Darden Restaurants to Participate in NAIC's 51st National Congress and Expo

ORLANDO, Fla., Oct. 24 -- Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI - news), will participate in the NAIC 51st National Congress and Expo in Detroit, Michigan October 26th through October 27th.

Headquartered in Orlando, Florida, Darden owns and operates 1,182 Red Lobster®, Olive Garden®, Bahama Breeze® and Smokey Bones® BBQ Sports Bar restaurants with fiscal 2001 sales of $4.0 billion and over 128,000 employees.

Although spun off from General Mills, Inc (NYSE: GIS - news) in 1995, Darden has a 33-year operating history. Today, Darden is a Fortune 500 company and the largest casual dining restaurant company in the world.

Darden has created a passionate culture with a sustaining drive for brilliance in:

- leadership development throughout the company,
- service and hospitality excellence, and
- culinary and beverage excellence that redefines casual dining.

Darden's management believes in being brilliant with the basics in each of these strategic areas -- creating a distinctive competitive edge.

With 629 restaurants in the U.S. and 32 in Canada, Red Lobster commands a 46% market share of the casual dining seafood segment and has posted its 15th consecutive quarter of same-restaurant sales increases.

With 478 restaurants in the U.S. and 6 in Canada, Olive Garden is the leader in the casual dining Italian segment with a 35% market share and achieving 28 consecutive quarters of same-restaurant sales growth.

Created in 1996, Bahama Breeze is a vibrant Caribbean-themed restaurant with 25 restaurants in 14 states.

In September 1999, our newest concept, Smokey Bones BBQ Sports Bar opened in Orlando and now has 12 restaurants. In June 2001, Darden announced plans to expand this concept nationally.

Learn more about Darden by stopping at our booth, #322, at the NAIC Expo 2001 located in Detroit on Friday, October 26th and Saturday, October 27th.

Corporate information is available through Darden's website at http://www.darden.com.

Forward-looking statements in this news release, if any, are made under the Safe Harbor provisions of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. Certain important factors could cause results to differ materially from those anticipated by the forward-looking statements, including the impact of changing economic or business conditions, the impact of competition, the availability of favorable credit and trade terms, the impact of changes in the cost or availability of food and real estate, government regulation, construction costs, weather conditions and other factors discussed from time to time in reports filed by the Company with the Securities and Exchange Commission.