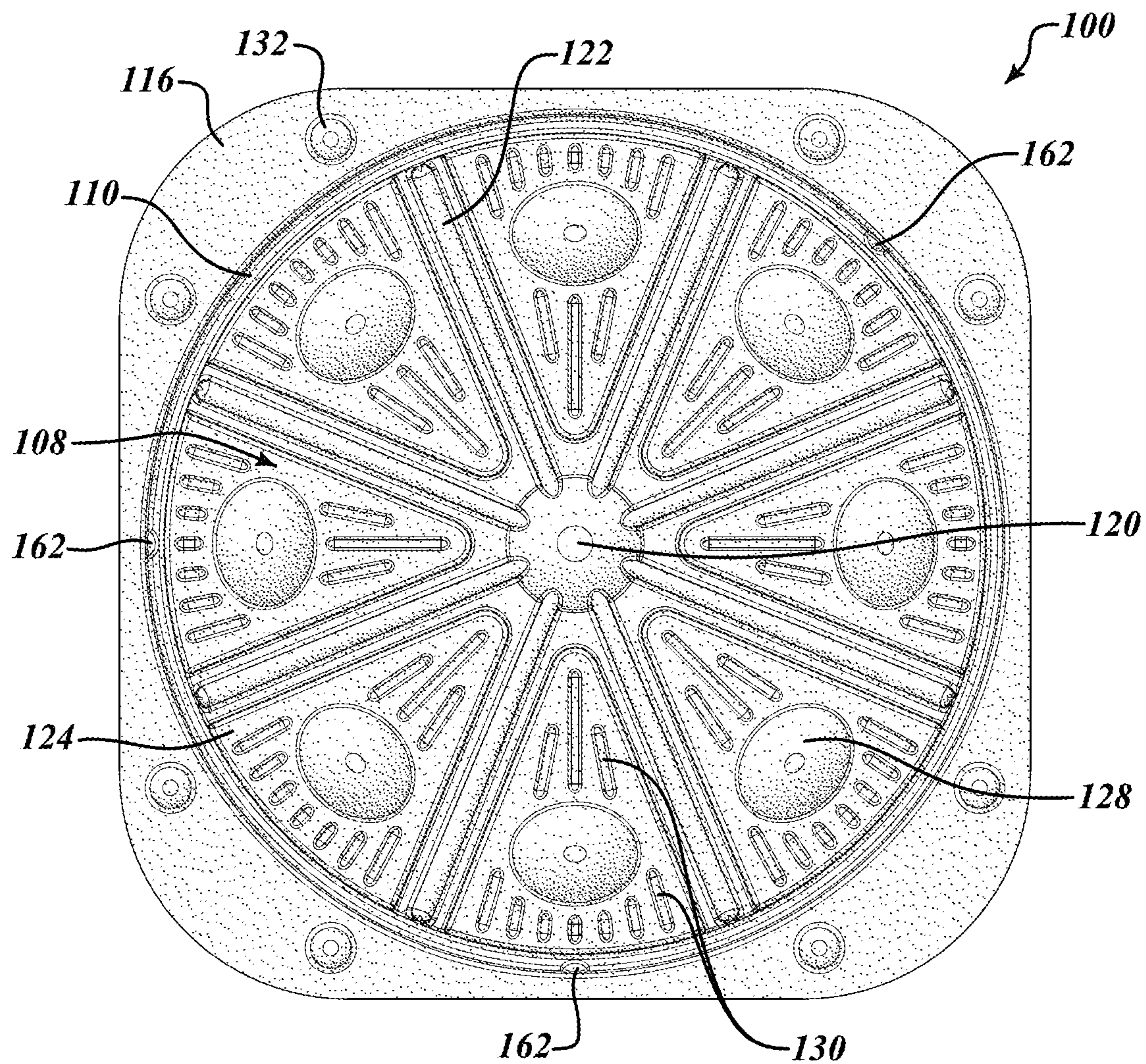


FIG. 9

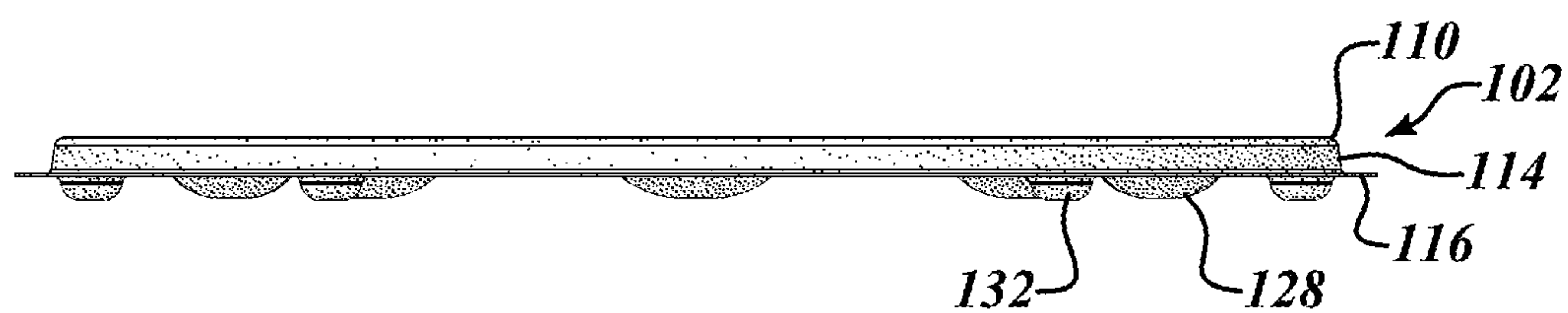


FIG. 10

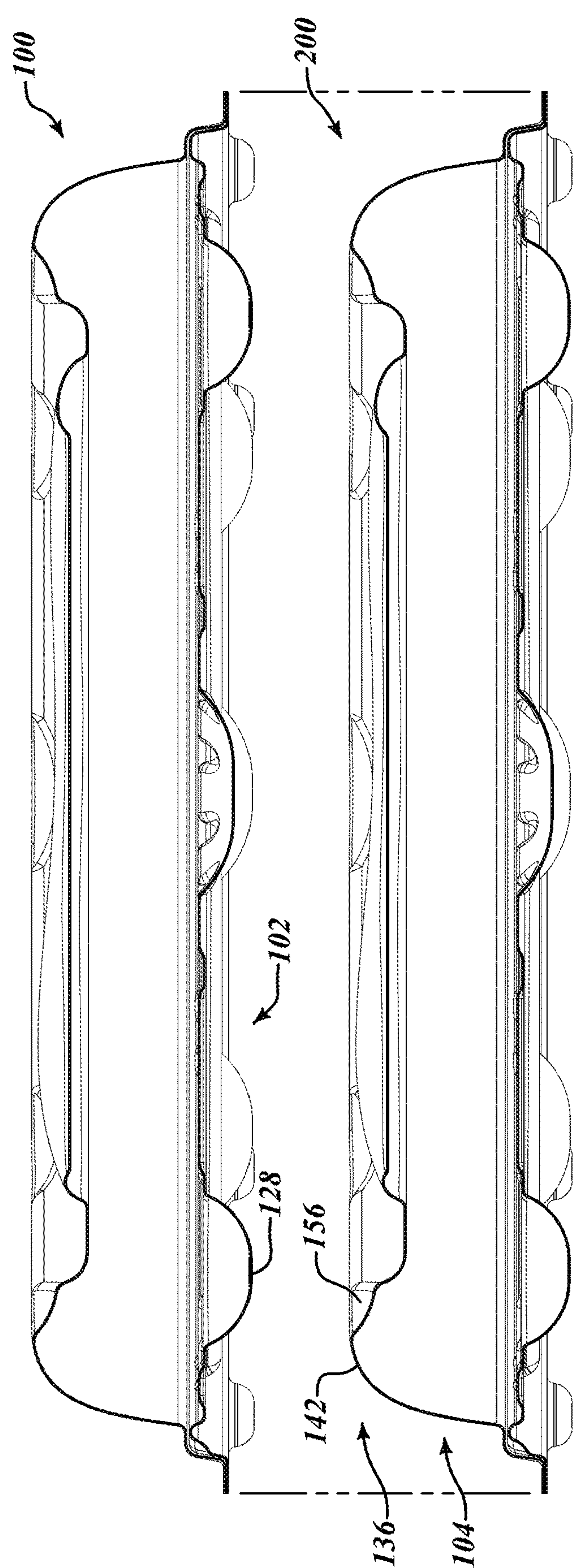


FIG. 11A

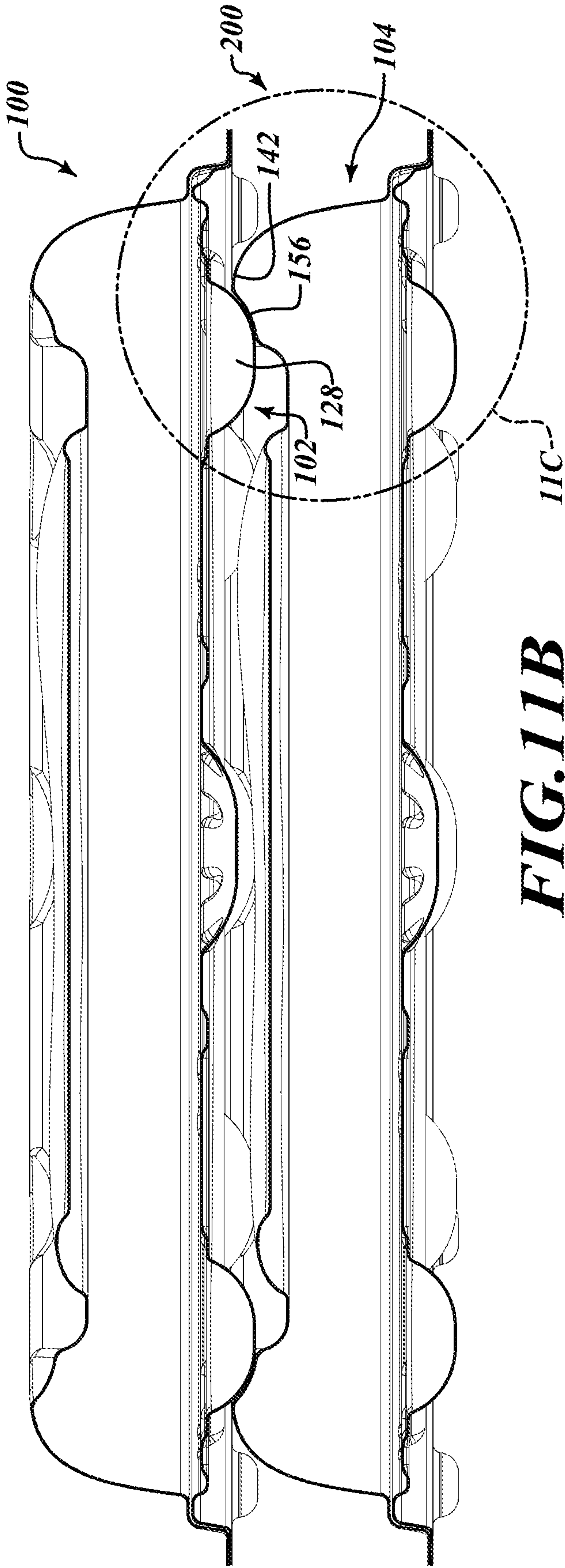


FIG. 11B

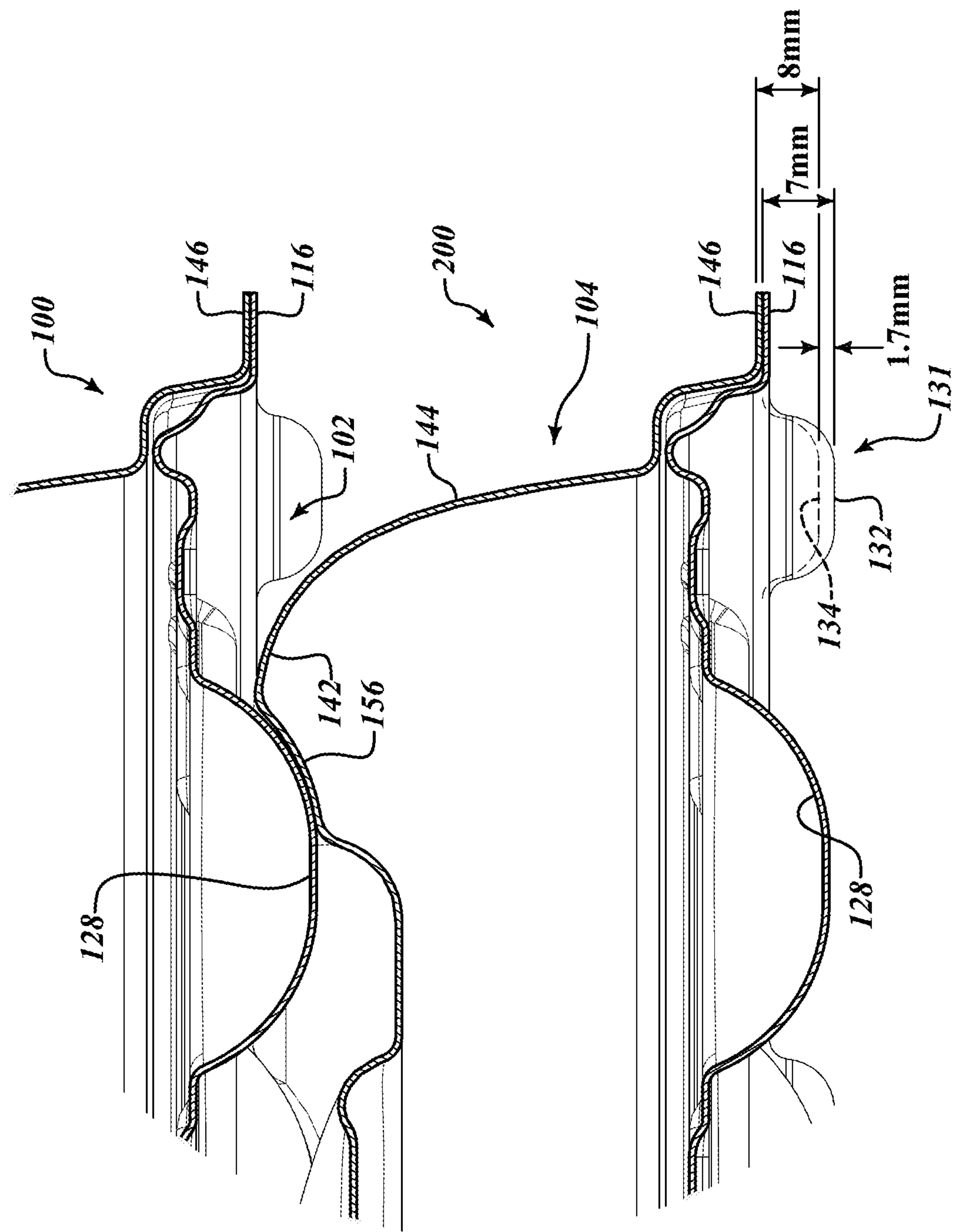


FIG. 11C

