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(54) **DISPLAY DEVICE FOR BEVERAGE PITCHER OR COFFEE MACHINE**

(76) Inventor: **Lawrence J. Koncelik, Jr.**, East Hampton, NY (US)

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Related U.S. Patent Documents

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Filed: **Jan. 14, 2004**

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G01K 1/14 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **99/285**; 99/323.3; 116/201; 116/202; 116/279; 116/307; 116/DIG. 1

(58) **Field of Classification Search** ..... 99/285, 99/323.3; 116/201, 202, 205, 279, 306, 307, 116/308, DIG. 3, DIG. 1; 368/10, 108; 220/592.16, 220/592.2, 592.28; 40/442, 444, 445; D7/322, D7/397, 398, 393
See application file for complete search history.

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Primary Examiner — Reginald L Alexander
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Brown & Michaels, PC

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An apparatus is disclosed comprising a display device or indicator device and a timer circuit. The display device can be placed in a first or a second state. In the first state the display device provides a first visual indication of a first type of beverage which is within a beverage receptacle. In the second state the display device provides a second visual indication of a second type of beverage which is within the beverage pitcher. The timer circuit, automatically, after a certain period of time, may change the indicator device from the first or second state to a third state in which the indicator device does not provide a visual indication of the type of beverage within a beverage container.

