Darden Restaurants Reports April Same-Restaurant Sales Results

ORLANDO, Fla., May 3 -- Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI) today reported strong same-restaurant sales growth at Olive Garden and Red Lobster for the four-week April fiscal month ended April 29, 2001. This period is the second month of Darden's fiscal 2001 fourth quarter.

Same-restaurant sales at Olive Garden were up 5% to 6% for the month. The sales growth reflected a 1% increase in guest counts, a 2% to 3% increase in pricing and a 2% increase in check average due to menu mix changes. In fiscal April of last year, Olive Garden had a 3% to 4% same-restaurant sales increase, driven by a 2% to 3% increase in guest counts, a 1% increase in pricing and a slightly positive increase in check average from menu mix changes. This year, Olive Garden featured its "Tour of Italy" promotion for $9.95 from April 16 to April 29.

Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster were up 3% to 4% for the April fiscal month, which reflected a 3% increase in pricing, a 2% to 3% increase in check average due to menu mix changes and a 2% decline in same-restaurant guest counts. In fiscal April of last year, Red Lobster recorded a 15% to 16% same-restaurant sales increase driven by exceptionally strong guest count growth of 8%, a 1% to 2% increase in pricing and a 6% increase in check average from menu mix changes. Red Lobster's "Lobsterfest" promotion, which began February 26, continues through May 20, 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.