



## **Darden Announces Plans for International Growth Through Formal Area Development Agreement with Americana Group**

### **Leading franchise operator to bring Red Lobster, Olive Garden and LongHorn Steakhouse brands to Middle East**

ORLANDO, Fla., Oct 19, 2010 /PRNewswire via COMTEX News Network/ -- Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI) today announced it has entered into a formal area development agreement with Americana Group to develop and operate Darden's Red Lobster, Olive Garden and LongHorn Steakhouse brands in the Middle East. The agreement calls for Americana to initially develop a minimum of 60 restaurants in Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates over the next five years.

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"Today is an exciting milestone in Darden's history," said Clarence Otis, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Darden. "We've been exploring international expansion for some time now as part of our ongoing focus on additional growth opportunities. The Middle East is an attractive, growing market that has shown a strong affinity for American brands, especially American dining brands.

"Darden remains committed to owning and operating its restaurants domestically. However we believe the best way for us to expand the reach of our portfolio internationally is by selecting the right partners, like Americana, with outstanding operations experience, local market knowledge, and the commitment to delivering our brands' experience with excellence."

Americana is the largest food service franchise operator in the Middle East with more than 1,200 restaurants throughout the region. The company has a long and successful history of franchising familiar U.S.-based brands including KFC, Pizza Hut, Hardee's, Krispy Kreme and TGI Friday's.

"We are delighted to welcome Red Lobster, Olive Garden and LongHorn Steakhouse to our family," said Americana Chairman and Managing Director, Marzouk Al Kharafi. "Consumer demand for casual dining brands in the Middle East market has grown over the past decade, and we expect that growth to continue in the future. The addition of these three highly regarded brands to our portfolio enables Americana to build on its long legacy as the leading restaurant operator in the region."

#### **About Darden Restaurants**

Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI), the world's largest full-service restaurant company, owns and operates 1,800 restaurants that generate more than \$7 billion in annual sales. Headquartered in Orlando, and employing approximately 180,000 people, Darden is recognized for a culture that rewards caring for and responding to people. Our restaurant brands - Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, The Capital Grille, Bahama Breeze and Seasons 52 - reflect the rich diversity of those who dine with us. Our brands are built on deep insights into what our guests want. For more information, please visit [www.darden.com](http://www.darden.com).

#### **About Americana Group**

Americana, a publicly traded company on the Kuwait Stock Exchange (FOOD.KW), is the Middle East's most successful group of companies operating consumer foods, restaurants, and food-related products. Today, the Americana Group operates more than 1,200 restaurants with more than 45,000 employees from 21 nationalities across 14 countries between the Atlantic Ocean and Caspian Sea. The Americana Group operates international franchises like TGI Friday's, Krispy Kreme, Costa coffee, KFC, Pizza Hut and Hardee's. The Americana Group's portfolio also includes a wide range of consumer foods manufactured in 17 factories in five different countries and marketed across the region with well-known names like Americana Meat, Americana Cake, Farm Frites, California Garden, Koki, Green Land and much more. For more information, please visit [www.americana-group.net](http://www.americana-group.net).

SOURCE Darden Restaurants, Inc.: General

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