27 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets

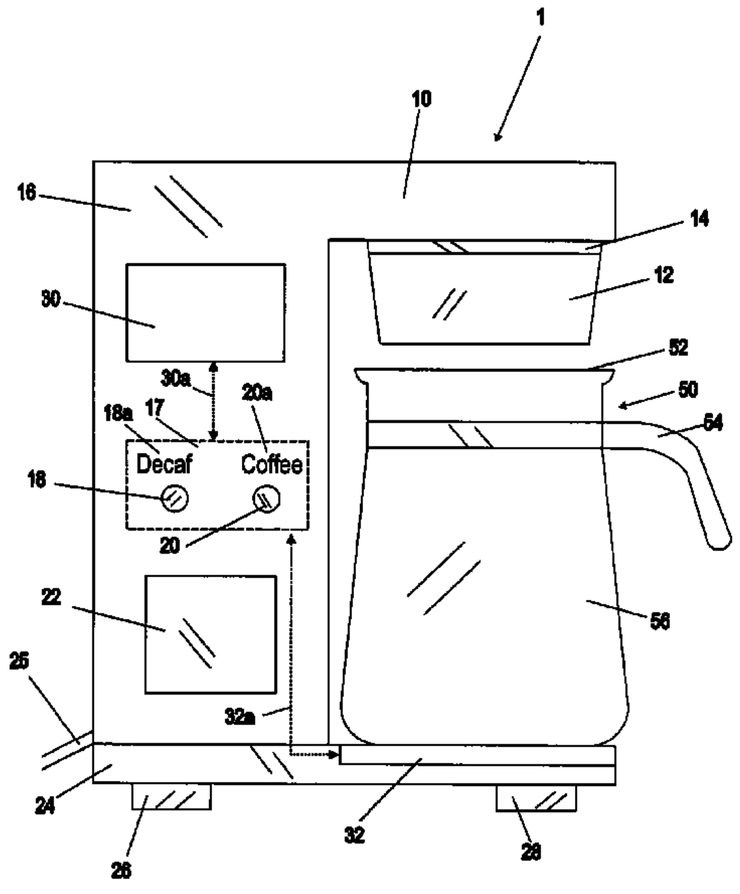


Fig. 1

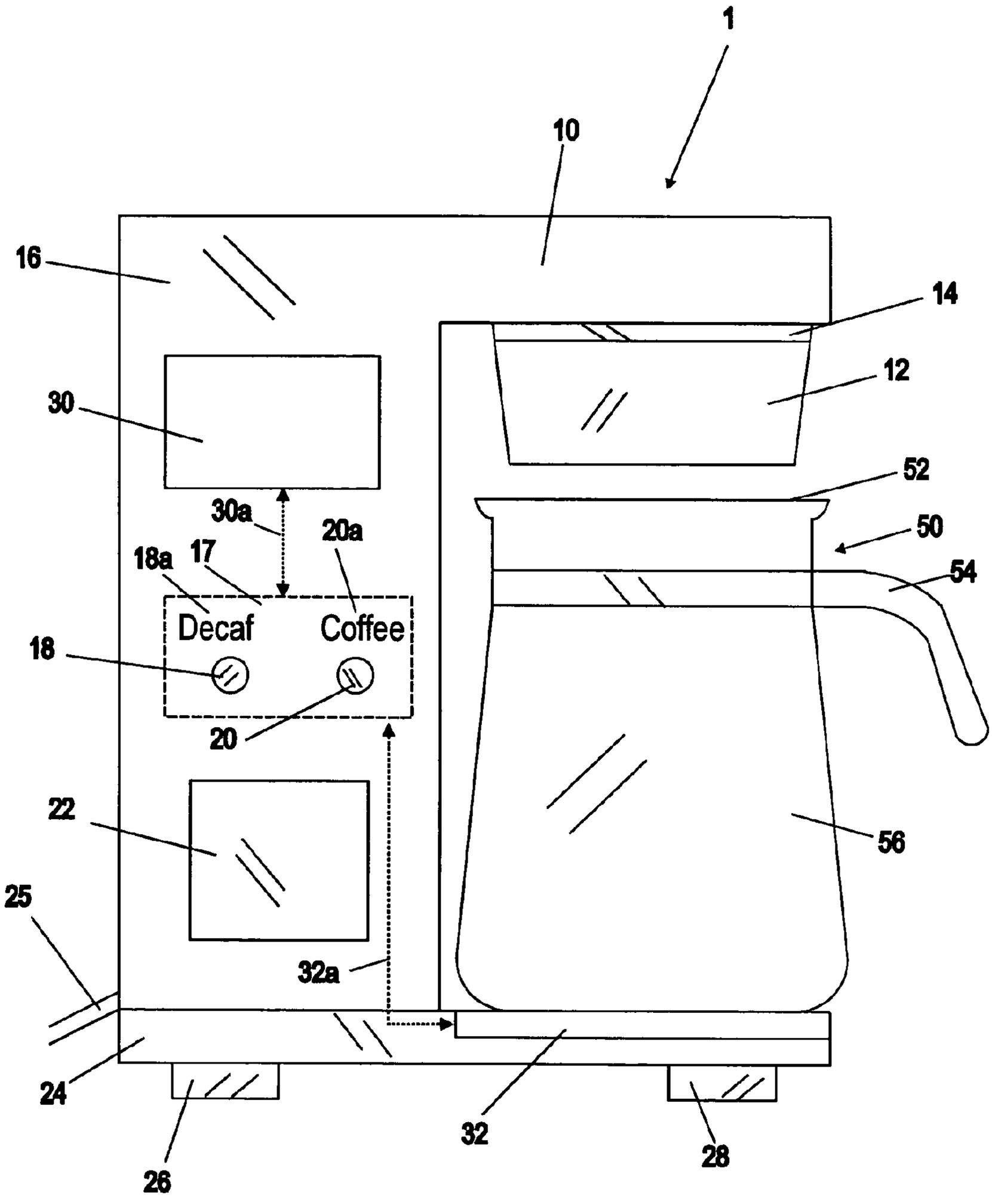

1
10
16
14
12
30
52
30a
20a
50
18a
17
54
Decaf
Coffee
18
20
22
56
25
32a
24
32
26
28

Fig. 2

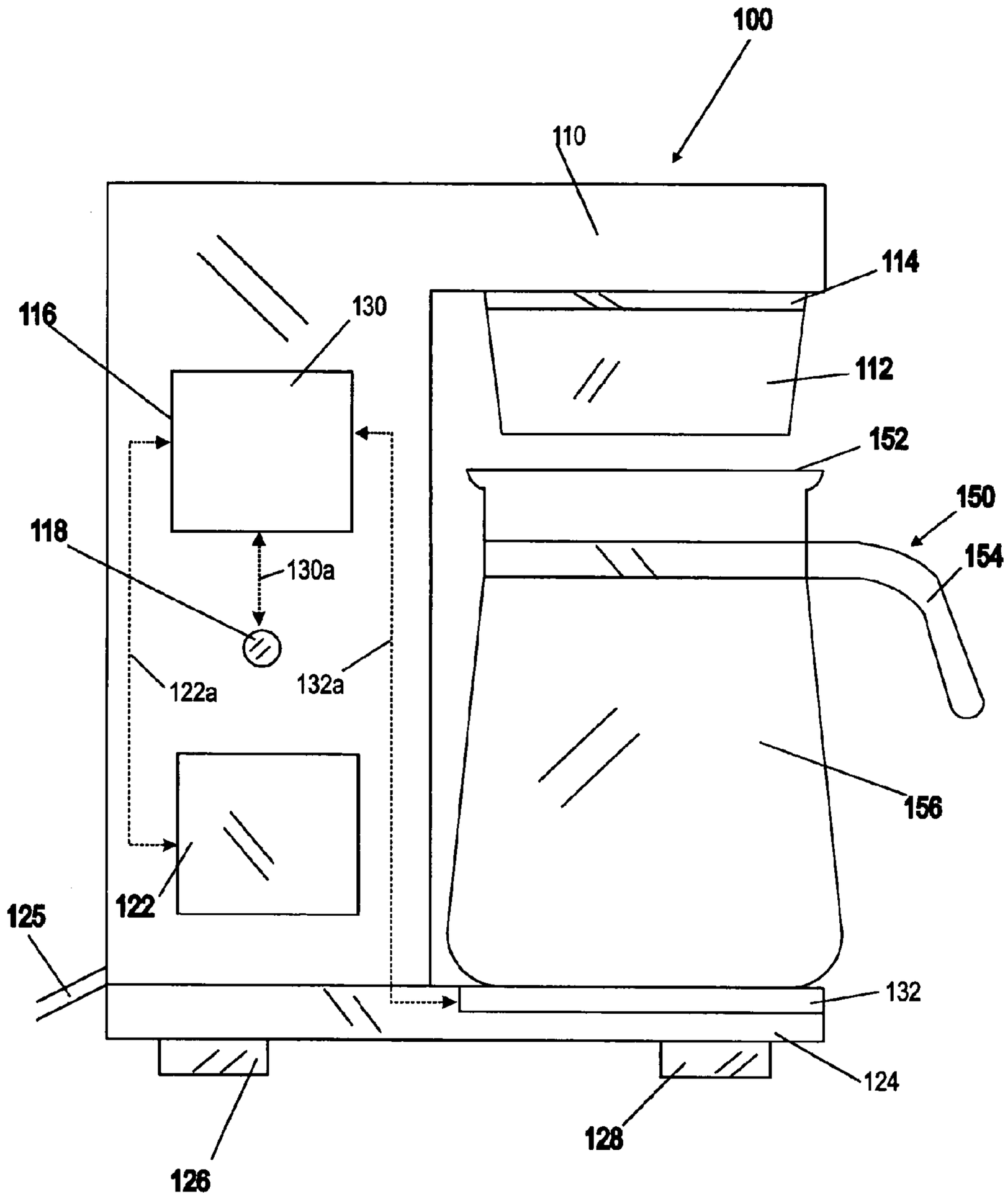

100
110
114
116
130
112
152
150
118
130a
154
122a
132a
156
122
125
132
124
126
128