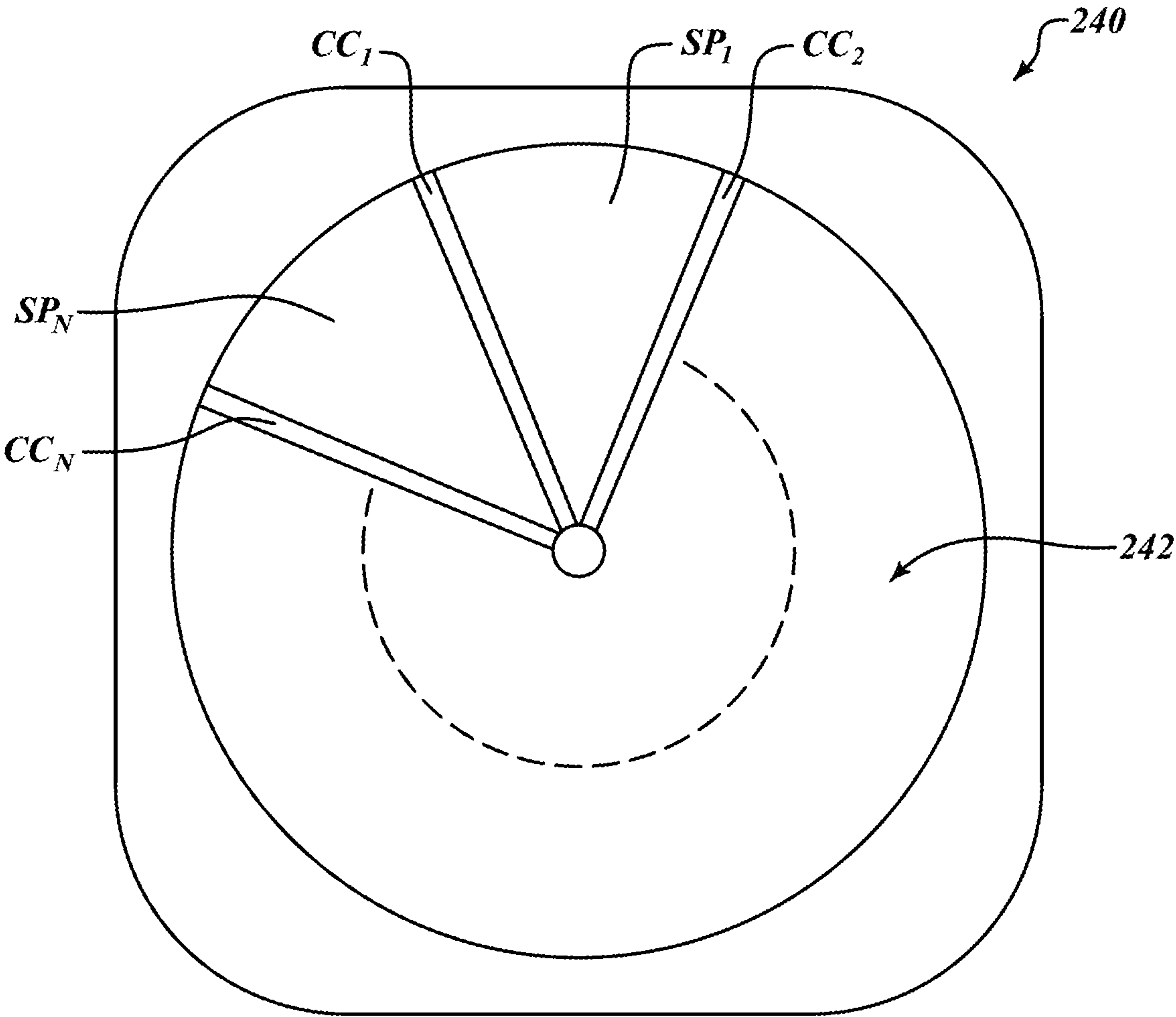


FIG.12

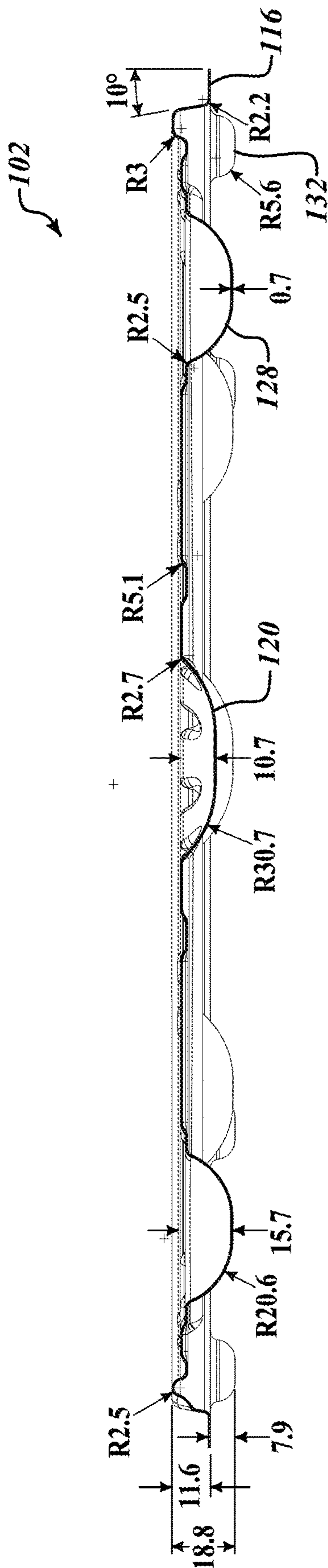


FIG.13

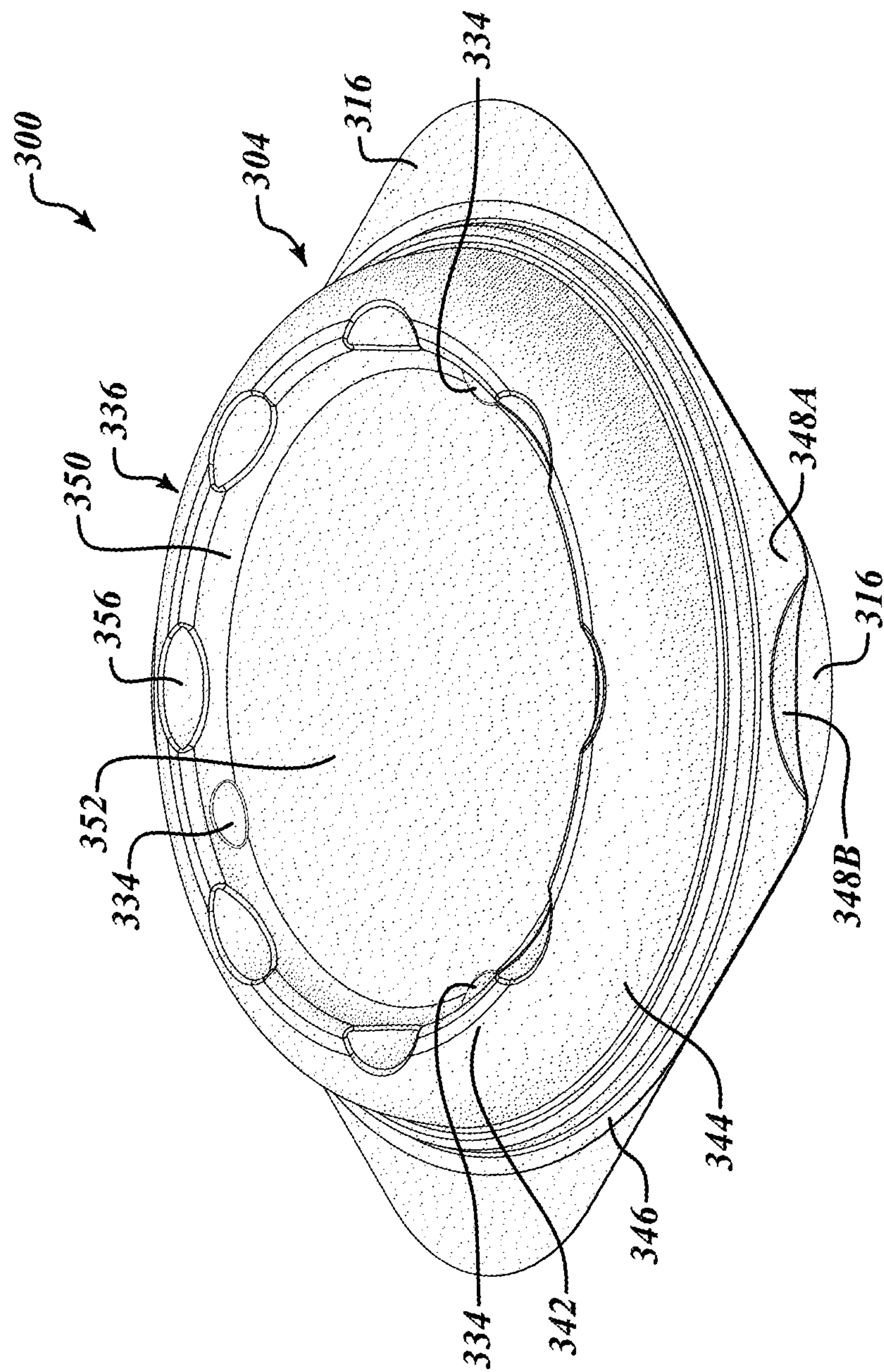


FIG. 14A

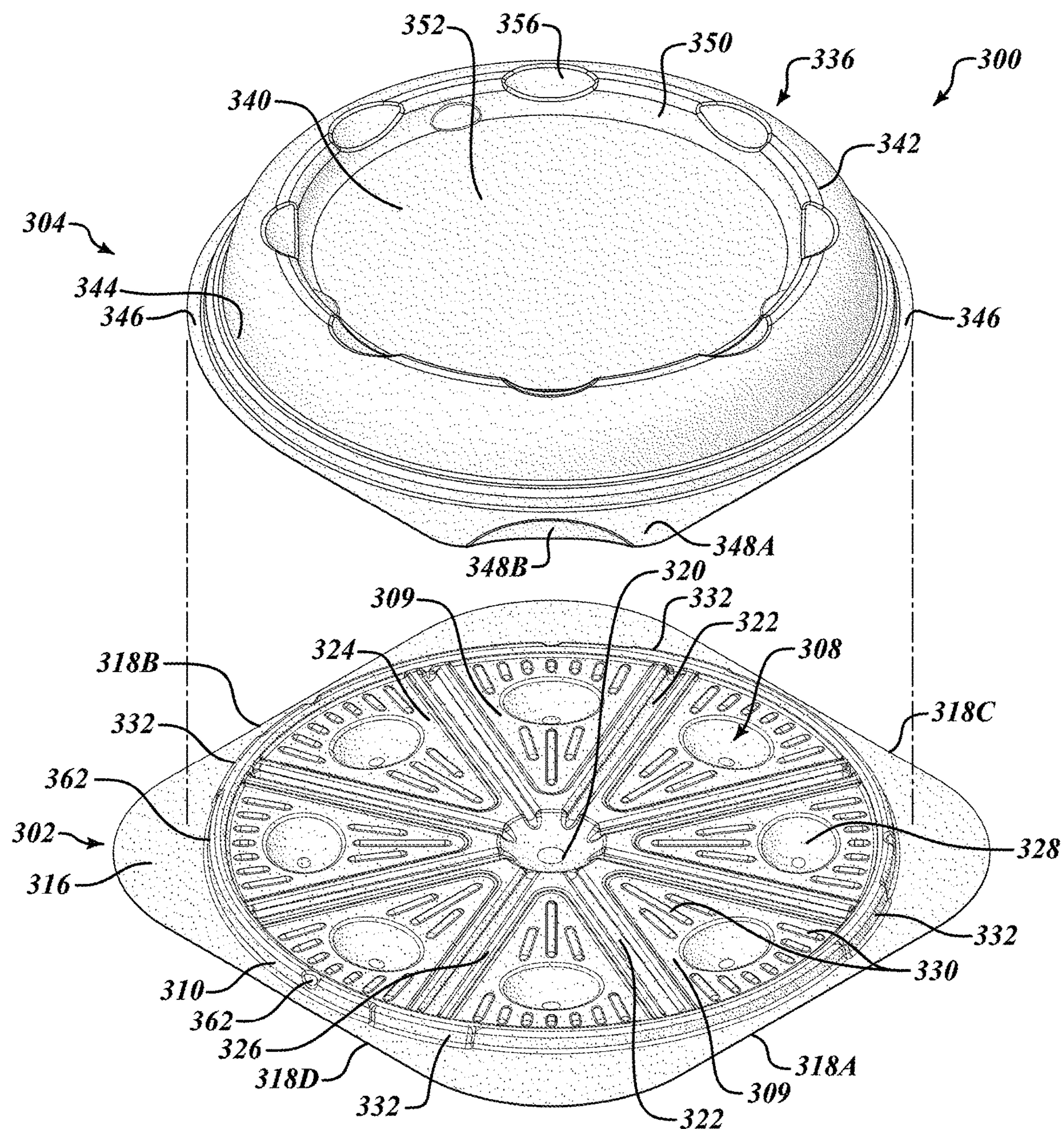


FIG. 14B

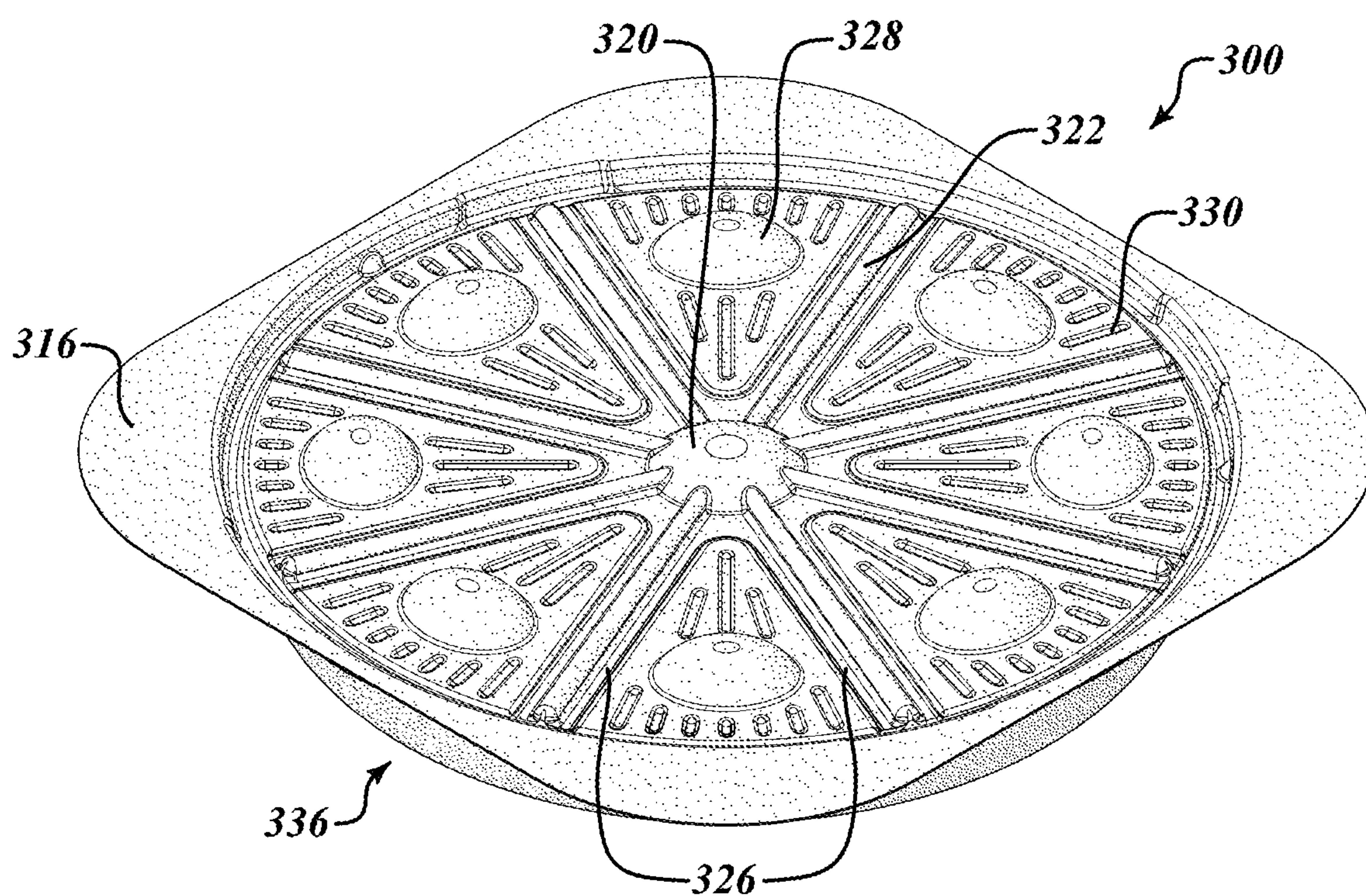


FIG. 15A

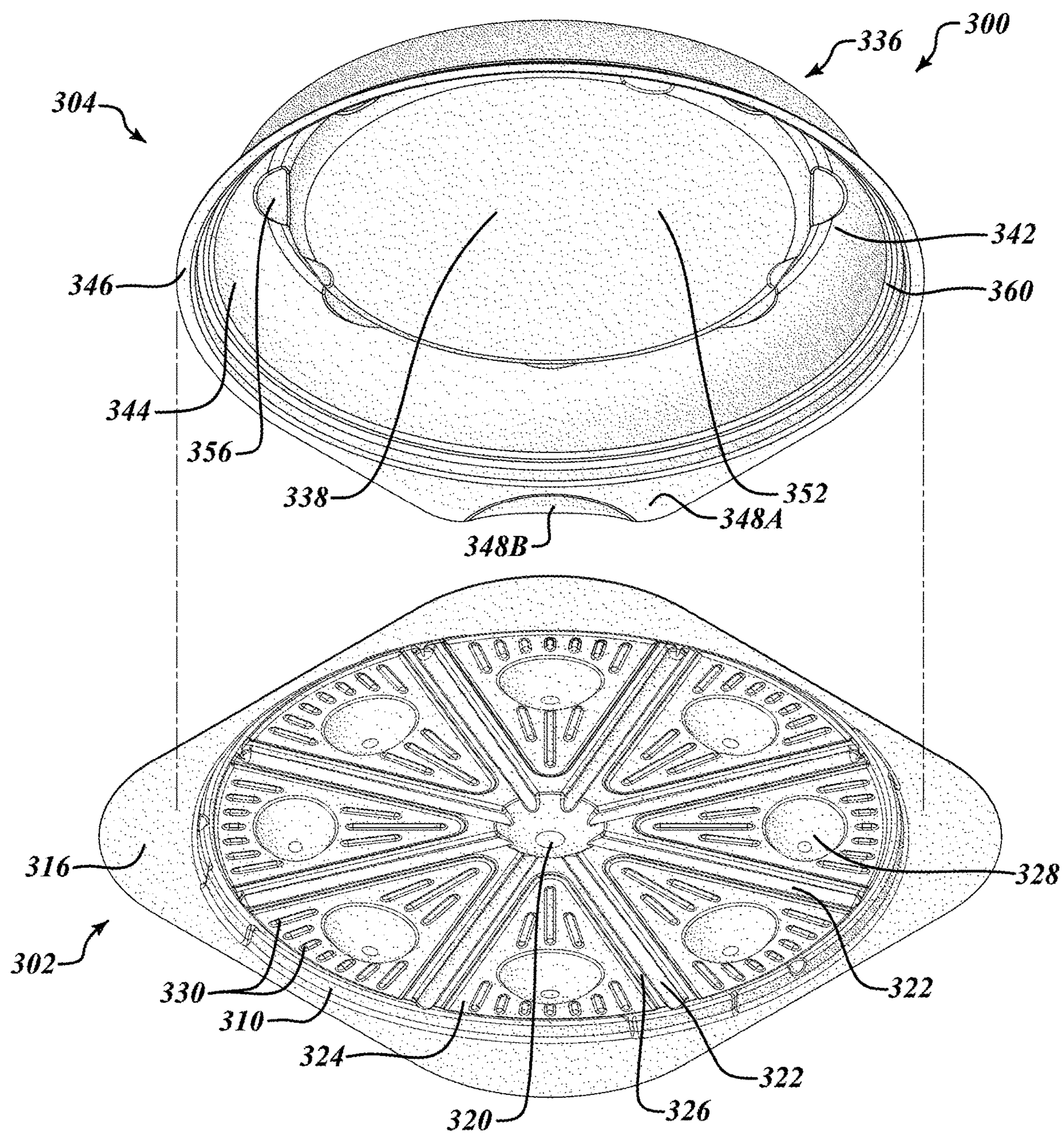


