Darden Restaurants Reports October Same-Restaurant Sales Results

ORLANDO, Fla., Oct. 30 -- Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI), today reported same-restaurant sales for the four-week October fiscal month ended October 28, 2001. This period is the second month of Darden's fiscal 2002 second quarter.

Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster were up 7% to 8% for the October fiscal month, driven by a 7% increase in guest counts. Average check increased slightly due to a 2% to 3% increase in pricing offset by a 2% decline because of menu mix changes. Red Lobster's "30-Shrimp for $9.99" promotion started on September 10 and will run through November 18. In fiscal October of last year, Red Lobster had an 11% to 12% same-restaurant sales increase, which reflected an 8% to 9% increase in guest counts, a 2% increase in pricing and a 1% increase in check average because of menu-mix changes. Last year, Red Lobster also ran the "30-Shrimp" promotion during fiscal October and priced it at $10.99.

Same-restaurant sales at Olive Garden were up 5% to 6% for the month, driven by a 2% to 3% increase in guest counts and a 3% increase in average check that resulted primarily from pricing increases. Olive Garden's results include the final two weeks of its signature "Never-Ending-Pasta-Bowl" for $7.95 feature, which began August 27 and ended October 14. The same promotion ran during the comparable period last year. In fiscal October of last year, Olive Garden had a 7% to 8% same-restaurant sales increase, driven by a 2% to 3% increase in pricing and a 5% increase in check average from menu-mix changes.

During fiscal October, Darden Restaurants, Inc. participated in the "Dine Out for America" campaign to benefit the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund. Darden contributed to the fund 100% of the restaurant profits that its operating companies generated on October 11, which totaled $1,462,391.

Darden will release fiscal 2002 second quarter results after the market close on December 13, 2001.


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.