Fig. 3

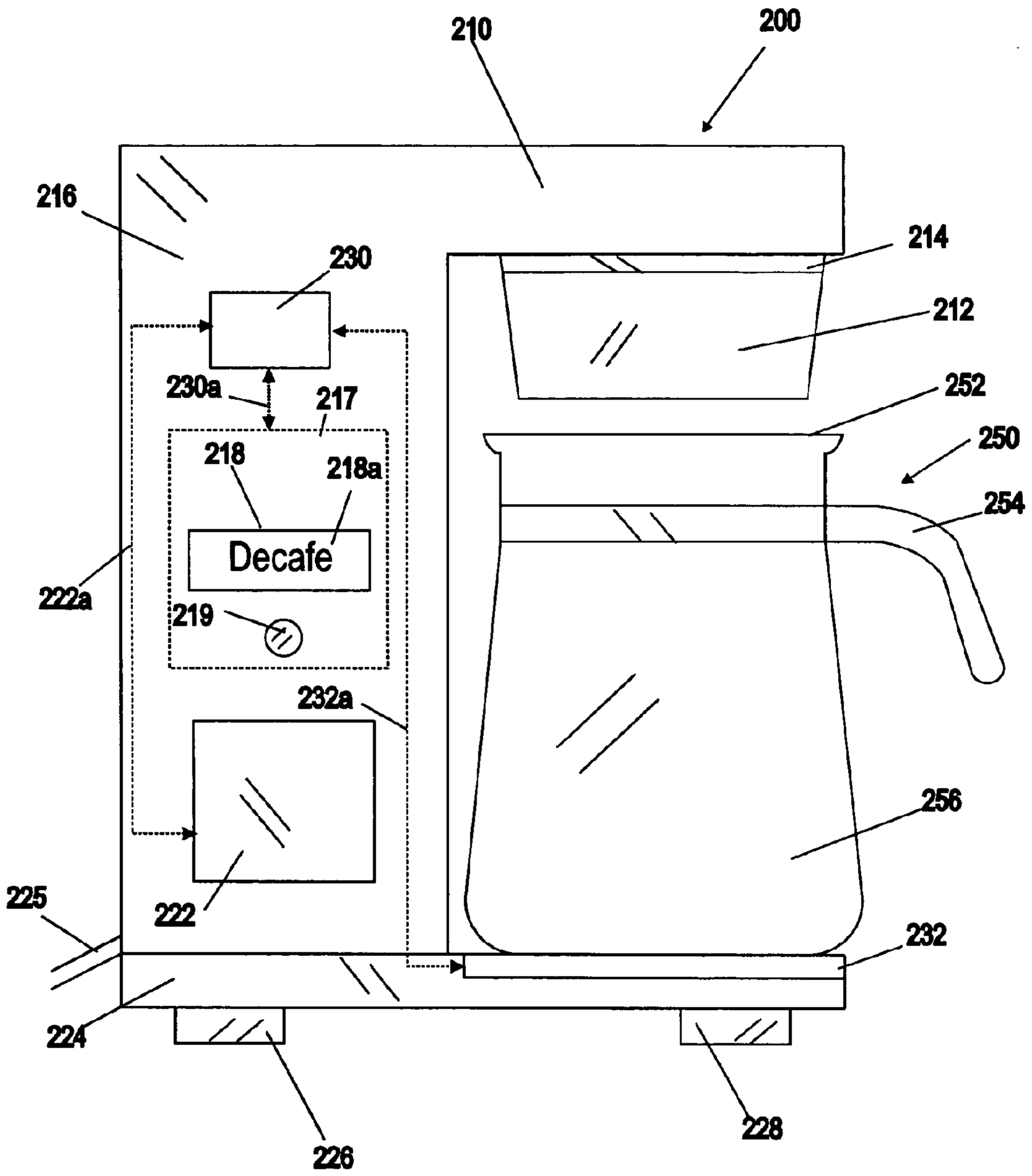

210
200
216
214
230
212
230a
217
252
218
218a
250
Decafe
254
222a
219
232a
256
225
222
232
224
226
228