FIG. 15B

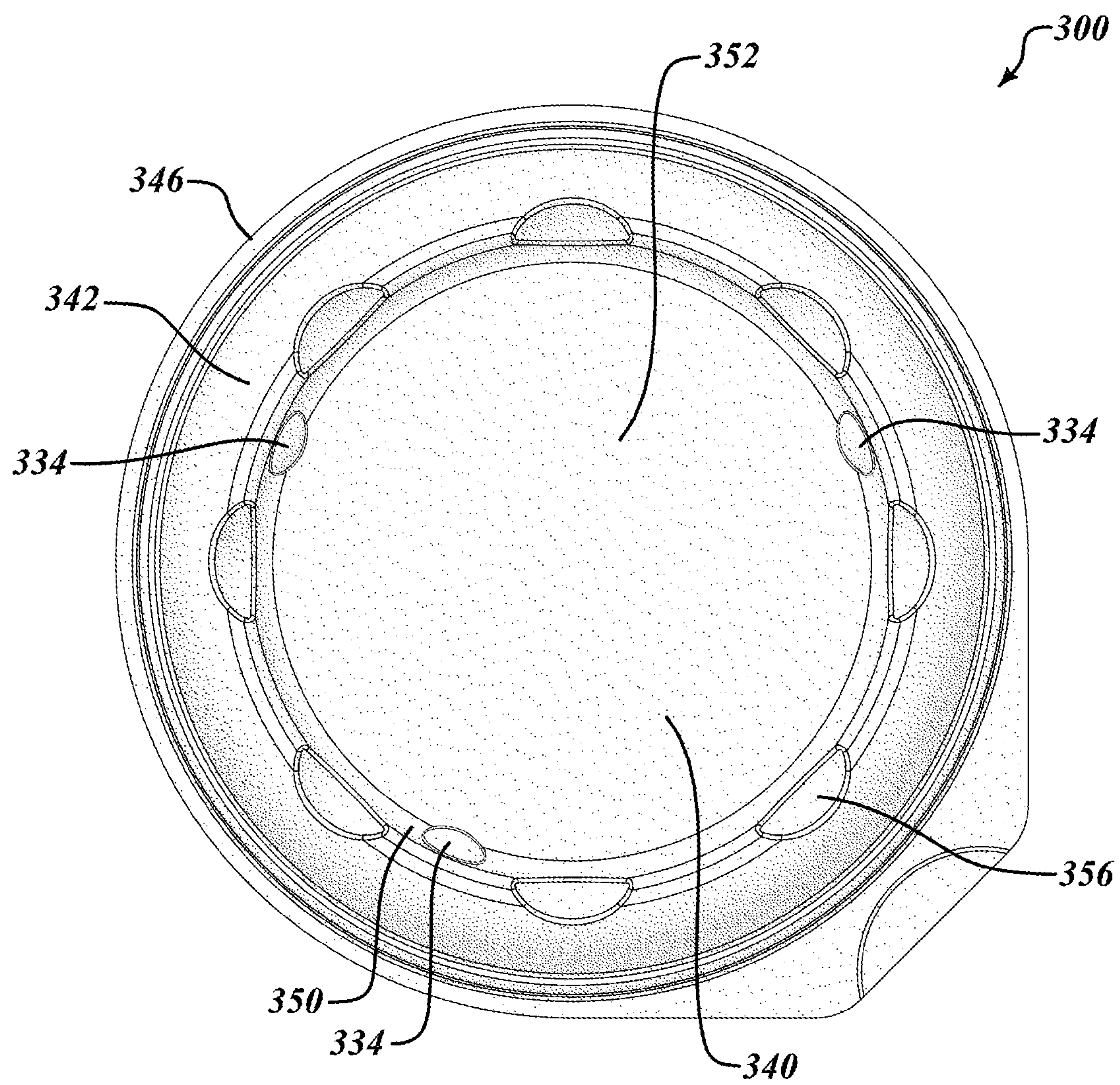


FIG. 16

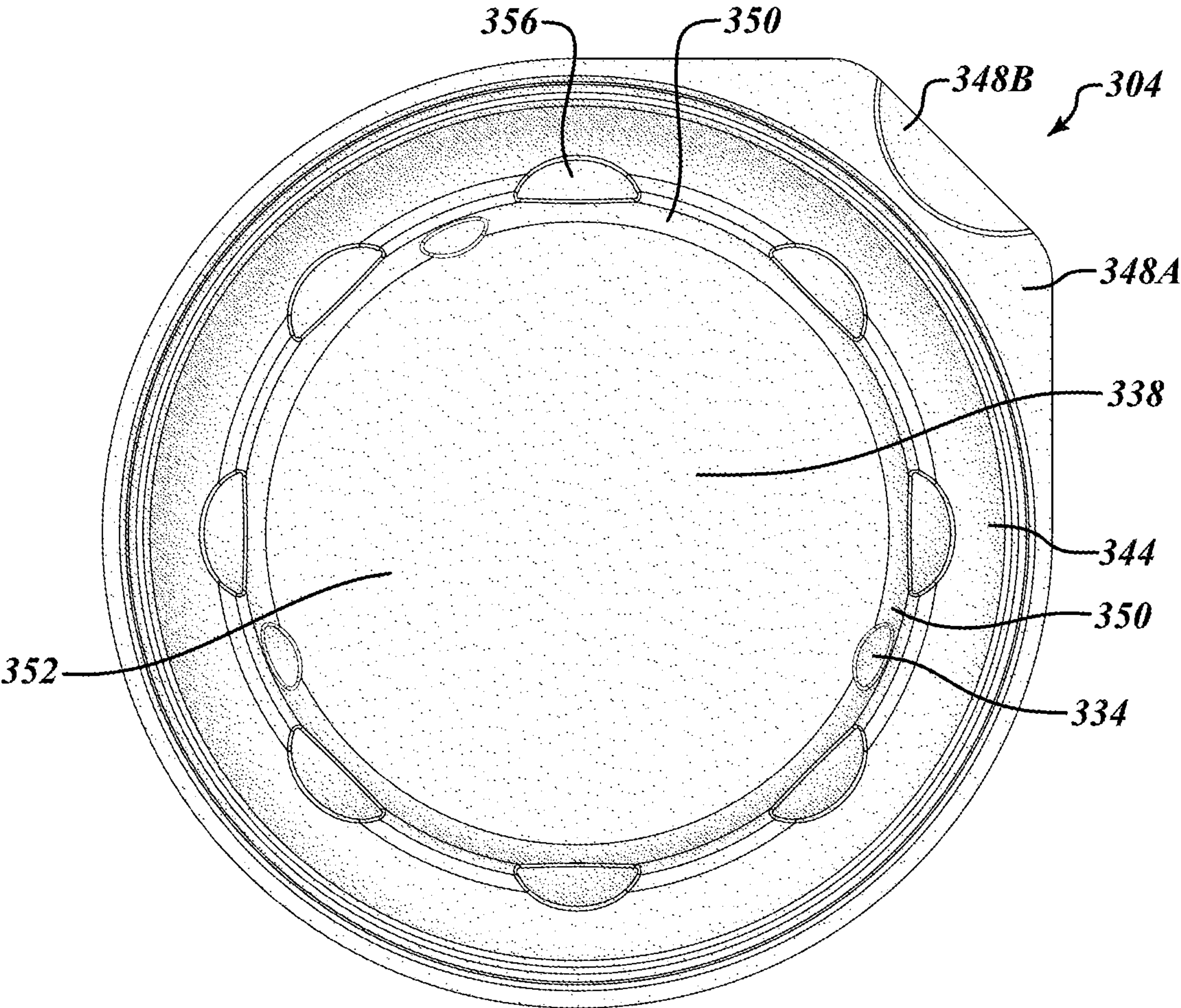


FIG. 17

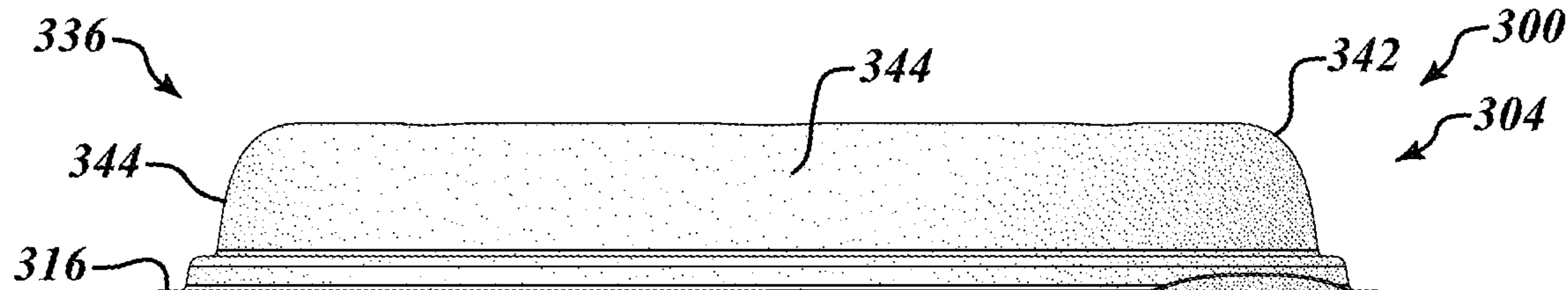


FIG. 18

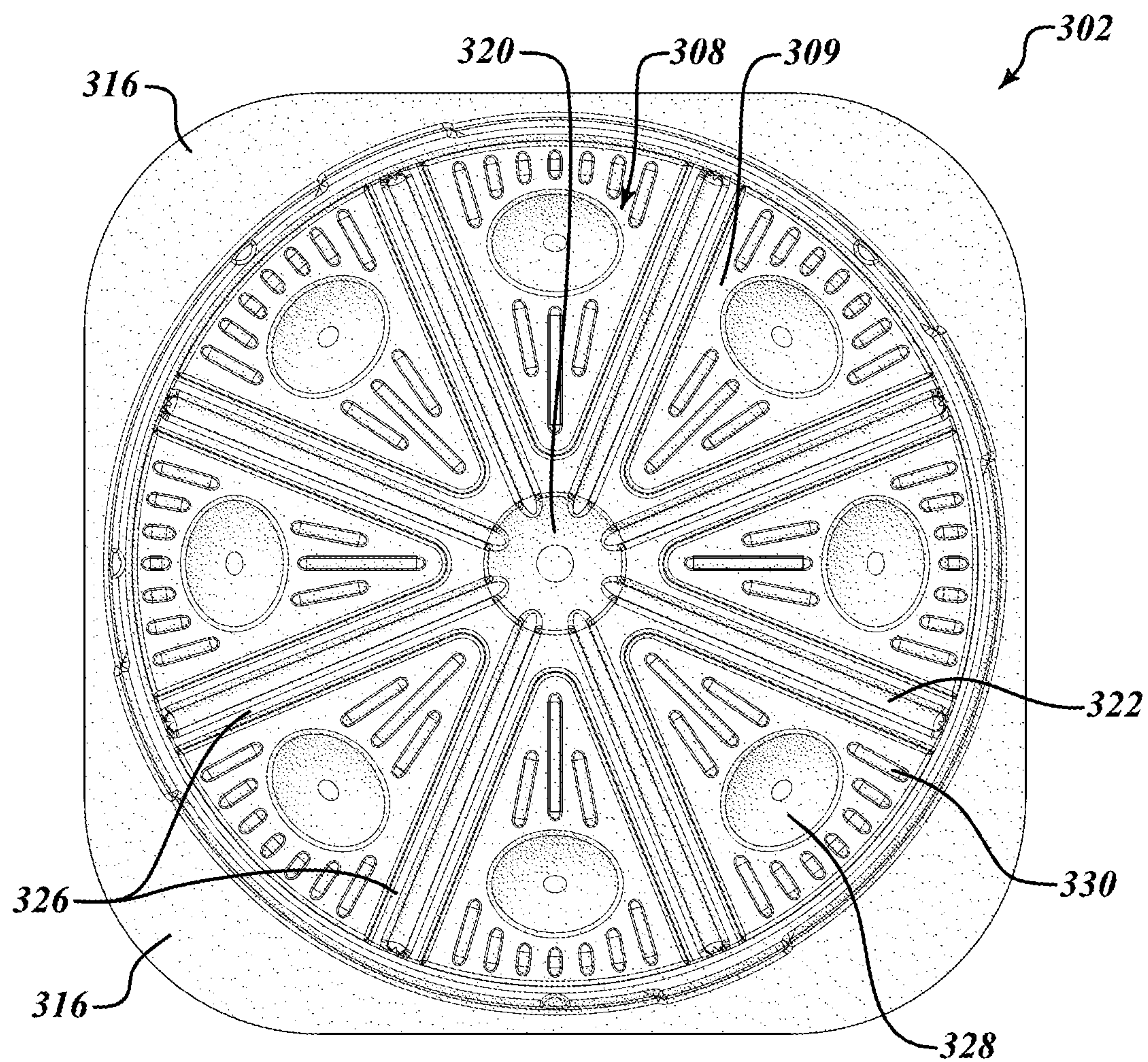


FIG. 19

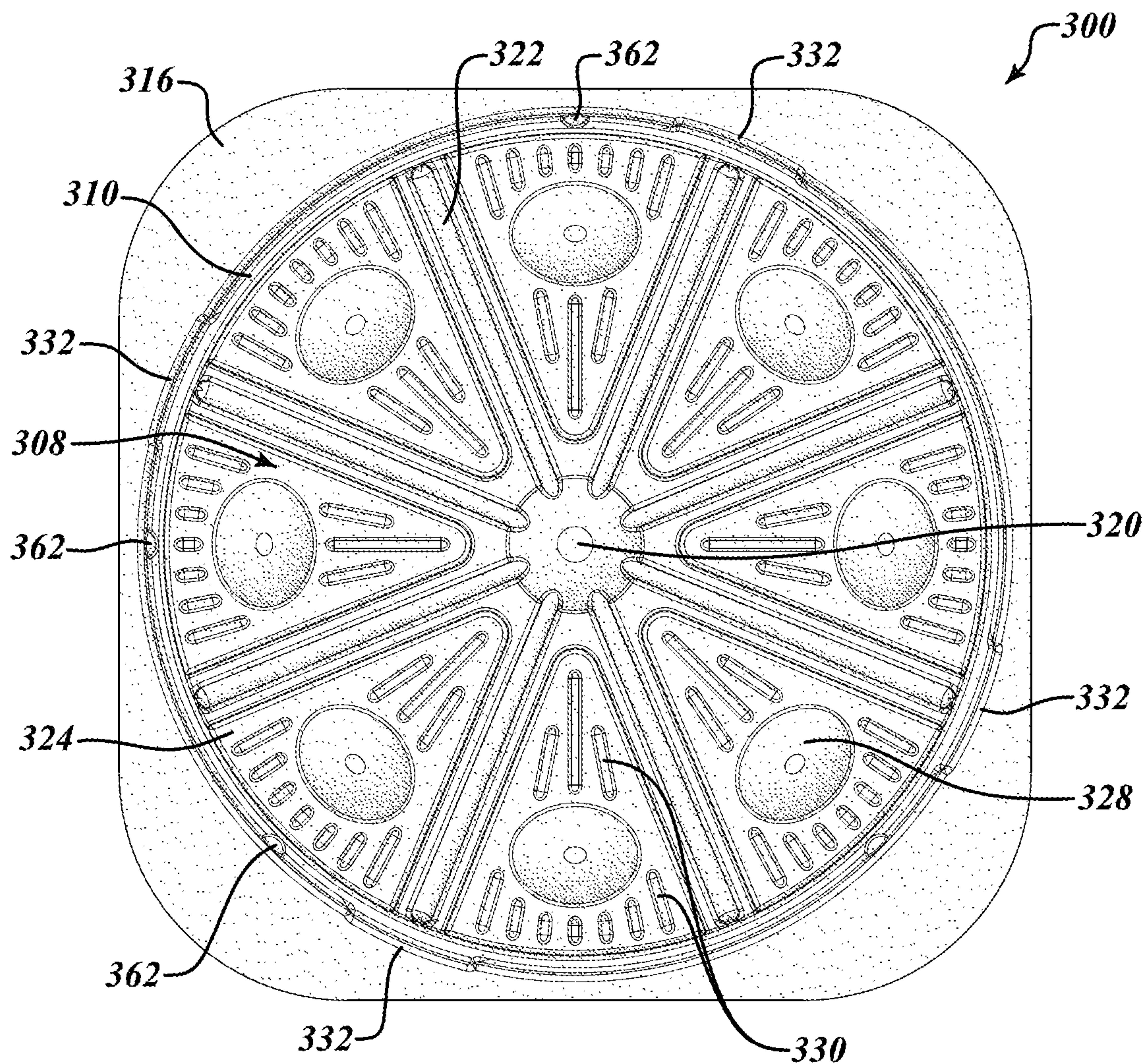


FIG. 20

