



Darden Adds Puerto Rico to International Growth Plans with Announcement of Area Development Agreement with ROI

Leading restaurant operator to bring Olive Garden to the island of Puerto Rico

ORLANDO, Fla., April 23, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI) today announced it has entered into an area development agreement with Restaurant Operators, Inc. (ROI) to develop and operate Darden's Olive Garden and LongHorn Steakhouse brands in Puerto Rico. ROI already operates five LongHorn units in Puerto Rico as part of an agreement that was executed prior to Darden's 2007 acquisition of RARE Hospitality Inc. The new agreement calls for ROI to initially develop a minimum of three additional LongHorn and eight Olive Garden restaurants over the next five years.

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

"ROI has been a strong partner with LongHorn Steakhouse for many years," said Kim Lopdrup, senior vice president of Business Development for Darden. "Today, we're excited to build upon that partnership with the announcement of our agreement. ROI's success operating LongHorn gives us great confidence about their ability to successfully introduce Olive Garden in Puerto Rico.

"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 excellent partners, like ROI, who have outstanding operations experience, local market knowledge, and a commitment to delivering our brands' experience with excellence."

"We are proud to include the Olive Garden brand in our portfolio of restaurants," said ROI CEO Jorge Colon-Gerena. "Olive Garden is an internationally recognized restaurant brand that meets the criteria of the brands we represent — quality, service, innovation, great taste, exciting menu, and casual family dining experience. The concept perfectly addresses the needs of the local market — discerning consumers who seek greater value and quality for their entertainment expenses. We look forward to growing the brand in the years to come."

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 over \$7.5 billion in annual sales. Headquartered in Orlando, and employing 180,000 people, Darden is recognized for a culture that rewards caring for and responding to people. In 2012, Darden was named to the FORTUNE "100 Best Companies to Work For" list for the second year in a row and is the only full-service restaurant company to ever appear on the list. Our restaurant brands — Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, The Capital Grille, Bahama Breeze, Seasons 52 and Eddie V's — 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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