Fig. 4

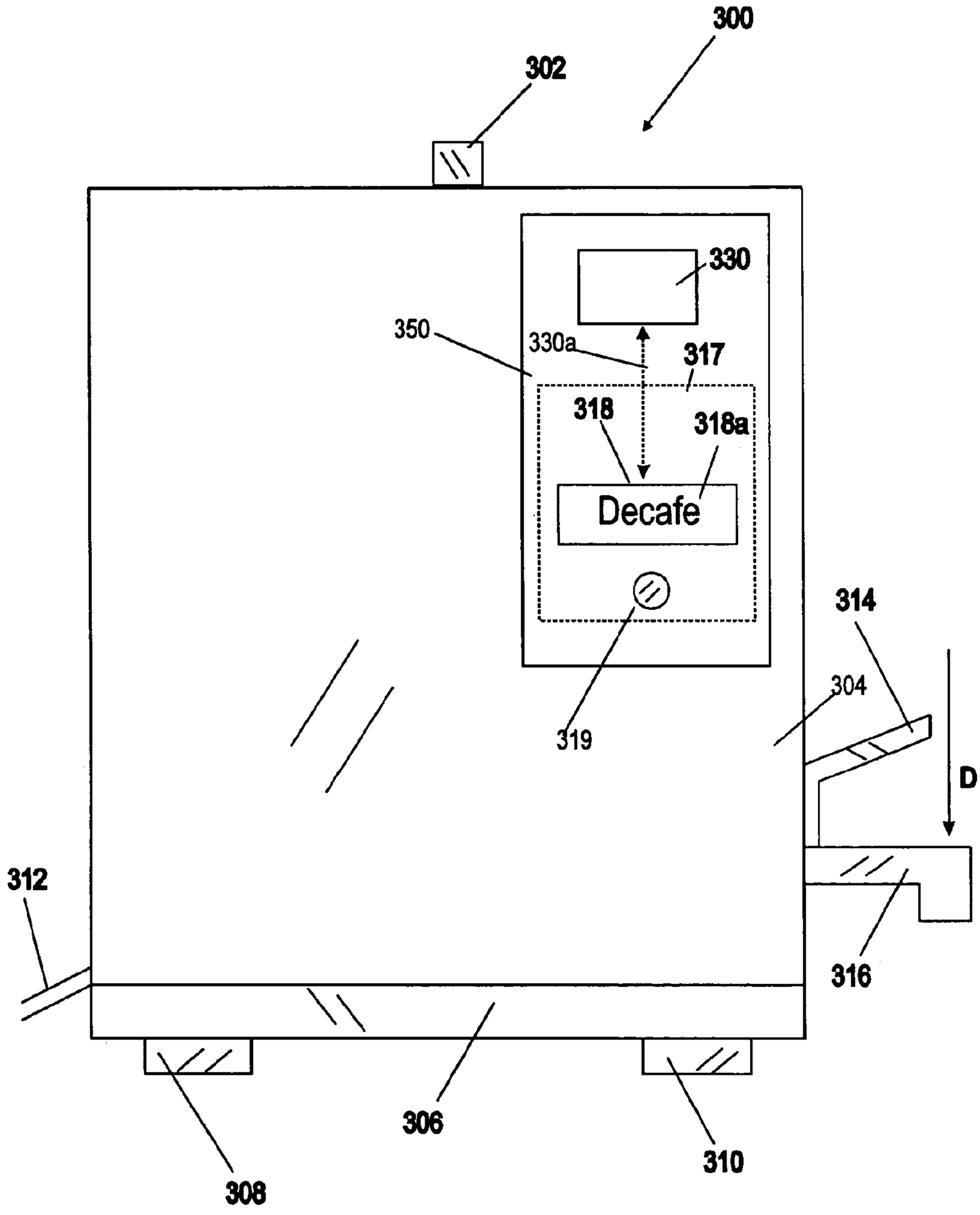
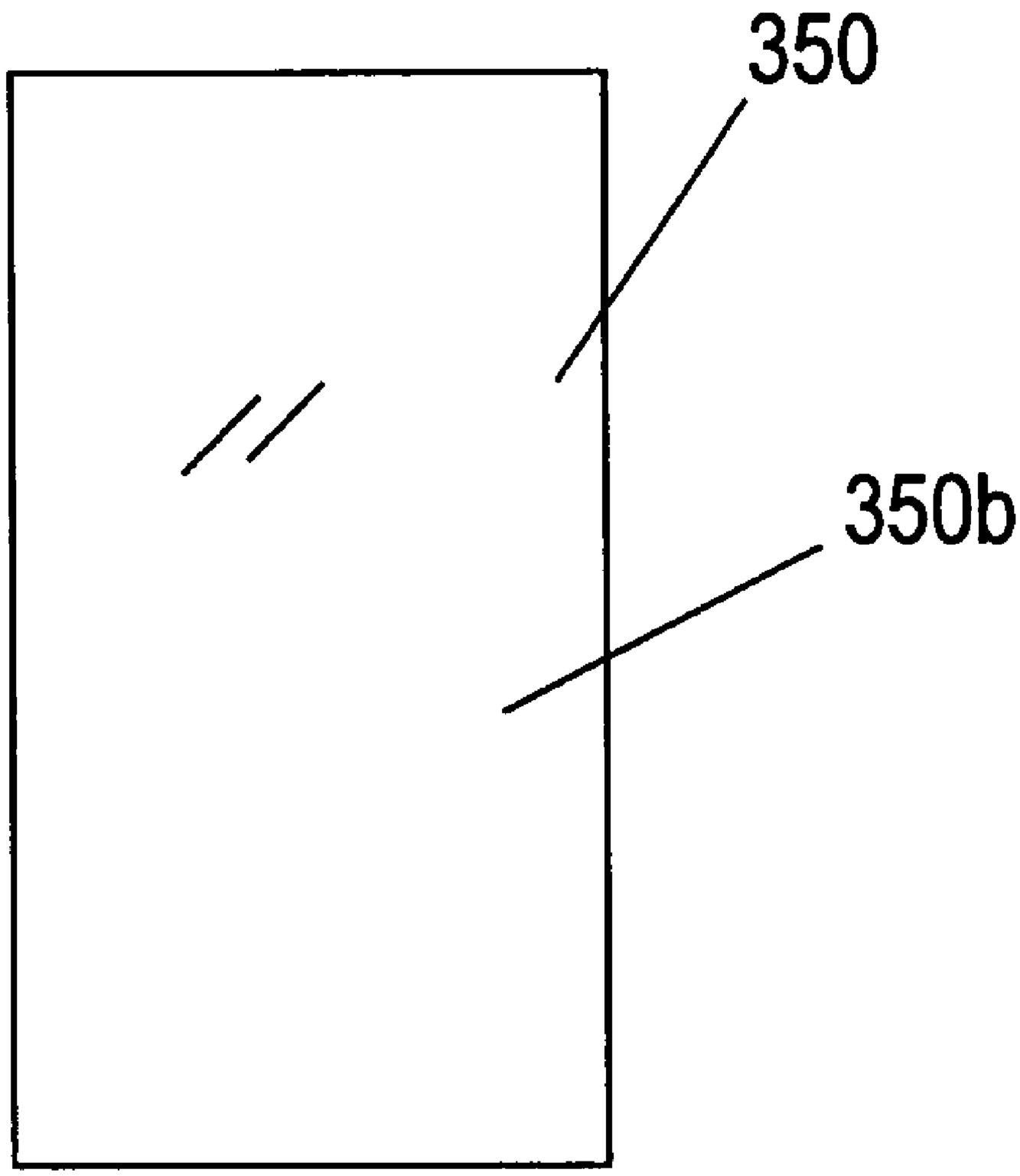

300
302
330
350
330a
317
318
318a
Decafe
319
314
304
D
312
316
306
308
310

Fig. 5



DISPLAY DEVICE FOR BEVERAGE PITCHER OR COFFEE MACHINE

Matter enclosed in heavy brackets [ ] appears in the original patent but forms no part of this reissue specification; matter printed in italics indicates the additions made by reissue.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to improved methods and apparatus concerning providing signs or symbols to indicate the contents of beverage pitchers.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

U.S. Pat. No. 6,564,696 to Koncelik discloses an indicator device which provides an indication of whether coffee which has been prepared is decaffeinated or non-decaffeinated. After an operator has set the indicator device to, for example, "decafe", the indicator device remains in a state which indicates "decafe" until the indicator device is changed by an individual.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention in one or more embodiments provides an apparatus comprising a timer circuit, and an indicator or display device which communicates with the timer circuit. The indicator device can be placed in a first or second state by an operator. In the first state the indicator device provides a first visual indication of a first type of beverage within a beverage receptacle. In the second state the indicator device provides a second visual indication of a second type of beverage within the beverage receptacle, wherein the second type of beverage differs from the first type of beverage.

The timer circuit can be programmed to automatically change the indicator device after a certain period of time, from the first or second state to a third state, wherein in the third state, the indicator device no longer provides a visual indication of what type of beverage is within the beverage receptacle. The beverage receptacle may be a coffee pot or a coffee machine. The first type of beverage may be non-decaffeinated coffee, and the second type of beverage may be decaffeinated coffee. The timer circuit and the indicator device can be attached or detached from a coffee machine.

The first visual indication may be a designation of the first type of beverage and may be comprised of least one alphanumeric character. The second visual indication may be a designation of the second type of beverage and may be comprised of at least one alphanumeric character.

The indicator device may be comprised of a first light under a first designation which indicates decaffeinated coffee, and a second light under a second designation which indicates non decaffeinated coffee. The first light may be part of a first push button which can be pushed in to light the first light to indicate that decaffeinated coffee has been made. The second light may be part of a second push button which can be pushed in to light the second light to indicate that non decaffeinated coffee has been made. The indicator device may be comprised of a first light which is able to emit either a first or a second color light. The first light may emit the first color light when the coffee machine has made decaffeinated coffee and the first light may emit the second color light when the coffee machine has made non decaffeinated coffee.

The indicator device may include an electronic digital display which displays whether coffee which has been made by a coffee machine is non decaffeinated or decaffeinated. The indicator device may further include a first push button which when pushed in causes the electronic digital display to toggle from displaying an indication that the coffee is decaffeinated to displaying an indication that the coffee is non decaffeinated.