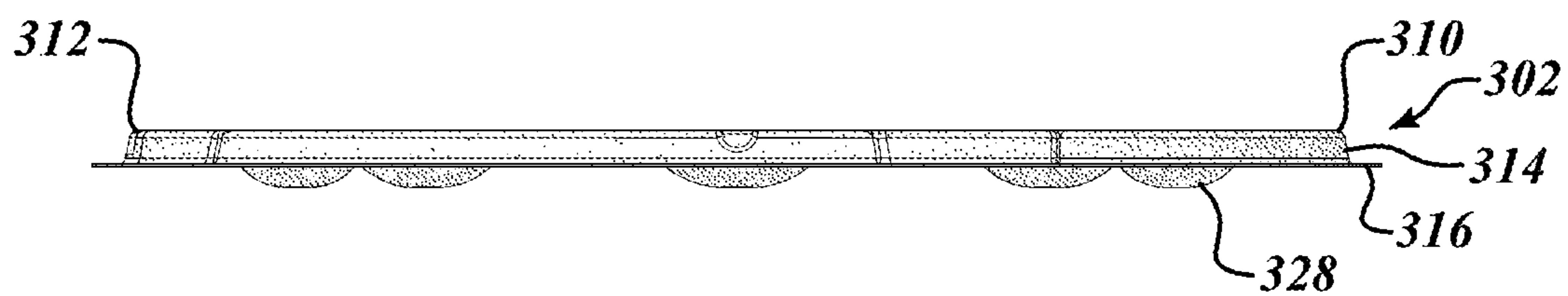


FIG. 21

CONTAINER FOR TRANSPORT AND STORAGE OF FOOD PRODUCTS

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present disclosure generally relates to containers for protecting, insulating, transporting and/or cooking food products.

