Darden Furthers Commitment to Sustainability With Solar Panel Installation at Headquarters Facility

Addition will be the largest private solar array in Florida

ORLANDO, Fla., Aug. 22, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Darden Restaurants is taking its commitment to sustainability to a new level. The company announced today that it will soon begin installation of 1.1 megawatts of solar panel roofing at its Restaurant Support Center (RSC) in Orlando. The project will be the largest private solar array in Florida and it will generate enough power to subsidize 15 to 20 percent of the RSC's annual usage, or the equivalent of taking the campus off the grid for nearly two months.

Upon completion later this year, Darden's rooftop solar installation is expected to produce up to 1.9 million kilowatt-hours of electricity per year, equaling the average annual energy usage of approximately 163 homes while reducing carbon emissions by more than 1,300 metric tons annually.

"As a company, preserving our resources for future generations has always been a priority," said Drew Madsen, president and chief operating officer of Darden Restaurants. "The decision to install solar panels is just the latest step in our strategy to reduce the energy and water consumption of our business in the communities where we operate."

Opened in September 2009, Darden's RSC facility is the largest building in Florida to receive Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification for New Construction (NC). It includes a number of energy-efficiency features, including high-performance windows that let daylight in, but not heat; a U-shaped floor plan that limits western exposures; motion sensors to turn off lights in vacant rooms; and a “daylight harvesting” system that monitors natural light levels and automatically dims artificial lighting as appropriate. It also features several water conservation elements. Through the use of reclaimed water at the RSC, Darden has saved more than 16 million gallons of drinking water in the past year.

"Darden is a prime example of a company fully committed to sustainability," said Rob Caldwell, vice president of efficiency and innovative technology for Progress Energy. "We commend them for that and we are pleased to support their investments in alternative energy and energy efficiency."

For more information about Darden's commitment to sustainability, visit www.generationcommitment.com.

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.

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