



## **Darden Expands International Growth Plans With Announcement of Formal Area Development Agreement With CMR**

### **Leading restaurant operator to bring Red Lobster, Olive Garden and The Capital Grille brands to Mexico**

ORLANDO, Fla., Aug. 11, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI) today announced it has entered into a formal area development agreement with CMR to develop and operate Darden's Red Lobster, Olive Garden and The Capital Grille brands in Mexico. The agreement calls for CMR to initially develop a minimum of 37 restaurants in Mexico over the next five years.

(Logo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20050203/FLTH026LOGO> )

"Last month we celebrated the opening of Red Lobster in Dubai, our first restaurant in the Middle East," said Kim Lopdrup, senior vice president of Business Development for Darden. "Today, we're excited to build upon that milestone with the announcement of our agreement with CMR, the leading full-service restaurant operator and franchisor in Mexico. With its growing middle class and strong affinity for American brands, Mexico is an attractive growth market for Darden.

"As we've stated previously, 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 CMR, with outstanding operations experience, local market knowledge, and the commitment to delivering our brands' experience with excellence."

CMR is Mexico's leading casual dining company, with more than 100 restaurants in 26 cities throughout the country. For more than 40 years, the company has operated a variety of company-owned and franchised concepts within the casual dining and fine dining sectors, including: Fonda Mexicana, Destilería, Elago and Chili's, among others.

"We are delighted to welcome Red Lobster, Olive Garden and The Capital Grille to our family," said CMR Chairman of the Board Joaquín Vargas Guajardo. "The addition of these three highly regarded brands to our portfolio is a huge step towards our vision: 'In casual dining, bring the best of the world to Mexico and share the best of Mexico with the world.'"

#### **About Darden Restaurants**

Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI), the world's largest full-service restaurant company, owns and operates more than 1,900 restaurants that generate more than \$7.5 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. In 2011, Darden became the first full-service restaurant company ever to be named to the FORTUNE "100 Best Companies to Work For" list. 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 CMR**

CMR SAB de CV (BMV:CMRB) is Mexico's leading casual dining company, publicly traded in the Mexican Stock Exchange (Bolsa Mexicana de Valores, BMV) and currently operating 116 units in 26 cities throughout Mexico. The company operates a variety of casual and fine dining concepts under imported and in-house brands: Wings, Chili's, Fonda Mexicana, Destilería and Elago, among others. CMR generates over \$150 million in annual sales and has approximately 5,700 employees. The company's vision is: "In casual dining, bring to Mexico the best of the world and share with the world the best of Mexico." For more information, please visit [www.cmr.ws/eng](http://www.cmr.ws/eng).

SOURCE Darden Restaurants, Inc.: General

News Provided by Acquire Media