BACKGROUND

Description of the Related Art

[0002] Today, the standard pizza box is a square box that is made from a single folded blank of corrugated cardboard. Once folded, the cardboard forms a box that is normally about two inches high and having equal sides of between 12 inches and 18 inches. The corrugated cardboard used to produce the pizza box is typically thick, which provides the pizza box with structural strength needed to stack multiple filled pizza boxes atop one another without the bottom box collapsing. Even then, stacking two or more pizza boxes together typically requires the ubiquitous pedestals or “pizza savers” which are placed within the box at the approximate center thereof to prevent the top or lid of the pizza box from being forced into contact with the pizza inside the box due to forces of one or more pizza boxes stacked on top of the pizza box. An example of such pizza saver is shown in U.S. Pat. No. 4,498,586.

[0003] In a traditional pizza box, the inside bottom surface of the pizza box is flat and smooth. When a pizza is placed inside the box, the bottom of the pizza rests flush against the flat bottom of the box. Consequently, any condensation, grease, or other liquid that collects between the bottom of the pizza and the bottom of the box becomes trapped. This can cause the bottom of a pizza to become soggy or oily, and can also reduce the structural integrity of the pizza box. Additionally, the top of the pizza box absorbs moisture emanating from hot, steaming pizza, which causes the top portion to droop, and which may cause the pizza box to collapse or may at least cause the top portion of the pizza box to touch the top of the pizza in instances where the aforementioned “pizza saver” is not used.

BRIEF SUMMARY

[0004] A compostable fiber food container may be summarized as including: a base including at least a portion of a raised rim disposed about a perimeter of an upwardly facing food receiving portion which receives a food product, the food receiving portion including an inner surface and a plurality of wells disposed in the food receiving portion that extend downwardly from the inner surface and which project outwardly from a bottom face of the base as a number of feet; and a compostable fiber cover selectively engageable with the base, the cover including a central dome portion having a substantially downward facing interior surface and a substantially upward facing exterior surface, the interior surface of the central dome portion having at least a portion of a channel disposed about a perimeter of the central dome that are sized and dimensioned to engage the at least a portion of the raised rim of the base when the cover is engaged with the base, and the central dome portion sized and shaped to provide an interior chamber which protects the food product, and the exterior surface of the central dome portion includes a plurality of dome recesses, at least

some of the plurality of dome recesses sized and dimensioned to receive at least a portion of respective ones of the feet of a base of another food container identical to the food container when the other food container is stacked on top of the cover of the food container.

[0005] The base may include a number N of wells, the cover may include the number N of dome recesses, and each of the dome recesses may be vertically aligned with one of the wells when the cover is engaged with the base. The base may include eight wells and the cover may include eight dome recesses, each of the dome recesses may be vertically aligned with one of the wells when the cover is engaged with the base. The central dome portion may include a raised outer rim spaced radially outward from a center of the central dome portion, and each of the dome recesses may be disposed on the outer rim of the central dome portion. At least a portion of each of the dome recesses may be disposed inward of an apex of the outer rim. The central dome portion may include a raised inner rim spaced radially outward from the center of the dome portion and spaced radially inward from the raised outer rim. Each well may have a rim adjacent the planar surface which may have an oval profile. Each of the wells and each of the dome recesses may be sized and dimensioned to restrict at least one of lateral movement or rotational movement between the cover of the food container and a base of another food container when the other food container is stacked on the cover of the food container. The base may include a plurality of sector portions, in which each sector portion may include a plurality of raised sector ribs extending upwardly from the planar surface. Each of a plurality of features including the raised rim, the wells, the channels, and the raised sector ribs may be spaced apart from at least one other of the plurality of features by a distance which is less than or equal to one inch. The base may have an overall height which is less than or equal to 1.5 inches. Each of the base and the cover may be formed from a single layer of material having a thickness in the range of 0.5 millimeters to 1.0 millimeters. The food receiving portion of the base may not have a continuously planar surface which exceeds 2 inches by 2 inches. Each of the base and the cover may have a length dimension which is greater than or equal to 12 inches. Each of the base and the cover may be formed from one of sugarcane fiber, wood fiber, or bamboo fiber. The base may have a square perimeter with rounded edges, and the food receiving portion may have a perimeter having a circular profile. The cover may have at least one denesting lug which provides a space between at least a portion of the cover and at least a portion of another cover when the cover is stacked together with the other cover. The raised rim of the base may include a plurality of cover interface portions that extend radially outward from the remainder of the raised rim, and the perimeter channel of the cover may be sized and dimensioned to engage each of the plurality of cover interface portions of the base when the cover is engaged with the base to provide an interference fit between the cover and the base.

[0006] A food container may include: a base of molded compostable fiber, the base including one or more protrusions disposed about a perimeter of an upwardly facing food receiving portion which receives a food product, the base having a bottom face, and the food receiving portion including an inner surface with a plurality of wells that project outwardly as respective mateable stacking feet from the bottom face of the base; and a cover of molded compostable

fiber, the cover selectively engageable with the base, the cover having a substantially downward facing interior surface and a substantially upward facing exterior surface, the interior surface of the cover having one or more depressions disposed about a perimeter of the cover that are sized and dimensioned to engage the at least a portion of the one or more protrusions of the base when the cover is engaged with the base, and the cover sized and shaped to provide an interior chamber which protects the food product, and the exterior surface of the cover includes a plurality of recesses, at least some of the plurality of recesses sized and dimensioned to receive at least a portion of respective ones of the mateable stacking feet of a base of another food container identical to the food container when the other food container is stacked on top of the cover of the food container.

[0007] The base may have a rectangular-shaped outer perimeter with rounded corners, the outer perimeter defined by first and second parallel edges and third and fourth parallel edges, and each of the channels are non-parallel with each of the first, second, third, and fourth edges of the base. The base may include a plurality of sector portions in the food receiving portion, in which each sector portion of the food receiving portion may include one of the plurality of wells that extends downwardly from the planar surface. Each well may have a rim adjacent the planar surface which has a profile in the shape of at least one of an oval, a circle, a triangle, a square, or a symbol. Each sector portion may include a raised sector portion rim which extends upward from the planar surface and is adjacent at least one of the two adjacent channels which delineate the sector portion. At least some of the raised sector ribs in each sector portion may have a length dimension which extends radially with respect to the central well. The base may include a base flange surrounding at least a portion of the raised rim, and the cover may include a cover flange surrounding at least a portion of the central dome portion. The base flange may include at least one base fastening recess which extends downwardly from the base flange, and the cover flange may include at least one corresponding cover fastening protrusion which extends downwardly from the cover flange, the at least one base fastening recess sized and dimensioned to receive at least a portion of the at least one cover fastening protrusion when the cover is engaged with the base. The at least one base fastening recess and the at least one cover fastening protrusion may each be sized and dimensioned to provide an audible cue when the at least one base fastening recess is separated from the cover fastening protrusion. The at least one base fastening recess may have a depth that is greater than 5 millimeters and a diameter that is greater than 8 millimeters, and the at least one cover fastening protrusion may have a depth which is 1 millimeter less than the depth of the at least one base fastening recess, and a diameter which is 1 millimeter greater than the diameter of the at least one base fastening recess. The at least one base fastening recess may include a plurality of recesses each having an upward facing surface and a downward facing surface, the downward facing surface of each of the plurality of base fastening recesses sized and dimensioned to be weight-bearing when the base is disposed on a planar support surface. The base flange may include at least one base fastening protrusion which extends upwardly from the base flange, and the cover flange may include at least one corresponding cover fastening recess which extends upwardly from the cover flange, the at least one cover

fastening recess sized and dimensioned to receive at least a portion of the at least one base fastening protrusion when the cover is engaged with the base. When the cover is engaged with the base, a perimeter of the cover flange may be vertically aligned with a perimeter of the base flange. The food container may include a number N of channels which delineate a corresponding number N of sector portions of the food receiving portion, where N is a positive integer. Each of the base and the cover may be formed from a single layer of material. Each of the base and the cover may be formed from one of sugarcane fiber, wood fiber, or bamboo fiber. The food receiving portion may have a circular profile. The base and the cover may each be formed from a single layer of material, and the base and the cover may be sized and dimensioned to be nestable with other bases and covers, respectively. The plurality of channels may be equally radially spaced to enable cutting of the food product into equally sized pieces when a cutting tool moves along the channels.

[0008] A food container may be summarized as including: a base including one or more depressions disposed about a perimeter of an upwardly facing food receiving portion which receives a food product, the food receiving portion including an inner surface and a plurality of wells disposed in the food receiving portion that extend downwardly from the inner surface and that project outwardly as respective feet from the bottom face of the base; and a cover selectively engageable with the base, the cover having a substantially downward facing interior surface and a substantially upward facing exterior surface, the interior surface of the cover having one or more protrusions disposed about a perimeter of the cover that are sized and dimensioned to engage the at least a portion of the one or more depressions of the base when the cover is engaged with the base, and the cover sized and shaped to provide an interior chamber which protects the food product, and the exterior surface of the cover includes a plurality of recesses, at least some of the plurality of recesses sized and dimensioned to receive at least a portion of respective ones of the feet of a base of another food container identical to the food container when the other food container is stacked on top of the cover of the food container.

[0009] A food container may be summarized as including: a base including one of a raised rim or channel disposed about a perimeter of an upwardly facing food receiving portion which receives a food product, the food receiving portion including an inner surface and a plurality of depressions disposed in the food receiving portion that extend downwardly from the inner surface and that project outwardly as respective mateable stacking feet from the bottom face of the base; and a cover selectively engageable with the base, the cover having a substantially downward facing interior surface and a substantially upward facing exterior surface, the interior surface of the cover having the other of the raised rim or channel disposed about a perimeter of the cover that are sized and dimensioned to engage the one of the raised rim or channel of the base when the cover is engaged with the base, and the cover sized and shaped to provide an interior chamber which protects the food product, and the exterior surface of the cover includes a plurality of recesses, at least some of the plurality of recesses sized and dimensioned to receive at least a portion of respective ones of the mateable stacking feet of a base of another food

container identical to the food container when the other food container is stacked on top of the cover of the food container.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] In the drawings, identical reference numbers identify similar elements or acts. The sizes and relative positions of elements in the drawings are not necessarily drawn to scale. For example, the shapes of various elements and angles are not necessarily drawn to scale, and some of these elements may be arbitrarily enlarged and positioned to improve drawing legibility. Further, the particular shapes of the elements as drawn, are not necessarily intended to convey any information regarding the actual shape of the particular elements, and may have been solely selected for ease of recognition in the drawings.

[0011] FIG. 1A is a top perspective view of a food container, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0012] FIG. 1B is a top perspective view of the food container with a cover of the food container separated from a base thereof, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0013] FIG. 2A is a bottom perspective view of the food container, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0014] FIG. 2B is a bottom perspective view of the food container with the cover separated from the base, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0015] FIG. 3 is a top plan view of the food container, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0016] FIG. 4A is a sectional view of the food container taken along the line 4A-4A of FIG. 3, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0017] FIG. 4B is a sectional view of the food container taken along the line 4A-4B of FIG. 1B, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0018] FIG. 5A is a sectional view of the food container taken along the line 5A-5A of FIG. 3, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0019] FIG. 5B is a sectional view of the food container taken along the line 5A-5B of FIG. 1B, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0020] FIG. 6 is a bottom plan view of the cover of the food container, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0021] FIG. 7 is a front elevational view of the cover of the food container, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0022] FIG. 8 is a top plan view of the base of the food container, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0023] FIG. 9 is a bottom plan view of the food container, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0024] FIG. 10 is a front elevational view of the base of the food container, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0025] FIG. 11A is a sectional elevational view of a first food container vertically aligned with and spaced apart from a second food container, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0026] FIG. 11B is a sectional elevational view of the first and second food containers in a stacked relationship, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0027] FIG. 11C is a detailed view of a portion of FIG. 11B, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0028] FIG. 12 is a top plan view of a food container which includes a number N of food receiving portion channels and a corresponding number N of sector portions, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0029] FIG. 13 is a sectional elevational view of the base of the food container, showing various dimensions thereof, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0030] FIG. 14A is a top perspective view of another food container, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0031] FIG. 14B is a top perspective view of the food container of FIG. 14A with a cover of the food container separated from a base thereof, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0032] FIG. 15A is a bottom perspective view of the food container of FIG. 14A, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0033] FIG. 15B is a bottom perspective view of the food container of FIG. 14A with the cover separated from the base, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0034] FIG. 16 is a top plan view of the food container of FIG. 14A, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0035] FIG. 17 is a bottom plan view of the cover of the food container of FIG. 14A, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0036] FIG. 18 is a front elevational view of the cover of the food container of FIG. 14A, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0037] FIG. 19 is a top plan view of the base of the food container of FIG. 14A, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0038] FIG. 20 is a bottom plan view of the food container of FIG. 14A, according to one illustrated implementation.

[0039] FIG. 21 is a front elevational view of the base of the food container of FIG. 14A, according to one illustrated implementation.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0040] In the following description, certain specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of various disclosed implementations. However, one skilled in the relevant art will recognize that implementations may be practiced without one or more of these specific details, or with other methods, components, materials, etc. In other instances, well-known structures associated with computer systems, server computers, and/or communications networks have not been shown or described in detail to avoid unnecessarily obscuring descriptions of the implementations.

[0041] Unless the context requires otherwise, throughout the specification and claims that follow, the word “comprising” is synonymous with “including,” and is inclusive or open-ended (i.e., does not exclude additional, unrecited elements or method acts).

[0042] Reference throughout this specification to “one implementation” or “an implementation” means that a particular feature, structure or characteristic described in connection with the implementation is included in at least one implementation. Thus, the appearances of the phrases “in one implementation” or “in an implementation” in various places throughout this specification are not necessarily all referring to the same implementation. Furthermore, the particular features, structures, or characteristics may be combined in any suitable manner in one or more implementations.