A method is also provided comprising fixing an indicator device and a timer circuit on a coffee machine, wherein the indicator device can be placed into a first state or a second state by an operator. When the indicator device is placed in a first state, the indicator device provides a first visual indication of a first type of beverage which is within a coffee receptacle. When the indicator device is placed in a second state the indicator device provides a second visual indication of a second type of beverage which is within the coffee receptable. The timer circuit, after a certain period of time, may cause the indicator device to automatically change from the first or second state to a third state in which the indicator device does not indicate what type of beverage is within the coffee receptacle.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** shows a coffee machine in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention including an indicator or display device showing a light under a designation to indicate whether coffee which has been prepared in a coffee pot is regular or decaffeinated;

FIG. **2** shows a coffee machine in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention including an indicator or display device showing only a light, which may be one of two colors, to indicate whether coffee which has been prepared in a coffee pot is regular or decaffeinated;

FIG. **3** shows a coffee machine in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention having an indicator or display device which includes a push button and a electronic digital display to indicate whether coffee which has been prepared in a coffee pot is regular or decaffeinated and a coffee pot;

FIG. **4** shows a commercial electric coffee machine including a spigot in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention having an indicator or display device to indicate whether coffee which has been prepared is regular or decaffeinated; and

FIG. **5** shows a backing of the display device of FIG. **4**.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** shows a coffee machine **1** in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention including an indicator device **17**. The coffee machine **1** includes an extension **10**, portions **12**, **14**, **16**, indicator device **18**, control panel **22**, power cord **25** (shown partially) which may be electrically connected to a power outlet, base **24**, and legs **26** and **28**. The coffee machine **1** may be similar to or identical to known available coffee machines, such as "Mr. Coffee" (Trademarked) except for some additional components which will be described. FIG. **1** also shows a coffee pot **50** having an opening **52** for receiving coffee from the coffee machine **1**, a handle **54** and a receptacle **56** in which the coffee is stored.

The indicator device **17** includes push button lights **18** and **20** which are under designation "Decaf" **18**a and "Coffee" **20**a respectively. The push button lights **18** and **20** are both

toggle switches and as such if they are turned off, they will light up when pushed, and if they are turned on, they will turn off when pushed in.

If an individual has made decaffeinated coffee in the coffee pot **50** they may cause the push button light **18** to light and cause the push button light **20** to stay off. Thus light **18** is lit under designation **18**a for "Decaf". If an individual has made regular coffee in the coffee pot **50** they may cause the push button light **20** to turn off and cause the push button light **18** to stay on. Thus light **20** is lit under designation **18**a for "Coffee". In this way, any person who wants to have a cup of coffee from the coffee pot **50** will know whether it is coffee (i.e. regular non-decaffeinated coffee) or decaffeinated coffee.

The push button lights **18** and **20** will also turn off when turned off by a timer circuit **30**. The timer circuit **30** is electrically connected to the indicator device **17** by bus **30**a. The timer circuit **30** may also be electrically connected to a hot plate device **32**. The hot plate device **32** may provide a signal to the timer circuit **30** when the hot plate device **32** is not longer heating the coffe pot **50**. In response to such a signal the timer circuit **30** may send a signal via bus **30**a to turn off both lights **18** and **20**, if they are on. When the decaffeinated push button light **18** is pushed the light **18** goes on. In addition, a signal may be sent to the timer circuit **30** starting a timer, such as a one hour timer. After an hour, the timer circuit **30** may send a signal via bus **30**a to the indicator device **17** which will turn off the light **18**.

FIG. **2** shows a coffee machine **100** in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention including an indicator device **118** which is only a light in this example and which may emit one of two colors, to indicate whether coffee which has been prepared in a coffee pot **150** is regular or decaffeinated. The coffee machine **100** may be similar to coffee machine **1** except to the difference between indicator device **17** and indicator device **118**, and other differences which will be described. Coffee machine **100** includes an extension **110**, portions **112**, **114**, **116**, indicator device **118**, control panel **122**, power cord **125** (shown partially) which may be electrically connected to a power outlet, base **124**, and legs **126** and **128**. FIG. **2** also shows a coffee pot **150** having an opening **152** for receiving coffee from the coffee machine **100**, a handle **154** and a receptacle **156** in which the coffee is stored.

The indicator device **118** is a push button single light which can be toggled to emit either a green color light, a red color light, or to emit no light at all, i.e. be turned off. An individual can use, for example, green to indicate that Decaffeinated coffee has been made in coffee pot **150** and red to indicate that regular coffee has been made in coffee pot **150**.

The coffee machine also includes a timer circuit **130** and a hot plate **132**. The timer circuit **130** is electrically connected to the indicator device **118** via bus **130**a. The timer circuit **130** is also electrically connected to the hot plate **132** via bus **132**a.

In operation, after an individual pushes the push button **118** to, for example, light a green color, the timer circuit **130** may be sent a signal from the button **118** to cause, for example, a one hour timer to start. After the one hour timer expires, the timer circuit **130** may send a signal to the button **118**, via bus **130**a, which will cause the button to go dark, i.e. be turned off.

The timer circuit **130** may also receive a signal from the hot plate **132**, indicating that the hot plate **132** has turned off. The timer circuit **130** in response to the hot plate **132** turning off, may send a signal to the button **118**, to turn the light of the button **118** off.

FIG. **3** shows a coffee machine **200** in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention having an indicator device **217** which includes a push button **219** and a electronic digital display **218** to indicate whether coffee which has been prepared in a coffee pot **250** is regular or decaffeinated. The coffee machine **200** may be identical to coffee machine **100** except for the difference between indicator device **118** and the indicator device **217**. Coffee machine **200** includes an extension **210**, portions **212**, **214**, **216**, indicator device **217**, control panel **222**, power cord **225** (shown partially) which may be electrically connected to a power outlet, base **224**, and legs **226** and **228**. FIG. **3** also shows a coffee pot **250** having an opening **252** for receiving coffee from the coffee machine **200**, a handle **254** and a receptacle **256** in which the coffee is stored.

An individual can set the electronic digital display **218** to a "Decaf" **218**a designation as in FIG. **3** by pressing the push button **219** a certain number of times. When the push button **219** is next pressed the designation on the digital display **218** may turn to a "Coffee" designation. The push button **219** may be a toggle switch which toggles the "Decaf" and "Coffee" designations on the display **218**.

