

[54] FOOD SERVICE ORDERING TERMINAL WITH VIDEO GAME CAPABILITY

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[58] Field of Search 364/401, 410; 273/85 G, 273/DIG. 28

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Primary Examiner—Jerry Smith

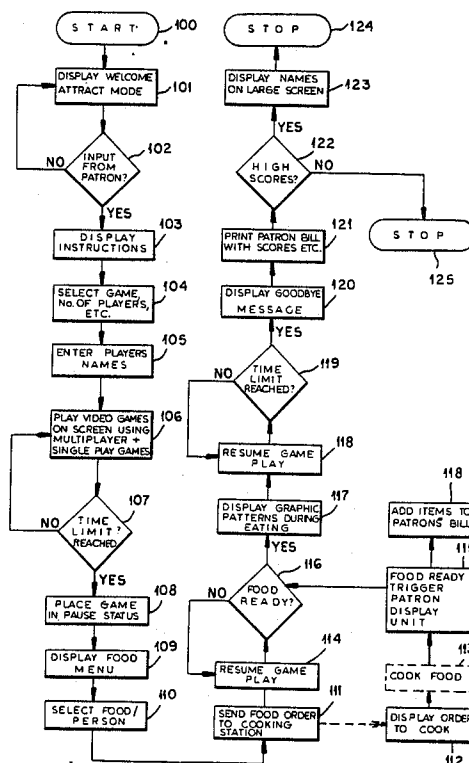
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[57] ABSTRACT

A computer operated food service establishment has individual patron locations each provided with a game-playing terminal from which patrons can select games to be played from a listing thereof provided by the central computer unit. Each terminal also displays the food service items available and from the display, automatically, the patrons can select respective items and the selected items are displayed at a remote terminal, e.g. in the kitchen, to enable preparation of the food service items while game play continues at the terminals. Game play is automatically terminated upon the lapse of a selected time period subsequent to food service.