[0043] As used in this specification and the appended claims, the singular forms “a,” “an,” and “the” include plural referents unless the context clearly dictates otherwise. It

should also be noted that the term “or” is generally employed in its sense including “and/or” unless the context clearly dictates otherwise.

[0044] The headings and Abstract of the Disclosure provided herein are for convenience only and do not interpret the scope or meaning of the implementations.

[0045] One or more implementations of the present disclosure are directed to providing food containers which preserve the quality of a food product for a duration of time, and which optionally allow for cooking of the food product therein. In one or more implementations, the food containers discussed herein are structurally sturdy, stackable, thermally insulating, disposable (e.g., compostable) and require minimal or no manual labor to assemble. In some implementations, the food containers discussed herein use a relatively small amount of material compared to existing corrugated cardboard containers, which material is compostable and/or recyclable.

[0046] Initially, a first implementations of a food container is discussed with reference to FIGS. 1A-11C and 13. Then, a second implementation of a food container is discussed with reference to FIG. 12. Then, a third implementation of a food container is discussed with reference to FIGS. 14A-21. Features of one or more of the implementations discussed herein may be modified and/or combined to provide further implementations.

[0047] Referring to FIG. 1A through FIG. 11C, various views of a food container 100 are shown. The food container 100 is illustrated as a container for containing a pizza for explanatory purposes, but it should be appreciated that the present disclosure is not limited to such. As shown in FIG. 1B, the food container 100 includes a base 102 and a separate cover 104 which cooperate as shown in the figures and described below to form a closed chamber 106 for supporting, protecting, insulating and optionally cooking a food product (e.g., pizza).

[0048] In some implementations, the base 102 and cover 104 may each be separately formed of a single layer of liquid-resistant insulating material including, but not limited to, molded sugarcane fiber (“bagasse”), molded wood fiber, molded bamboo fiber, molded paper or plastic (e.g., biodegradable plastic, thermoplastic material, bio-based plastic, recycled plastic, recyclable plastic). The base and/or the cover may be opaque, semi-transparent, or transparent (e.g., an opaque base made with molded fiber and a cover made with transparent plastic material). This is in contrast to conventional pizza boxes which are made from corrugated cardboard. In implementations wherein the base 102 cover 104 are formed from molded fibers, the single layer of material may have a relatively small thickness of between 0.5 mm and 1.0 mm (e.g., 0.8 mm). In implementations wherein the base 102 and cover 104 are formed from plastic (e.g., polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polylactic acid (PLA)), the single layer of material may have a thickness of 0.5-0.6 mm or less.

[0049] In some implementations, the base 102 is formed of a single layer of insulating material and includes an upwardly facing circular-shaped food receiving portion 108 which receives the pizza thereon. The base 102 further includes a raised peripheral rim 110 disposed about a perimeter of the food receiving portion 108. The rim 110 comprises a raised upwardly facing apex surface 112 (see FIG. 4B) and an downwardly and outwardly extending sidewall 114 which meets with a substantially planar base

flange 116 that extends outwardly from the rim. As shown in FIG. 1B, the base flange 116 has a substantially rectangular-shaped (e.g., square) outer perimeter with rounded corners defined by first and second parallel edges 118A and 118B and third and fourth parallel edges 118C and 118D. Among other things, the base flange 116 strengthens the rigidity of the base 102.

[0050] The food receiving portion 108 of the base 102 includes a planar surface 109 and a number of features which extend at least one of upward or downward from the planar surface 109. In particular, the food receiving portion 108 includes a central well 120 which extends downwardly from the planar surface 109 and receives liquid drippings or condensation from the cooked food (e.g., pizza) placed in the food container 100. In the illustrated implementation, the central well 120 has a circular perimeter, but may have other shapes (e.g., triangle, octagon) in other implementations.

[0051] The food receiving portion 108 also includes a plurality of food receiving portion channels or grooves 122 (also referred to herein as “channels”) extending downwardly below the planar surface 109 and running radially outward from the central well 120 and terminating at the raised peripheral rim 110. In some implementations, the radial channels 122 may extend only partially between the central well 120 and the raised peripheral rim 110. In the illustrated implementation, each of the channels 122 has a U-shaped cross-sectional profile, but in other implementations the channels may have other shapes (e.g., V-shaped). In some implementations, each channel 122 may slope downward from the rim 110 toward the central well 120 to facilitate the flow of liquid through the channel into the central well. Each pair of adjacent channels 122 and a corresponding portion of the raised peripheral rim 110 delineate a respective sector portion 124 of the food receiving portion 108 which supports a portion of a food item (e.g., an individual slice of pizza). In the illustrated implementation, the base 102 includes eight channels 122 and eight sector portions 124. Generally the base 102 may include N channels and N sector portions, where N is a positive integer.

[0052] The plurality of channels 122 are equally radially spaced to enable cutting of the food item (e.g., pizza) into equally sized pieces when a cutting tool (e.g., knife) moves along the channels. Since the channels 122 extended downward from the planar surface 109, a user may cut through the food item over the channels without damaging (e.g., cutting) the food receiving portion 108 of the base 102. Further, each of the channels 122 are non-parallel with each of the edges 118A-118D of the base 102, which improves the rigidity of the base. In the illustrated implementation, each of the channels 122 is offset by 22.5° from perpendicular from a respective one of the edges 118A-118D which the channel extends toward. Further, each of the channels 122 is collinear with an opposite channel that extends radially in the opposite direction. Thus, when the base 104 is to be discarded (e.g., composted), the user may fold the base along an axis which extends through two opposing collinear channels to reduce the dimensions of the base so the base will fit within a compost receptacle.

[0053] Among other things, the channels 122 function to strengthen the base 102 in rigidity and provide supporting forces to the food receiving portion 108 when the base is disposed on a resting surface, such as a countertop, oven or another food container. The channels 122 also serve as guides for a cutting tool to cut eight equally sized pieces of

a food item (e.g., pizza). Further, the channels **122** provide air space below the food item, which provides additional insulation. In some implementations, because the channels **122** may be substantially covered by the food item placed on the food receiving portion **108**, indicia (e.g., visible and/or tactile markings) may be positioned on or adjacent the rim **110** radially in line with the channels to aid the user in cutting the pizza into pieces along the channels.

[0054] As discussed above, each pair of adjacent channels **122** and a corresponding portion (e.g., a 45° arc portion) of the raised peripheral rim **110** delineate a respective sector portion **124** of the food receiving portion **108** which receives an individual piece of the food item (e.g., slice of pizza). Each sector portion **124** includes a portion of the planar surface **109** and a raised sector portion rim **126** (FIG. 1B) which extends upward from the planar surface and adjacent each of the channels **122** which define the sector portion. In addition to supporting the food item above the planar surface **109**, the raised sector portion rim **126** adjacent the channels **122** may aid in supporting the food item near the cutting location, thereby facilitating the cutting process to provide accurate individual pieces.

[0055] Each sector portion **124** further includes a sector well **128** which may receive liquid drippings from the food product therein. In the illustrated implementation, each sector well has a perimeter rim adjacent the planar surface **109** which has an oval profile. In other implementations, each of the perimeter rims may have a profile in the shape of at least one of a circle, a triangle, a square, another shape, or a symbol (e.g., logo). Each sector portion **124** also includes a plurality of raised sector ribs or projections **130** which extend upward from the planar surface **109** around the sector well **128** having an uppermost portion which supports the hot food product (e.g., pizza). In some implementations, the combined area of the ribs **130** in a sector portion **124** is smaller than the portion of the planar surface **109** in the sector portion. Thus, when the food product is supported on the uppermost portions of the ribs **130** and the raised sector portion rim **126**, heat loss due to conduction through the planar surface **109** is substantially reduced compared to food containers with flat bottom surfaces which have relatively large surface area contact with the bottom surface of the food product. Additionally, the raised ribs **130** and sector portion rim **126** tend to isolate the bottom surface of the food product from the planar surface **109**, which prevents the food product from becoming soggy due to trapped liquid on the planar surface **109** of the food receiving portion **108**.

[0056] In the illustrated implementations, the shapes of the ribs **130** are elongated and have a length dimension which extends radially with respect to the central well **120**. Additionally, in the illustrated implementations the ribs **130** are radially symmetrical. In other implementations, the number, sizes and dimensions of the raised ribs **130** may be different from shown in the figures. The raised ribs **130** also function to improve the rigidity of the base **102**.

[0057] In some implementations, each of a plurality of features of the base **102** comprising the raised rim **110**, the central well **120**, the sector wells **128**, the channels **122**, and the raised sector ribs **130** is spaced apart from at least one other of the plurality of features by a distance which is less than or equal to one inch. In some implementations, due to the aforementioned plurality of features, the food receiving portion **108** of the base **102** does not have a continuously planar surface which exceeds 2 inches by 2 inches. Such

features significantly improve the strength of the base **102**, while allowing the base to have a length dimension greater than 12 inches (e.g., 16 inches), a width dimension greater than 12 inches (e.g., 16 inches), an overall height which is less than 1.5 inches (e.g., 1 inch), and a material thickness between 0.5 mm and 1.0 mm (e.g., 0.8 mm). In other implementations, the base **102** may have a relatively larger height and the cover **104** may have a relatively smaller height.

[0058] The base flange **116** which extends around the raised rim **110** includes eight fastening recesses or seats **132** that extend downwardly from the base flange. As discussed below, each of the fastening recesses **132** of the base **102** receive a corresponding one of a plurality of downwardly extending fastening protrusions **134** of the cover **104** to selectively retain the cover on the base **102**. The fastening recesses **132** are generally dome-shaped in the illustrated implementations, but may be other shapes and sizes in other implementations. Further, other implementations may include more fastening recesses, fewer fastening recesses, or no fastening recesses.

[0059] In some implementations, at least some of the fastening recesses **132**, the central well **120**, and the sector wells **128** extend downwardly to a lowermost portion of the base **102** so that they are weight-bearing and function as “feet” which form an insulating air space below the food receiving portion **108** of the base **102** and a resting surface when the base is supported on the resting surface. Thus, the raised ribs **130** of each sector portion, together with at least some of the fastening recesses **132**, the central well **120**, and the sector wells **128**, form a layer of air insulation between the planar surface **109** of the food receiving portion **108** and the food product and a layer of air insulation between the food receiving portion and a resting surface using only a single layer of material (i.e., the material which forms the base **102**). Additionally, the aforementioned “feet” raise the remainder of the base **102** (and cover **104** when engaged with the base) slightly above a resting surface (e.g., table), which causes a shadow to be cast, similar to a more formal serving plate.

[0060] The cover **104** comprises a single layer of thermally insulating material (e.g., molded fiber) and includes a central dome portion **136** comprising a substantially downward facing interior surface **138** (FIG. 2B) and a substantially upward facing exterior surface **140** (FIG. 1B). As shown in FIG. 4B, the dome portion **136** comprises a raised outer rim **142** spaced radially outward from the center of the dome portion which terminates in a downwardly and outwardly extending sidewall **144**. The sidewall **144** meets with a substantially planar cover flange **146** which extends laterally outwardly therefrom. Similar to the base flange **116**, the cover flange **146** has a substantially rectangular-shaped outer perimeter with rounded corners defined by first and second parallel edges **148A** and **148B** and third and fourth parallel edges **148C** and **148D** (see FIG. 1B). Among other things, the cover flange **146** strengthens the rigidity of the cover **104**.

[0061] The cover flange **146** also includes eight integrally formed fastening protrusions **134** which extend downwardly from the cover flange. The fastening protrusions **134** are generally dome-shaped in the illustrated implementations, but may be other shapes and sizes in other implementations. Further, other implementations may include more fastening protrusions, fewer fastening protrusions, or no fastening

protrusions. As shown in FIG. 11C, each of the fastening protrusions **134** of the cover flange **146** is vertically aligned with one of the integrally formed fastening recesses **132** of the base flange **116** to form a fastener **131**. In operation, each fastening recess **132** may receive a corresponding fastening protrusion **134** when the cover **104** is placed on the base **102**. Among other things, such fasteners **131** may restrict lateral or rotational movement of the cover **104** relative to the base **102** which maintains the alignment of the cover relative to the base. In some implementations, each fastening recess **132** may be sized and dimensioned to receive a corresponding fastening protrusion **134** responsive to an external force pushing the fastening recess and the fastening protrusion together when the cover **104** is placed on the base **102**, forming an interference or press fit. In such implementations, upon receiving a fastening protrusion **134**, a fastening recess **132** may generate a fastening force which facilitates holding the cover **104** in a closed configuration on the base **102**. Such fastening force resists external forces applied to the container **100** so that the container remains closed throughout storage, transportation or any other function of the container.

[0062] In some implementations, the base flange **116** may include a number of fastening protrusions that extend upwardly from the base flange, and the cover flange **146** may include a corresponding number of fastening recesses that extend upwardly from the cover flange. In such implementations, the fastening recesses of the cover **104** may receive the fastening protrusions of the base **102**.

[0063] For a plastic blister or thermoform package, due to its elastic property, when a fastening or positioning mechanism is separated the mechanism will generate an audio cue (e.g., “snap”) to signal the movement. This is due to the “undercut” design, which is a commonly known design technique in the plastic packaging industry. Such is feasible because the plastic molding process allows the undercut design. For paper or molded pulp products, it may not be possible make such an undercut design, and therefore it is typically accepted that a molded pulp package cannot have any locking design with an audible snap function. However, in some implementations of the present disclosure, due to the combination of dimension of the interference, the angle, and the thickness of the base **102** and cover **104**, the fastening mechanisms provide an unexpected performance with an audible cue (e.g., “snap”) when the fastening protrusions are disengaged from the corresponding fastening recesses. In some implementations, this audible cue may be produced more than once (e.g., each time a fastening protrusion is disengaged from a fastening recess). In some implementations, each of the fastening recesses has a depth that is greater than 5 millimeters and a diameter that is greater than 8 millimeters, and each of the fastening protrusions has a depth which is 1 millimeter less than the depth of the fastening recesses, and a diameter which is 1 millimeter greater than the diameter of the fastening recesses.