The coffee machine **200** may also include a timing circuit **230** which may be electrically connected to the indicator device **217** by a bus **230**a. The coffee machine **200** may also include a hot plate **232** which may be electrically connected to the timing circuit **230** by bus **232**a.

In operation, after an individual pushes the push button **219** to, for example, cause the word "Decafe" to appear on the display **218**, the timer circuit **230** may be sent a signal from the button **219** and/or indicator device **217** to cause, for example, a one hour timer to start. After the one hour timer expires, the timer circuit **230** may send a signal to the digital display **218**, via bus **230**a, which may cause the digital display **218** to go dark, to show a blank screen, or to indicate in some other way that the time has expired and that type of coffee can either no longer be determined or the indication of the type of coffee must be verified or updated.

The timer circuit **230** may also receive a signal from the hot plate **232**, indicating that the hot plate **232** has been turned off. The hot plate **232** may be used to heat coffee pot **250**. The timer circuit **130** in response to the hot plate **232** turning off, may send a signal to the digital display **218** via bus **232**a to turn the digital display **218** to go dark, to show a blank screen, or to indicate in some other way that the time has expired and that the type of coffee can either no longer be determined or the indication of the type of coffee must be verified or updated.

FIG. **4** shows a commercial electric coffee machine **300** in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention. The machine **300** includes receptacle **304**, spigot switch **314**, spigot **316**, power cord **312** for connecting to an electrical outlet, base **306**, legs **308** and **310**, and display device or indicator device **350**. The display device or indicator device **350** may be detachable from the rest of coffee machine **300**. The display device or indicator device **350** may include a digital display **318** and a button **319**. The display device **350** may further include a timer circuit **330** electrically connected to the digital display **318** by a bus **330**a. The display device **350** may function similar to the device **217** and timer circuit **230** shown in FIG. **3**. Instead of the display device **350**, the timer circuit **30** and device **17** can be used or the timer circuit **130** and the button **118** can be used.

The spigot switch **314**, when pressed downwards in a direction D, allows coffee to flow from the receptacle **304** through the spigot **316** and out of the coffee machine **300**. The machine **300** may be similar to those known in the art with the exception of indicator device **350**. The indicator device **350** may be provided or sold separately. The indicator device **350**

may include an adhesive backing for attaching or detaching the indicator device **350** to or from the machine **300**. The indicator device **350** may include a "Decafe" designation **318**a which is shown and a "coffee" designation which is not shown. The indicator device **350** can be fixed to the receptacle **304** and part of the machine **300**.

FIG. **10** shows a backside **350**b of the display device **350** of FIG. **4**. The backside is made of an adhesive material which can stick to, for example, machine **300** in FIG. **4**, to temporarily attach the device **350** to machine **300**.

The timer circuit **30** and/or device **17** of FIG. **1**, timer circuit **130** and/or button **118** of FIG. **2**, or the timer circuit **230** and/or device **317** of FIG. **3**, could take the place of, a warmer light on an automatic coffee pot. Thus, when the person making the coffee pushes a button that says "coffee" two things would happen—the warmer plate, such as warmer or hot plate **32** of FIG. **1** would go on, and a light, such as light **20** would go on lighting up the words, "Coffee" or providing a light under the word "Coffee". The timer circuits **30**, **130**, and **230** can be programmed through control panel **22**, **122**, and **222**, via busses **22**a, **122**a, and **222**a, respectively, to cause the devices **17**, **118**, and **317**, respectively, to go out after a set time—a time that can be programed in by the user. The control panels **22**, **122**, and **222** may include a keypad for data entry. The timer circuits **30**, **130**, and **230** can also be programmed to cause the devices **17**, **118**, and **317**, respectively to go off when the warmer or hot plates **32**, **132**, and **232**, respectively, go off.

By having the selection display go out after a certain amount of time, the coffee user will always be assured that each time a new pot is made, the maker would have had to affirmatively select either decafe or Coffee or perhaps decafe/coffee mix if that is what is contained in the pot.

Although the invention has been described by reference to particular illustrative embodiments thereof, many changes and modifications of the invention may become apparent to those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. It is therefore intended to include within this patent all such changes and modifications as may reasonably and properly be included within the scope of the present invention's contribution to the art.

I claim:

[1. An apparatus comprising
a timer circuit; and
an indicator device which communicates with the timer circuit;
wherein the indicator device can be placed in a first or second state by an operator;
wherein in the first state the indicator device provides a first visual indication of a first type of beverage within a beverage receptacle;
wherein in the second state the indicator device provides a second visual indication of a second type of beverage within the beverage receptacle, wherein the second type of beverage differs from the first type of beverage;
and wherein the timer circuit can be programmed to automatically change the indicator device after a certain period of time from the first or second state to a third state, wherein in the third state, the indicator device no longer provides a visual indication of what type of beverage is within the beverage receptacle.**]**

[2. The apparatus of claim **1** wherein
the first type of beverage is non-decaffeinated coffee; and
the second type of beverage is decaffeinated coffee.**]**

[3. The apparatus of claim **2** wherein
the timer circuit and the indicator device can be attached or detached from a coffee machine.**]**

[4. The apparatus of claim **1** wherein
the first visual indication is a designation of the first type of beverage and is comprised of least one alphanumeric character; and
the second visual indication is a designation of the second type of beverage and is comprised of at least one alphanumeric character.**]**

[5. The apparatus of claim **1** wherein
the beverage receptacle is a coffee pot.**]**

[6. The apparatus of claim **5** wherein
the first type of beverage is decaffeinated coffee; and
the second type of beverage is non decaffeinated coffee.**]**

[7. The apparatus of claim **2** wherein
the indicator device comprises
a first light under a first designation which indicates decaffeinated coffee; and
a second light under a second designation which indicates non decaffeinated coffee.**]**

[8. The apparatus of claim **7** wherein
the first light is part of a first push button which can be pushed in to light the first light to indicate that decaffeinated coffee has been made; and
the second light is part of a second push button which can be pushed in to light the second light to indicate that non decaffeinated coffee has been made.**]**

[9. The apparatus of claim **2** wherein
the indicator device comprises
a first light which is able to emit either a first or a second color light;
and wherein the first light emits the first color light when the coffee machine has made decaffeinated coffee and the first light emits the second color light when the coffee machine has made non decaffeinated coffee.**]**

