Darden Restaurants Reports September Same-Restaurant Sales Results

ORLANDO, Fla., Oct. 2 -- Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI) today reported same-restaurant sales for the five-week September fiscal month ended September 30, 2001. This period is the first month of Darden's fiscal 2002 second quarter.

Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster were up 4% to 5% for the September fiscal month, driven by a 2% to 3% increase in guest counts and a 2% increase in pricing. Red Lobster's Festival of Crab promotion, which began July 9, continued through September 9. Its popular 30-Shrimp for $9.99 feature started on September 10 and will run through November 18. Prior year promotions included a Lobster and Shrimp offering for $12.99 during the first week of September followed by 30-Shrimp for $10.99 during the remainder of the month. In fiscal September of last year, Red Lobster had a 6% to 7% same-restaurant sales increase, which reflected a 3% to 4% increase in guest counts, a 2% increase in pricing and a 1% increase in check average because of menu-mix changes.

Same-restaurant sales at Olive Garden were up 3% to 4% for the month. This reflected a 2% increase in guest counts, a 2% to 3% increase in pricing and a 1% reduction in check average due to menu mix-changes. Olive Garden featured its signature Never-Ending-Pasta-Bowl for $7.95 from August 27 to September 30. The same promotion ran during the comparable month last year. In fiscal September of last year, Olive Garden had an 8% to 9% same-restaurant sales increase, driven by a 1% increase in guest counts, a 3% increase in pricing and a 4% to 5% increase in check average from menu-mix changes.


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.