[0064] The dome portion **136** further comprises an irregularly-shaped raised inner rim **150** disposed radially inward of the raised outer rim **142**, and a substantially planar ceiling portion **152** disposed inward of the raised inner rim. In some implementations, the raised inner rim **150** has a radially asymmetric profile. A downwardly extending dome portion channel or groove **154** is positioned radially between the raised outer rim **142** and the raised inner rim **150**. The shapes and dimensions of the raised outer rim **142**, the dome portion

channel **154** and the raised inner rim **150** may be different in other implementations. The raised outer rim **142**, the dome portion channel **154** and the raised inner rim **150** together provide rigidity to the dome portion **136** which, as discussed below, provides support to the ceiling portion **152** and facilitates stacking of multiple containers **100** together. In the illustrated example, the raised inner rim **150** is lower in height than the raised outer rim **142**, but in other implementations the height of the inner rim may be equal to or greater than the outer rim. As discussed further below with reference to FIGS. 11A-11C, the outer rim **142** of the central dome portion **136** also includes eight spaced apart dome recesses **156** each sized and dimensioned to receive at least a portion of a corresponding sector well **128** of a base **102** of another food container **100** when the other food container is stacked on top of the cover **104** of the food container.

[0065] Among other things, the shapes of the sidewall **144**, raised outer rim **142**, dome portion channel **154**, and raised inner rim **150** function to improve the rigidity of the cover **104**, and serve to distribute supporting forces when an object (e.g., one or more other food containers) is stacked on the cover **104**. Further, the shape of the interior surface **138** of the central dome portion **136** and/or the texture (e.g., rough texture) of the interior surface may tend to absorb or retain moisture (e.g., condensation) which reduces the amount of moisture that returns to the hot food item (e.g., pizza) which could cause quality deterioration of the food item. Additionally, the generally round shape of the central dome portion **136** which corresponds to a round food item (e.g., pizza) provides a reduced surface area for heat transfer compared to a conventional square pizza box, thus prolonging the duration that the food item maintains an elevated temperature. In other implementations, the central dome portion **136** may be sized and/or dimensioned differently than shown in the illustrated implementations.

[0066] As shown in FIGS. 4A and 4B, the interior surface **138** of the sidewall **144** of the central dome portion **136** has an inwardly and downwardly facing perimeter channel **160** sized and dimensioned to form engage the raised perimeter rim **110** of the base **102** when the cover **104** is engaged with the base. When the cover **104** is engaged with the base **102**, the perimeter channel **160** of the sidewall **144** of the cover contacts the top surface **112** and sidewall **114** of the raised rim **110** of the base **102** to form a “seal” which may limit or even prevent the flow of air into or out of the enclosed chamber **106** which houses the food item. In some implementations, the perimeter channel **160** and the raised rim **110** are sized and dimensioned to form an interference or press fit therebetween when the cover **104** is engaged with the base **102**.

[0067] The various features of the dome portion **136** provide significant strength which, among other things, allows for stacking multiple food containers **100** together. Specifically, the dome portion **136** includes several curved or cornered portions which together improve the rigidity of the cover **104**. For example, the dome portion **136** includes the perimeter channel **160** adjacent the base flange **116**, the curved sidewall **144** radially inward of the perimeter channel, the raised outer rim **142** radially inward of the sidewall, the dome portion channel **154** radially inward of the raised outer rim, the raised inner rim **150** radially inward of the dome portion channel, and the planar ceiling portion **152** radially inward of the raised inner rim.

[0068] When the cover **104** is engaged with the base **102** (FIG. 4A), the base flange **116** and cover flange **146** are also in contact and fastened by the fasteners **131** which, as noted above, serve to restrict lateral or rotational motion between the cover and the base, to add strength to the assembled food container **100**, and to increase the limiting of airflow into the chamber **106**. As discussed above, in some implementations the fasteners **131** may form an interference or press fit between each pair of protrusions **134** and recesses **132** of the cover **104** and base **102**, respectively. In such implementations, the fasteners **131** also function to retain the cover **104** on the base **102**.

[0069] In the illustrated implementation, the outer dimensions of the base **102** and the cover **104** are substantially matched which aids the user in aligning the cover **104** when placing the cover onto the base during use, particularly when the cover is not joined to the base via a hinge (e.g., flexible joint). In some implementations, due to various symmetries of the base **102** and the cover **104**, the cover may be secured to the base at any of four relative rotational angles (e.g., 0°, 90°, 180°, and 270°) relative to the base. That is, the edge **148A** (FIG. 1B) of the cover **104** may be vertically aligned with any of the edges **118A-118D** of the base **102**. To remove the cover **104** from the base **102**, the user may lift the cover relative to the base with sufficient force to overcome the “seal” between the perimeter channel **160** of the cover and the rim **110** of the base and, in implementations where the fasteners **131** are secured by interference or press fits, sufficient force to overcome the fastening forces of the respective fasteners **131**.

[0070] As shown in FIG. 1B, in some implementations, the raised rim **110** of the base **102** includes one or more grooves or notches **162** at an intersection of the top surface **112** and the sidewall **114** of the rim **110**. Such grooves **162** may function to release the seal between the cover **104** and the base **102** when the user begins to lift the cover from the base prior to the perimeter channel **160** disengaging with the remainder of the raised rim **110**. Such feature advantageously makes the cover **104** easier to remove from the base **102** when a user desires to access the food item in the food container **100**.

[0071] The base **102** and cover **104** of the food container **100** may be nestable with other bases and covers, respectively, with a minimum amount of vertical height (i.e., essentially the thickness of the material for each component). That is, when a first base **102** is stacked on top of a second base, the top surfaces of the features of the lower second base are positioned adjacent the bottom surfaces of corresponding features of the upper first base, with minimal air space therebetween. Similarly, when a first cover **104** is stacked on top of a second cover, the top surfaces of the features of the lower second cover are positioned adjacent the bottom surfaces of corresponding features of the upper first cover. Thus, numerous bases may be stacked together at a height which is much less than the combined height of the individual bases. Similarly, numerous covers may be stacked together at a height which is much less than the combined height of the individual covers. Such nesting feature is advantageous for shipping and for storing the food containers **100** in a small space (e.g., restaurant, vehicle, packaging).

[0072] Further, unlike conventional pizza boxes formed from a cardboard blank which has to be folded, no pre-assembly is required. Thus, the base **102** and cover **104** need

not be handled by a user until selected for use to perform its intended function, which significantly reduces the likelihood of contamination.

[0073] In operation, a user may select a base **102** from a stack of nested bases, place a food item (cooked or uncooked) onto the food receiving portion **108** of the base, select a cover **104** from a stack of nested covers, and lower the cover onto the base as shown in FIGS. 1A and 2A.

[0074] Because the food item is generally supported above the planar surface **109** of the food receiving portion **108** by the raised ribs **130** and sector portion rim **126** of each sector portion **124**, liquid drippings from the food item fall away from the food item and into the sector wells **128**, the central well **120** and/or the channels **122**. Such features prevent the bottom of the food item from becoming soggy in addition to strengthening the rigidity of the food container. Thus, the aforementioned features of the food container **100** provide a housing which is lightweight, sturdy, compostable, and supports the food item in a manner which keeps the food item in a hot and dry condition, which preserves the freshness of the food item.

[0075] FIGS. 11A-11C show how the food container **100** is stackable with one or more other food containers, such as another food container **200** which is substantially the same or identical to the food container **100**. As shown in FIG. 11C, an inward facing portion of the apex of the raised outer rim **142** of the central dome portion **136** of the cover **104** includes a plurality of dome recesses or seats **156** radially spaced from the center of the dome portion. Each of the dome recesses **156** are sized and dimensioned to receive at least a portion of one sector well **128** of a base **102** of another food container **100** when the other food container is stacked on top of the cover **104** of the food container **200**. In some implementations, the shape of the recesses **156** may complement the shape of the sector wells **158** to maximize the contact surface area between the recesses and the sector wells. Thus, the sector wells **128** function as “feet” for the base of the food container **100** when the food container **100** is stacked on top of the food container **200**. When in such a stacked relationship, only the sector wells **128** of the base **102** of the top food container **100** contact the dome recesses **156** of the cover **104** of the bottom food container **200**, which provides a substantial air space between the two containers **100** and **200**, thus minimizing heat transfer therebetween. Additionally, since the sector wells **128** of the base **102** of the top food container **100** are spaced apart from the food product in the food container **100** and the sector recesses **156** of the dome portion **136** of the bottom food container **200** are not in contact with the food product in the food container **200**, surfaces of the food containers adjacent the hot food products do not contact each other when the containers are stacked, which further minimizes heat transfer between containers.

[0076] As discussed above, the outer rim **142** of the central dome portion **136** is structurally rigid and serves to distribute supporting forces of the sector wells **128** of the base **102** when the top food container **100** is stacked on the cover **104** of the bottom food container **200**. Moreover, when the food container **100** is stacked on the food container **200** and the bottom surface of each of the sector wells **128** of the base **102** is received in a respective one of the dome recesses **156**, the food container **100** and the food container **200** are restricted from lateral or rotational movement with respect

to each other, which helps keep the food containers in a stacked relationship during transportation of the food containers.

[0077] FIG. 12 shows a simplified schematic diagram of a base 240 for a food container. The base 240 may be similar or identical to the base 102 discussed above. In this implementation, the base 240 includes a food receiving portion 242 which includes a number N of channels CC_{1-N} which delineate a corresponding number N of sector portions SP_{1-N} . The channels CC_{1-N} and sector portions SP_{1-N} may be similar to the channels 122 and sector portions 124, respectively, discussed above. As a non-limiting example, the number N may be equal to a positive integer (e.g., 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 16).

[0078] FIG. 13 shows a sectional elevational view of the base 102 and includes a number of dimensional measurements and radius of curvature measurements in millimeters for the base 102, according to one or more implementations. FIG. 6 also shows example measurements for the outer edges of the cover 104 and/or base 102. As shown, in some implementations the base 102 and cover 104 may each have outer dimensions of 410 millimeters by 410 millimeters. The aforementioned strengthening structural features allow the food container 100 to be relatively large and to utilize a relatively thin layer of material for each of the base and the cover while providing the aforementioned required support for receiving a food item and/or stacking multiple food containers together. Such measurements are provided as examples and should not be considered to be limiting.

[0079] Referring now to FIG. 14A through FIG. 21, various views of a food container 300 are shown. The food container 300 may be similar or identical to the food containers 100 and 200 in many respects (e.g., shapes, materials, sizes, features). Accordingly, at least some of the discussion above is applicable to the food container 300 and may not be repeated below for the sake of brevity.

[0080] As shown in FIG. 14B, the food container 300 includes a base 302 and a separate cover 304 which cooperate as shown in the figures and described below to form a closed chamber for supporting, protecting, insulating and optionally cooking a food product (e.g., pizza). In at least some implementations, the base 302 is formed of a single layer of insulating material and includes an upwardly facing circular-shaped food receiving portion 308 which receives the pizza thereon. The base 302 further includes a raised peripheral rim 310 disposed about a perimeter of the food receiving portion 308. The rim 310 comprises a raised upwardly facing apex surface 312 (FIG. 21) and a downwardly and outwardly extending sidewall 314 which meets with a substantially planar base flange 316 that extends outwardly from the rim. As shown in FIG. 14B, the base flange 316 has a substantially rectangular-shaped (e.g., square) outer perimeter with rounded corners defined by first and second parallel edges 318A and 318B and third and fourth parallel edges 318C and 318D. Among other things, the base flange 316 strengthens the rigidity of the base 302.

[0081] The food receiving portion 308 of the base 302 includes a planar surface 309 and a number of features which extend at least one of upward or downward from the planar surface 309. In particular, the food receiving portion 308 includes a central well 320 which extends downwardly from the planar surface 309 and receives liquid drippings or condensation from the cooked food (e.g., pizza) placed in the food container 300. In the illustrated implementation, the

central well 320 has a circular perimeter, but may have other shapes (e.g., triangle, octagon) in other implementations.

[0082] The food receiving portion 308 also includes a plurality of food receiving portion channels or grooves 322 (also referred to herein as “channels”) extending downwardly below the planar surface 309 and running radially outward from the central well 320 and terminating at the raised peripheral rim 310. In some implementations, the radial channels 322 may extend only partially between the central well 320 and the raised peripheral rim 310. In the illustrated implementation, each of the channels 322 has a U-shaped cross-sectional profile, but in other implementations the channels may have other shapes (e.g., V-shaped). In some implementations, each channel 322 may slope downward from the rim 310 toward the central well 320 to facilitate the flow of liquid through the channel into the central well. Each pair of adjacent channels 322 and a corresponding portion of the raised peripheral rim 310 delineate a respective sector portion 324 of the food receiving portion 308 which supports a portion of a food item (e.g., an individual slice of pizza). In the illustrated implementation, the base 302 includes eight channels 322 and eight sector portions 324. Generally the base 302 may include N channels and N sector portions, where N is a positive integer.