[10. The apparatus of claim **9** wherein
the first light is part of a first push button which can be pushed in to light the first light and to toggle the first light from emitting a first color light to emitting a second color light.**]**

[11. The apparatus of claim **2** wherein
the indicator device includes an electronic digital display which displays whether coffee which has been made by the coffee machine is non decaffeinated or decaffeinated.**]**

[12. The apparatus of claim **11** wherein
the indicator device includes a first push button which when pushed in causes the electronic digital display to toggle from displaying an indication that the coffee is decaffeinated to displaying an indication that the coffee is non decaffeinated.**]**

[13. The apparatus of claim **2** further comprising
the coffee machine which includes a spigot through which coffee can flow;
and wherein the coffee machine includes a spigot switch for allowing coffee to flow from the coffee machine through the spigot.**]**

[14. A method comprising the steps of
fixing an indicator device and a timer circuit on a coffee machine;
wherein the indicator device can be placed into a first state or a second state by an operator;
wherein when the indicator device is placed in a first state the indicator device provides a first visual indication of a first type of beverage which is within a coffee receptacle;

wherein when the display device is placed in a second state the indicator device provides a second visual indication of a second type of beverage which is within the coffee receptable; and

wherein the first and second type of beverages differ and the first and second visual indications differ;

and wherein the timer circuit, after a certain period of time, causes the indicator device to automatically change from the first or second state to a third state in which the indicator device does not indicate what type of beverage is within the coffee receptacle.]

[**15**. The method of claim **14** wherein

the first type of beverage is decaffeinated coffee; and

the second type of beverage is non decaffeinated coffee.]

[**16**. The method of claim **14** wherein

the first visual indication is a designation of the first type of beverage and is comprised of least one alphanumeric character; and

the second visual indication is a designation of the second type of beverage and is comprised of at least one alphanumeric character.]

17. An apparatus for indicating a type of beverage in a beverage receptacle removable from the apparatus, the apparatus comprising:

a timer circuit; and

an indicator device which communicates with the timer circuit;

wherein the indicator device can be placed in a first or second state by an operator;

wherein in the first state the indicator device provides a first visual indication of a first type of beverage within the beverage receptacle;

wherein in the second state the indicator device provides a second visual indication of a second type of beverage within the beverage receptacle;

wherein the second type of beverage differs from the first type of beverage;

and wherein the timer circuit changes the indicator device from the first state or second state to a third state in which the apparatus no longer provides a visual indication of what type of beverage is within the beverage receptacle, after a predetermined period of time after the beverage has been prepared for use by a machine, such that, during the predetermined period of time, a subsequent user of the apparatus is informed of the beverage type.

18. The apparatus of claim 17 wherein

the first type of beverage is non-decaffeinated coffee; and

the second type of beverage is decaffeinated coffee.

19. The apparatus of claim 18 wherein

the timer circuit and the indicator device can be attached or detached from the machine.

20. The apparatus of claim 18 wherein

the indicator device comprises

a first light which is able to emit either a first or a second color light;

and wherein the first light emits the first color light when the machine has made decaffeinated coffee and the first light emits the second color light when the machine has made non decaffeinated coffee.

21. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein

the first light is part of a first push button which can be pushed in to light the first light and to toggle the first light from emitting a first color light to emitting a second color light.

22. The apparatus of claim 17 wherein

the first visual indication is a designation of the first type of beverage and is comprised of least one alphanumeric character; and

the second visual indication is a designation of the second type of beverage and is comprised of at least one alphanumeric character.

23. The apparatus of claim 17 wherein

the beverage receptacle is a coffee pot.

24. The apparatus of claim 23 wherein

the first type of beverage is decaffeinated coffee; and

the second type of beverage is non decaffeinated coffee.

25. The apparatus of claim 18 wherein

the indicator device comprises

a first light under a first designation which indicates decaffeinated coffee; and

a second light under a second designation which indicates non decaffeinated coffee.

26. The apparatus of claim 25 wherein

the first light is part of a first push button which can be pushed in to light the first light to indicate that decaffeinated coffee has been made; and

the second light is part of a second push button which can be pushed in to light the second light to indicate that non decaffeinated coffee has been made.

27. The apparatus of claim 18 wherein

the indicator device includes an electronic digital display which displays whether coffee which has been made by the machine is non decaffeinated or decaffeinated.

28. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein

the indicator device includes a first push button which when pushed in causes the electronic digital display to toggle from displaying an indication that the coffee is decaffeinated to displaying an indication that the coffee is non decaffeinated.

29. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the predetermined time is about an hour.

30. A method for indicating a type of beverage in a coffee receptacle, the method comprising the steps of:

fixing an indicator device and a timer circuit on a coffee machine;

wherein the indicator device can be placed into a first state or a second state by an operator;

wherein the coffee receptacle is removable from the coffee machine;

wherein when the indicator device is placed in a first state the indicator device provides a first visual indication of a first type of beverage which is within the coffee receptacle;

wherein when the display device is placed in a second state the indicator device provides a second visual indication of a second type of beverage which is within the coffee receptacle; and

wherein the first and second type of beverages differ and the first and second visual indications differ;

and wherein the timer circuit, after a predetermined period of time, causes the indicator device to automatically change from the first or second state to a third state in which there is no indication as to what type of beverage is within the coffee receptacle;

wherein, during the predetermined period of time, a subsequent user of the apparatus is informed of the beverage type after the beverage has been prepared for use by the coffee machine.

31. The method of claim 30 wherein

the first type of beverage is decaffeinated coffee; and

the second type of beverage is non decaffeinated coffee.

32. The method of claim 30 wherein

the first visual indication is a designation of the first type of beverage and is comprised of least one alphanumeric character; and

the second visual indication is a designation of the second type of beverage and is comprised of at least one alphanumeric character.

33. The method of claim 30, wherein

the coffee machine comprises a hot plate electrically connected to the timer circuit;

such that when the hot plate is turned off, the timer circuit changes the indicator device to the third state.

34. A method for indicating a type of beverage in a coffee receptacle, the method comprising the steps of:

fixing an indicator device and a timer circuit on a coffee machine; and

sending a signal from the indicator device to the timer circuit to start a timer;

wherein the indicator device can be placed into a first state or a second state by an operator;

wherein the coffee receptacle is removable from the coffee machine;

wherein when the indicator device is placed in a first state the indicator device provides a first visual indication of a first type of beverage which is within the coffee receptacle;

wherein when the display device is placed in a second state the indicator device provides a second visual indication of a second type of beverage which is within the coffee receptacle; and

wherein the first and second type of beverages differ and the first and second visual indications differ;

and wherein the timer circuit, after a predetermined period of time on the timer has elapsed, sends a signal to the indicator device to cause the indicator device to automatically change from the first or second state to a third state in which the indicator device does not indicate what type of beverage is within the coffee receptacle, the predetermined period of time being chosen such that a subsequent user of the apparatus is informed of the beverage type after the beverage has been prepared for use by the coffee machine.

