ORLANDO, Fla., April 30 -- Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI - news) today reported same-restaurant sales results at Olive Garden and Red Lobster for the four-week April fiscal month, which ended April 28, 2002. This period is the second month of Darden's fiscal 2002 fourth quarter.

Same-restaurant sales at Olive Garden were up 9% to 10% for the month, and reflected a 5% increase in guest counts, a 2% to 3% increase in pricing and a 2% increase in check average due to menu mix changes. Olive Garden's "Chicken and Shrimp Limone" feature began on April 8 and will run through May 26. The feature was supported by a national coupon, and complemented by three weeks of national advertising highlighting Olive Garden's signature "Soup, Salad, and Breadsticks." In fiscal April of last year, Olive Garden had a 5% to 6% increase in same-restaurant sales, driven by a 1% increase in guest counts, a 2% to 3% increase in pricing and a 2% increase in check average from menu mix changes. Last year, Olive Garden featured the "Tour of Italy" at a special price of $9.95 from April 16 to May 27. Darden estimates that together the changes in advertising timing and the shift of the seasonally slow Easter weekend from fiscal April last year to fiscal March this year had a positive effect of approximately five percentage points on this April's same-restaurant sales results.

Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster were up 4% to 5% for the April fiscal month. The growth reflected a 4% increase in guest counts, a 2% increase in check average due to pricing and a 1% to 2% decline in check average because of menu mix changes. In fiscal April of last year, Red Lobster recorded a 3% to 4% same-restaurant sales increase, driven by 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. Both this year and last year, Red Lobster's "Lobsterfest" promotion ran the entire fiscal month. The Company estimates that the Easter weekend shift positively affected Red Lobster's April same-restaurant sales results this year by less than one percentage point.


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.