Darden Restaurants Reports July Same-Restaurant Sales Results

ORLANDO, Fla., Aug. 6 -- Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI) today reported same-restaurant sales for the four-week July fiscal month ended July 29, 2001. This period is the second month of Darden's fiscal 2002 first quarter.

Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster were up 1% to 2% for the July fiscal month driven by a 2% to 3% increase in pricing, a 2% to 3% increase in check average due to menu mix changes and a 3% decline in guest counts. Red Lobster's July advertising introduced the first ever Festival of Crab which began July 9 and will continue through September 2. The prior year marketing strategy focused on a value-oriented Lobster and Shrimp priced at $12.99. In fiscal July of last year, Red Lobster had a 4% to 5% same-restaurant sales increase, which reflected a 1% to 2% decline in guest counts, a 1% to 2% increase in pricing, and a 4% to 5% increase in check average because of menu- mix changes.

Same-restaurant sales at Olive Garden were flat for the month as anticipated. This reflected a 1% decline in guest counts and a 1% increase in check average due to a 1% to 2% increase in pricing slightly offset by a decrease from menu-mix changes. Olive Garden featured Chicken and Shrimp Limone, from June 4 to July 15. Olive Garden also featured Chicken con Broccoli which began July 23 and continues through August 19. The prior year marketing strategy highlighted the successful Lobster Spaghetti promotion. Last year, Olive Garden had an 8% to 9% same-restaurant sales increase driven by a 3% increase in guest counts, a 2% to 3% increase in pricing and a 2% to 3% 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.