35. An apparatus for indicating a type of beverage in a beverage receptacle removable from the apparatus, the apparatus comprising:

a timer circuit; and

an indicator device which communicates with the timer circuit;

wherein the indicator device can be placed in a first or second state by an operator;

wherein the first or second state is selected before a machine makes the beverage ready for use;

wherein in the first state the indicator device provides a first visual indication of a first type of beverage within the beverage receptacle;

wherein in the second state the indicator device provides a second visual indication of a second type of beverage within the beverage receptacle, wherein the second type of beverage differs from the first type of beverage;

wherein the timer circuit is programmed so that the indicator device remains in the first or second state for a predetermined period of time that is after the machine has made the beverage ready for use;

wherein after the predetermined time the indicator device automatically changes from the first or second state to a third state; and

wherein in the third state, the apparatus no longer provides a visual indication of what type of beverage is within the beverage receptacle.

36. The apparatus of claim 35 wherein the first state or the second state is selected when the operator makes the beverage with use of the machine.

37. A method for indicating a type of beverage in a coffee receptacle, the method comprising the steps of:

fixing an indicator device and a timer circuit on a coffee machine;

wherein the coffee receptacle is removable from the coffee machine;

wherein the indicator device can be placed into a first state or a second state by an operator;

wherein the first and second type of beverages differ and the first and second visual indications differ;

wherein the first or second state is selected before the coffee machine makes the beverage ready for use;

wherein when the indicator device is placed in a first state the indicator device provides a first visual indication of a first type of beverage which is within the coffee receptacle;

wherein when the indicator device is placed in a second state the indicator device provides a second visual indication of a second type of beverage which is within the coffee receptacle; and

wherein the timer circuit is programmed so that the indicator device remains in the first or second state for a predetermined period of time that is after the coffee machine has made the beverage ready for use;

wherein after the predetermined time the indicator device automatically changes from the first or second state to a third state;

wherein, in the third state, there is no indication as to what type of beverage is within the coffee receptacle.

38. The method of claim 37 wherein the first state or the second state is selected when the operator makes the coffee using the coffee machine.

39. An apparatus for indicating a type of beverage in a beverage receptacle removable from the apparatus, the apparatus comprising:

a timer circuit; and

an indicator device which communicates with the timer circuit;

wherein the indicator device can be placed in a first or second state by an operator;

wherein the first or second state is selected before a machine makes the beverage ready for use;

wherein in the first state the indicator device provides a first visual indication of a first type of beverage within the beverage receptacle;

wherein in the second state the indicator device provides a second visual indication of a second type of beverage within the beverage receptacle, wherein the second type of beverage differs from the first type of beverage;

wherein the timer circuit is programmed so that the indicator device remains in the first or second state for a predetermined period of time that is after the machine has made the beverage that is in the receptacle ready for use;

wherein after the predetermined time the indicator device automatically changes from the first or second state to a third state;

wherein in the third state, the apparatus no longer provides a visual indication of what type of beverage is within the beverage receptacle.

40. The apparatus of claim 39 wherein the first state or the second state is selected when the operator makes the beverage using the machine.

41. A method for indicating a type of beverage in a coffee receptacle, the method comprising the steps of:

fixing an indicator device and a timer circuit on a coffee machine; and

sending a signal from the indicator device to the timer circuit to start a timer;

wherein the indicator device can be placed into a first state or a second state by an operator;

wherein the first or second state is selected before the coffee machine makes the beverage ready for use;

wherein the coffee receptacle is removable from the coffee machine;

wherein when the indicator device is placed in a first state the indicator device provides a first visual indication of a first type of beverage which is within the coffee receptacle;

wherein when the indicator device is placed in a second state the indicator device provides a second visual indication of a second type of beverage which is within the coffee receptacle; and

wherein the first and second type of beverages differ and the first and second visual indications differ;

wherein the timer circuit is programmed so that the indicator device remains in the first or second state for a predetermined period of time that is after the coffee machine has made the beverage ready for use;

wherein the timer sends a signal to the indicator device to cause the indicator device to automatically change from the first state or the second state to a third state;

wherein, in the third state there is no visual indication of what type of beverage is within the coffee receptacle.

42. An apparatus for indicating a type of beverage in a beverage receptacle removable from the apparatus, the apparatus comprising:

a timer circuit; and

an indicator device which communicates with the timer circuit;

wherein the indicator device can be placed in a first or second state by an operator;

wherein the first or second state is selected before the machine makes the beverage ready for use;

wherein in the first state the indicator device provides a first visual indication of a first type of beverage within the beverage receptacle after the machine has made the beverage;

wherein in the second state the indicator device provides a second visual indication of a second type of beverage within the beverage receptacle after the machine has made the beverage;

wherein the second type of beverage differs from the first type of beverage;

wherein the timer circuit is programmed so that the indicator device remains in the first or second state for a predetermined period of time that is after the machine has made the beverage ready for use;

wherein after the predetermined time the indicator device automatically changes from the first or second state to a third state; and

wherein in the third state, the apparatus no longer provides a visual indication of what type of beverage is within the beverage receptacle.

43. A method for indicating a type of beverage in a coffee receptacle, the method comprising the steps of:

fixing an indicator device and a timer circuit on a coffee machine;

wherein the coffee receptacle is removable from the coffee machine;

wherein the indicator device can be placed into a first state or a second state by an operator;

wherein the indicator device is placed in the first or second state before the beverage is made by the machine;

wherein, in the first state the indicator device provides a first visual indication of the first type of beverage which is within the coffee receptacle;

wherein, in the second state the indicator device provides a second visual indication of a second type of beverage which is within the coffee receptacle;

wherein the first and second type of beverages differ and the first and second visual indications differ;

and wherein the timer circuit changes the indicator device from the first or second state to a third state in which there is no indication as to what type of beverage is within the coffee receptacle, after a predetermined period of time after the beverage has been prepared for use by the coffee machine, such that, during the predetermined period of time, a subsequent user of the apparatus is informed of the beverage type.

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