Darden Restaurants Reports September Same-Restaurant Sales Results

ORLANDO, Fla., Oct. 1 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI) today reported same-restaurant sales for the five-week September fiscal month ended September 29, 2002. This period is the first month of Darden's fiscal 2003 second quarter.

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 2% to 3% increase in check average. The check average increase was due to higher pricing. Olive Garden featured its signature Never-Ending-Pasta-Bowl for $7.95 which began August 26. The same promotion ran during the comparable month last year. In fiscal September of last year, Olive Garden had a 3% to 4% same-restaurant sales increase, which reflected a 2% increase in guest counts and a 2% to 3% increase in check average.

Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster were up 0% to 1% for the September fiscal month. This reflected a 1% to 2% increase in average check, primarily due to pricing, and a 0% to 1% decrease in guest counts. The same-restaurant guest count decline occurred at lunch, which was down 2% to 3% while same-restaurant guest counts at dinner were up 0% to 1%. Red Lobster featured Pound of Crab for $10.99 from August 5 through September 1 and began its 30-Shrimp for $9.99 promotion on September 9. During the comparable period last year, Red Lobster promoted its Festival of Crab during the first week, followed by 30-Shrimp for $9.99 during the last three weeks of the period. In fiscal September of last year, Red Lobster had a 4% to 5% same-restaurant sales increase, which reflected a 2% to 3% increase in guest counts and a 2% increase in pricing.


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.