6 Claims, 3 Drawing Figures



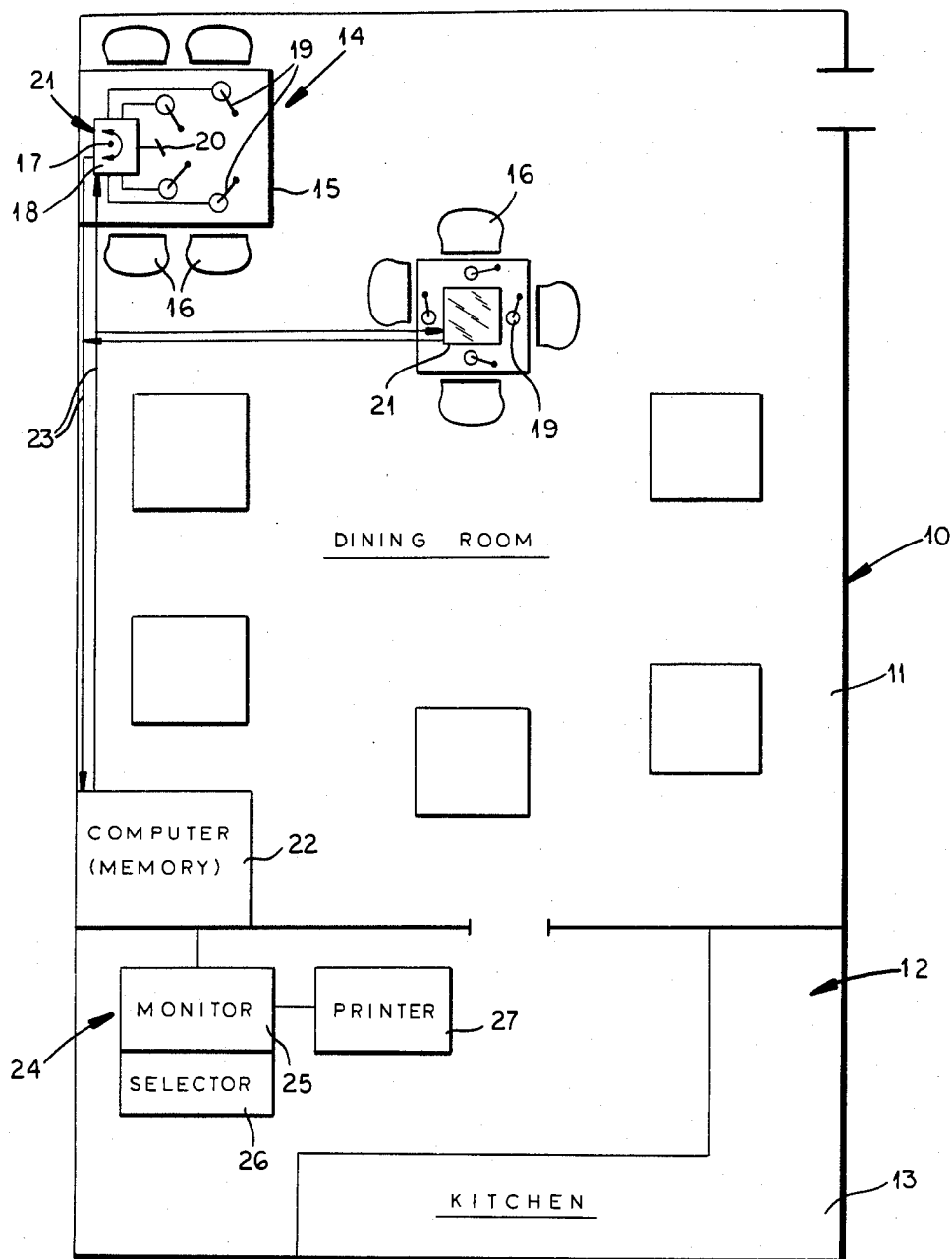


FIG.1

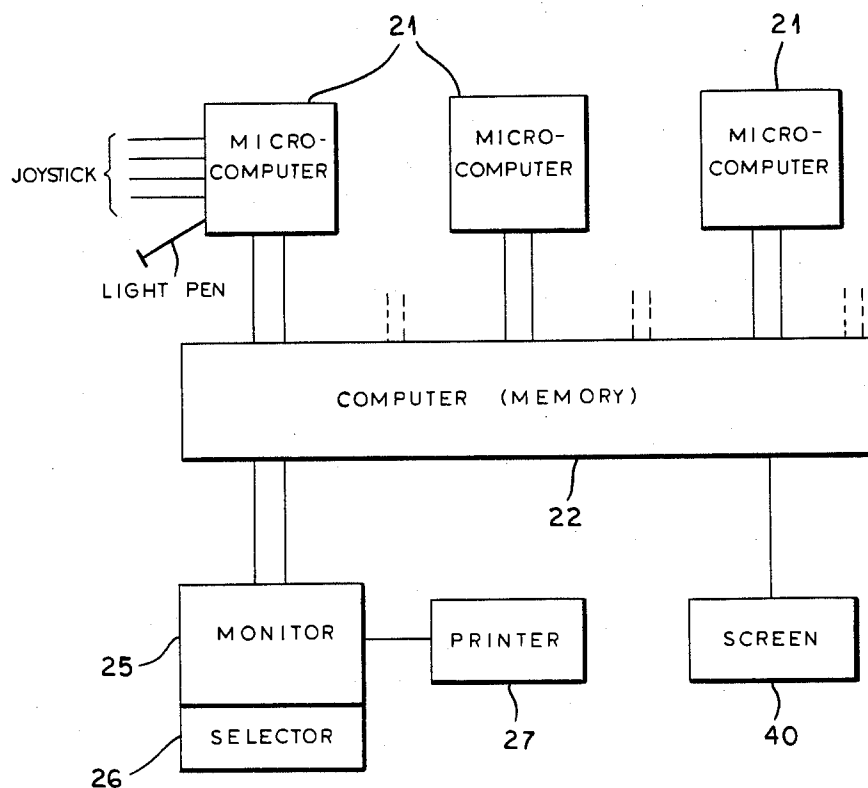
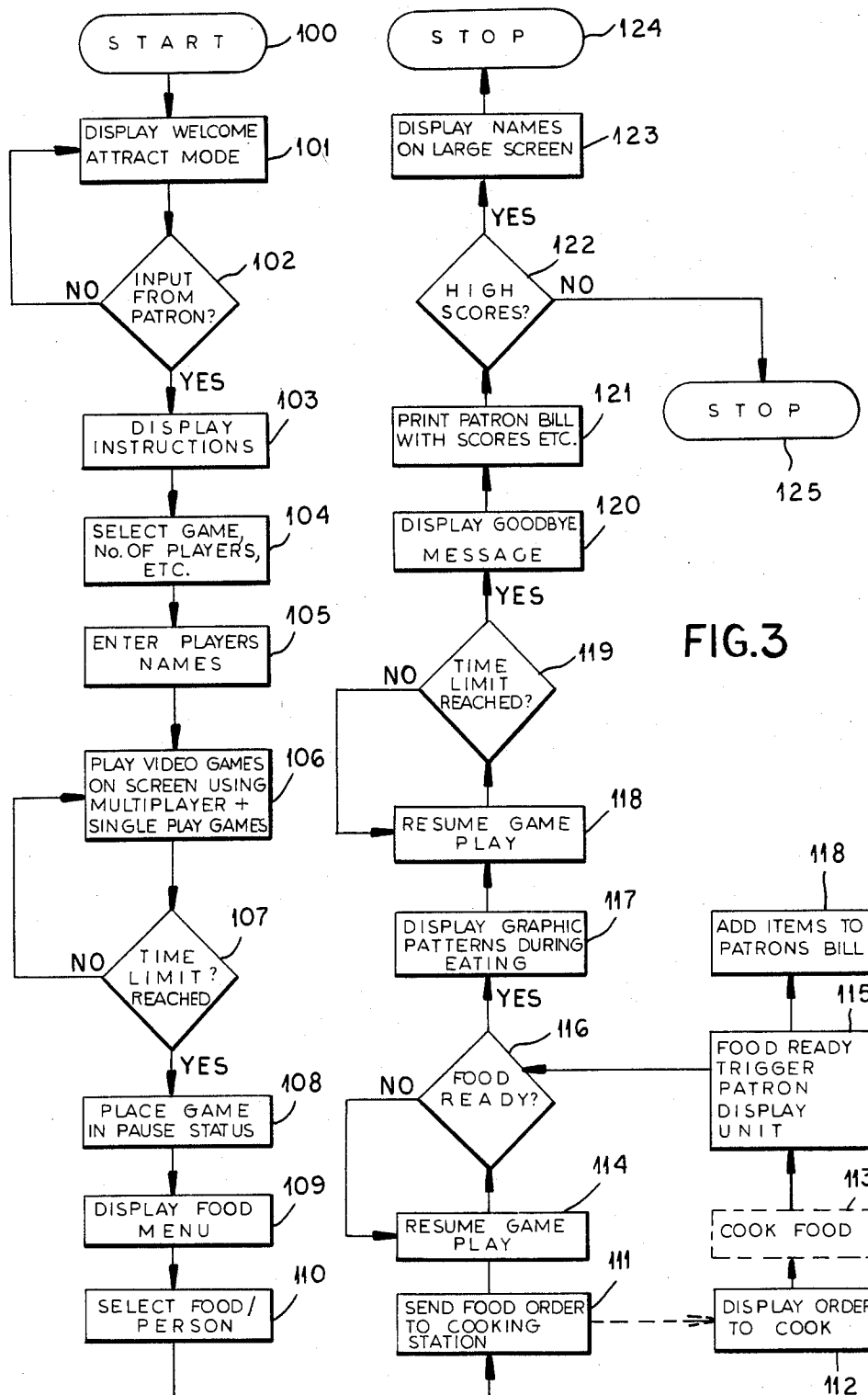


FIG.2



FOOD SERVICE ORDERING TERMINAL WITH VIDEO GAME CAPABILITY

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

Our present invention relates to a computer-controlled food service establishment and, more particularly, to a method of operating a computer system and to a food service establishment utilizing computer control.