[0083] The plurality of channels 322 are equally radially spaced to enable cutting of the food item (e.g., pizza) into equally sized pieces when a cutting tool (e.g., knife) moves along the channels. Since the channels 322 extended downward from the planar surface 309, a user may cut through the food item over the channels without damaging (e.g., cutting) the food receiving portion 308 of the base 302. Further, each of the channels 322 are non-parallel with each of the edges 318A-318D of the base 302, which improves the rigidity of the base. In the illustrated implementation, each of the channels 322 is offset by 22.5° from perpendicular from a respective one of the edges 318A-318D which the channel extends toward. Further, each of the channels 322 is collinear with an opposite channel that extends radially in the opposite direction. Thus, when the base 304 is to be discarded (e.g., composted), the user may fold the base along an axis which extends through two opposing collinear channels to reduce the dimensions of the base so the base will fit within a compost receptacle.

[0084] Among other things, the channels 322 function to strengthen the base 302 in rigidity and provide supporting forces to the food receiving portion 308 when the base is disposed on a resting surface, such as a countertop, oven or another food container. The channels 322 also serve as guides for a cutting tool to cut eight equally sized pieces of a food item (e.g., pizza). Further, the channels 322 provide air space below the food item, which provides additional insulation. In some implementations, because the channels 322 may be substantially covered by the food item placed on the food receiving portion 308, indicia (e.g., visible and/or tactile markings) may be positioned on or adjacent the rim 310 radially in line with the channels to aid the user in cutting the pizza into pieces along the channels.

[0085] As discussed above, each pair of adjacent channels 322 and a corresponding portion (e.g., a 45° arc portion) of the raised peripheral rim 310 delineate a respective sector portion 324 of the food receiving portion 308 which receives an individual piece of the food item (e.g., slice of pizza). Each sector portion 324 includes a portion of the planar surface 309 and a raised sector portion rim 326 (FIG. 14B)

which extends upward from the planar surface and adjacent each of the channels 322 which define the sector portion. In addition to supporting the food item above the planar surface 309, the raised sector portion rim 326 adjacent the channels 322 may aid in supporting the food item near the cutting location, thereby facilitating the cutting process to provide accurate individual pieces.

[0086] Each sector portion 324 further includes a sector well 328 which may receive liquid drippings from the food product therein. In the illustrated implementation, each sector well has a perimeter rim adjacent the planar surface 309 which has an oval profile. In other implementations, each of the perimeter rims may have a profile in the shape of at least one of a circle, a triangle, a square, another shape, or a symbol (e.g., logo). Each sector portion 324 also includes a plurality of raised sector ribs or projections 330 which extend upward from the planar surface 309 around the sector well 328 having an uppermost portion which supports the hot food product (e.g., pizza). In some implementations, the combined area of the ribs 330 in a sector portion 324 is smaller than the portion of the planar surface 309 in the sector portion. Thus, when the food product is supported on the uppermost portions of the ribs 330 and the raised sector portion rim 326, heat loss due to conduction through the planar surface 309 is substantially reduced compared to food containers with flat bottom surfaces which have relatively large surface area contact with the bottom surface of the food product. Additionally, the raised ribs 330 and sector portion rim 326 tend to isolate the bottom surface of the food product from the planar surface 309, which prevents the food product from becoming soggy due to trapped liquid on the planar surface 309 of the food receiving portion 308.

[0087] In the illustrated implementations, the shapes of the ribs 330 are elongated and have a length dimension which extends radially with respect to the central well 320. Additionally, in the illustrated implementations the ribs 330 are radially symmetrical. In other implementations, the number, sizes and dimensions of the raised ribs 330 may be different from shown in the figures. The raised ribs 330 also function to improve the rigidity of the base 302.

[0088] In some implementations, each of a plurality of features of the base 302 comprising the raised rim 310, the central well 320, the sector wells 328, the channels 322, and the raised sector ribs 330 is spaced apart from at least one other of the plurality of features by a distance which is less than or equal to one inch. In some implementations, due to the aforementioned plurality of features, the food receiving portion 308 of the base 302 does not have a continuously planar surface which exceeds 2 inches by 2 inches. Such features significantly improve the strength of the base 302, while allowing the base to have a length dimension greater than 12 inches (e.g., 16 inches), a width dimension greater than 12 inches (e.g., 16 inches), an overall height which is less than 1.5 inches (e.g., 1 inch), and a material thickness between 0.5 mm and 1.0 mm (e.g., 0.8 mm). In other implementations, the base 302 may have a relatively larger height and the cover 304 may have a relatively smaller height.

[0089] The outward facing sidewall 314 of the raised rim 310 of the base 302 includes four cover interface portions 332 spaced 90° apart from each other that extend radially outward from the remainder of the outward facing sidewall 314. As discussed further below, the cover interface portions 332 of the base 302 engage an inwardly and downwardly

facing perimeter channel 360 of the cover 304 when the cover is engaged with the base to provide a friction fit between the cover and the base, which retains the cover on the base until removed by a user.

[0090] In some implementations, at least some of the central well 320 and the sector wells 328 extend downwardly to a lowermost portion of the base 302 so that they are weight-bearing and function as “feet” which form an insulating air space below the food receiving portion 308 of the base 302 and a resting surface when the base is supported on the resting surface. Thus, the raised ribs 330 of each sector portion, together with at least some of the central well 320 and the sector wells 328, form a layer of air insulation between the planar surface 309 of the food receiving portion 308 and the food product and a layer of air insulation between the food receiving portion and a resting surface using only a single layer of material (i.e., the material which forms the base 302). Additionally, the aforementioned “feet” raise the remainder of the base 302 (and cover 304 when engaged with the base) slightly above a resting surface (e.g., table), which causes a shadow to be cast, similar to a more formal serving plate.

[0091] The cover 304 comprises a single layer of thermally insulating material (e.g., molded fiber) and includes a central dome portion 336 comprising a substantially downward facing interior surface 338 (FIG. 15B) and a substantially upward facing exterior surface 340 (FIG. 14B). In at least some implementations, the exterior surface 340 is circular in shape which facilitates printing (e.g., laser printing, pad printing) thereon with text and/or graphics (e.g., logo, image, instructions). As shown in FIG. 14B, the dome portion 336 comprises a raised outer rim 342 spaced radially outward from the center of the dome portion which terminates in a downwardly and outwardly extending sidewall 344. The sidewall 344 meets with a cover flange 346 which extends laterally outwardly therefrom. The cover flange 346 has a substantially circular-shaped outer perimeter and includes tab portion 348A that may align with one of the four corner portions of the base flange 316 when the cover 304 is engaged with the base. The tab portion 348A may be planar in shape or may have a distal portion 348B that extends upward that may be grasped by the user to remove the cover 304 from the base 302 during use. Among other things, the cover flange 346 strengthens the rigidity of the cover 304.

[0092] The dome portion 336 further comprises a substantially planar ceiling portion 352 disposed radially inward of the raised outer rim 342. The raised outer rim 342 provides rigidity to the dome portion 336 which, as discussed below, provides support to the ceiling portion 352 and facilitates stacking of multiple containers 300 together. The outer rim 342 of the central dome portion 336 also includes eight spaced apart dome recesses 356 each sized and dimensioned to receive at least a portion of a corresponding sector well 328 of a base 302 of another food container 300 when the other food container is stacked on top of the cover 304 of the food container.

[0093] As noted above, the interior surface 338 of the sidewall 344 of the central dome portion 336 has the perimeter channel 360 sized and dimensioned to engage the cover interface portions 332 of the raised perimeter rim 310 of the base 302 when the cover 304 is engaged with the base. In some implementations, the perimeter channel 360 and the cover interface portions 332 of the raised rim 310 are sized

and dimension to form a friction or interference fit therebetween when the cover **304** is engaged with the base **302**.

[0094] The various features of the dome portion **336** provide significant strength which, among other things, allows for stacking multiple food containers **300** together. Specifically, the dome portion **336** includes several curved or cornered portions which together improve the rigidity of the cover **304**. For example, the dome portion **336** includes the perimeter channel **360** adjacent the base flange **316**, the curved sidewall **344** radially inward of the perimeter channel, the raised outer rim **342** radially inward of the sidewall, and the planar ceiling portion **352** radially inward of the raised inner rim.

[0095] As shown in FIG. 14B, in some implementations, the raised rim **310** of the base **302** includes one or more grooves or notches **362** at an intersection of the top surface **312** and the sidewall **314** of the rim **310**. Such grooves **362** may function to release the seal between the cover **304** and the base **302** when the user begins to lift the cover from the base prior to the perimeter channel **360** disengaging with the cover interface portions **332** of the raised rim **310**. Such feature advantageously makes the cover **304** easier to remove from the base **302** when a user desires to access the food item in the food container **300**.

[0096] The base **302** and cover **304** of the food container **300** may be nestable with other bases and covers, respectively, with a minimum amount of vertical height (i.e., essentially the thickness of the material for each component). That is, when a first base **302** is stacked on top of a second base, the top surfaces of the features of the lower second base are positioned adjacent the bottom surfaces of corresponding features of the upper first base, with minimal air space therebetween. Similarly, when a first cover **304** is stacked on top of a second cover, the top surfaces of the features of the lower second cover are positioned adjacent the bottom surfaces of corresponding features of the upper first cover. Thus, numerous bases may be stacked together at a height which is much less than the combined height of the individual bases. Similarly, numerous covers may be stacked together at a height which is much less than the combined height of the individual covers. Such nesting feature is advantageous for shipping and for storing the food containers **300** in a small space (e.g., restaurant, vehicle, packaging).

[0097] In at least some implementations, the cover **304** may include one or more spaced apart denesting lugs **334** disposed on an inward facing surface **350** of the dome portion **336** spaced radially inward from the raised outer rim **342**. The denesting lugs **334** may be spaced apart from each other at uneven intervals around the circumference of inward facing surface **350**. The denesting lugs **334** operate to make it easier for a user to separate the covers from one another when stacked. Thus, for example, a manufacturer of the covers may provide a number of the covers stacked together which may be easily separated prior to use. In particular, the denesting lugs **334** provide spacing between two stacked covers **304**, which allows for ease in grasping only one of the covers by an individual or a machine. The uneven spacing of the denesting lugs **334** may reduce the likelihood that the denesting lugs of one cover will align with and fit into the denesting lugs of another cover stacked the cover, which would cause the denesting lugs to fail to provide the intended spacing between the two covers.

[0098] The various implementations described above can be combined to provide further implementations. These and other changes can be made to the implementations in light of the above-detailed description. In general, in the following claims, the terms used should not be construed to limit the claims to the specific implementations disclosed in the specification and the claims, but should be construed to include all possible implementations along with the full scope of equivalents to which such claims are entitled. Accordingly, the claims are not limited by the disclosure.

[0099] To the extent that they are not inconsistent with the specific teachings and definitions herein, all of the US patents, US patent application publications, US patent applications, referred to in this specification and/or listed in the Application Data Sheet, including but not limited to U.S. Patent Application Ser. No. 62/311,787, filed Mar. 22, 2016, are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

1. A food container comprising:

a base comprising a raised rim disposed about a perimeter of an upwardly facing food receiving portion which receives a food product, the food receiving portion comprising a planar surface, a central well disposed in the center of the food receiving portion, and a plurality of channels each extending downwardly from the planar surface and radially at least partially between the central well and the raised rim, each pair of adjacent channels and a corresponding portion of the raised rim delineating a respective sector portion of the food receiving portion, each sector portion comprises a sector well that extends downwardly from the planar surface; and

a cover selectively engageable with the base, the cover comprising a central dome portion having a substantially downward facing interior surface and a substantially upward facing exterior surface, the interior surface of the central dome portion having a perimeter channel sized and dimensioned to engage the raised rim of the base when the cover is engaged with the base, and the central dome portion sized and shaped to provide an interior chamber which protects the food product, the interior chamber defined at least in part by the interior surface of the central dome portion and the food receiving portion of the base, and the exterior surface of the central dome portion comprises a plurality of dome recesses, each of the plurality of dome recesses sized and dimensioned to receive at least a portion of a sector well of a base of another food container identical to the food container when the other food container is stacked on top of the cover of the food container, and wherein the exterior surface of the central dome portion further comprises a plurality of denesting lugs, each of the plurality of denesting lugs sized and dimensioned to provide spacing between at least a portion of an interior surface of another cover identical to the cover when the other cover is stacked on top of the cover.

2. The food container of claim 1, wherein the central dome portion comprises a raised outer rim and an inward facing surface disposed within the raised outer rim.

3. The food container of claim 2, wherein the plurality of denesting lugs are disposed on the inward facing surface.

4. The food container of claim 3, wherein the plurality of denesting lugs are spaced apart from each other at uneven intervals around a circumference of the inward facing surface.

5. The food container of claim 3, wherein the plurality of dome recesses project substantially inward from the exterior surface of the central dome portion and the plurality of denesting lugs project substantially outward from the exterior surface of the central dome portion.

6. The food container of claim 3, wherein the plurality of dome recesses are spaced apart from each other at even intervals around a circumference of the raised outer rim.

7. The food container of claim 3, wherein the plurality of denesting lugs comprise an odd number of denesting lugs and wherein the plurality of dome recesses comprise an even number of dome recesses.

8. The food container of claim 3, wherein the plurality of denesting lugs comprise a different number of denesting lugs than the plurality of dome recesses.

9. The food container of claim 1, wherein the cover comprises a cover flange and wherein the base comprises a base flange.

10. The food container of claim 9, wherein the cover flange comprises at least one downwardly extending fastening protrusion and wherein the base flange comprises at least one downwardly extending fastening recess configured to engage with the at least one fastening protrusion when the cover is engaged with the base.

11. The food container of claim 9, wherein the base flange extends around a full perimeter of the food receiving portion and wherein the cover flange extends from a portion of the central dome portion.

12. The food container of claim 9, wherein the at least one downwardly extending fastening protrusion is discrete from the at least one dome recess.

13. The food container of claim 10, wherein the central dome portion comprises an uppermost extent of the cover.

14. The food container of claim 13, wherein the downwardly extending fastening protrusion comprises a lowermost extent of the cover.

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