The invention also relates to a process for preparing food service orders, to an entertainment medium associated with food service and a combination food-service and entertainment establishment.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

One of the major hallmarks of the last few years has been the establishment of the electronic game industry in a variety of forms, making available apparatus and techniques which have created new vistas in entertainment. For example, the advent of the microprocessor permitted so-called computer games to be produced in cartridge, tape or disk form for playing upon special purpose machines and even general purpose microcomputers or the like.

Games have been developed for large computer installations as well and, with refinements in graphics technique, have proved to be fascinating for young and adult alike.

In fact, experts in the field have recognized that video games may prove to be an important factor in decreasing a latent hostility between the individual and the computer, which hostility appears to have been ingrained in mankind since the development of so-called "thinking" machines.

However, to a certain extent, computer games and machines have, in spite of their versatility, made little headway in the food service field or in entertainment associated with food service.

For example, orders at food service establishments are still customarily taken by waiters or waitresses, manually inscribed upon a suitable memorandum, such as a multileaf book, manually or orally transmitted to the cook or food-preparation personnel, and ultimately delivered by hand by the waiter to the table.

Entertainment in food service establishments may be live, e.g. as in nightclubs, or may be prerecorded as in discotheques and even in establishments catering to youth and keying, for example, on video displays, old motion pictures and the like.

Personal involvement of the customer in the entertainment operation and even in the food ordering interplay is at a minimum.

OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

It is the principal object of the present invention to provide a food service establishment in which disadvantages of earlier food service establishments are obviated and whereby the patron may be more efficiently served and entertained than has hitherto been the case.

Another object of the invention is to provide a method of operating a computer system for similar ends.

Still a further object of this invention is to provide a method of controlling food service orders whereby disadvantages of earlier systems are obviated and an

optimum involvement of a patron in food service activity and entertainment can be provided.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

These objects and others which will become apparent hereinafter are attained, in accordance with the present invention, which provides a food service establishment basically having a plurality of food-service stations, e.g. separate tables, each of which is provided with at least a rudimentary computer facility including at least a video monitor and game-playing elements permitting two patrons at the station to engage in a competitive game or any individual at any station to play a solitary game.

According to a feature of the invention, the computer facility at each station is also connected to a central location provided with at least an output terminal at which selected menu items can be displayed or otherwise outputted and hence the order of the patrons presented to the cooking or food-preparation staff.

Advantageously, means is provided, after a predetermined period of games play, for interrupting the game in progress at a particular station at an appropriate point, e.g. after a certain number of points have been scored and/or a certain number of playing pieces have been destroyed, to provide an audio visual display welcoming the patrons to the facility and displaying the various menu items available at the time together with prices and the like. The particular menu items can then be selected, e.g. by operating a light pen, a joystick, selector buttons or other selector means.

According to a feature of the invention, the selected menu items can be stored, e.g. in the memory of a central computer facility connected to the various terminals, and tapped at the output station when, for example, monitoring personnel key in the number of the patron station.

The output station can be provided with a printer which can display the selected items and price, calculate the taxes, provide a subtotal and, if desired, provide a final total as well as printing out, if desired, special purpose forms, e.g. credit card charge forms, the latter being thereafter imprinted with impressions from the patron's card.

According to another feature of the invention, the computer may, if the order is given, restore a game mode to the computer facility at each patron station, thereby allowing the patrons to entertain themselves pending receipt of the food which can be delivered from the kitchen in the usual manner.

Once the food is delivered, the game mode can be terminated although, in some cases, the game mode can continue for a limited period, e.g. a half hour, after delivery of the food. At the end of this time, the computer facility at the patron station can provide an audio/visual display thanking the patron for his presence and inviting the patron, for example, to return and/or to move to an establishment adjacent the restaurant and provide it with standard coin-operated computer games.

The system of the invention has numerous advantages and ramifications. For example, it allows direct communication between the patron and the kitchen so that the patron is immediately apprised of the availability or unavailability of a particular selected item, it eliminates the possibility of error since a direct line of communication is established, it provides an automatic printout so that food items which should be charged are

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