Darden Restaurants Reports June Same-Restaurant Sales Results

ORLANDO, Fla., July 2 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI - News) today reported positive same-restaurant sales for the five-week June fiscal month ended June 30, 2002. This period is the first month of Darden's fiscal 2003 first quarter. Same-restaurant sales at Olive Garden were up 4% to 5% for the month. The sales growth reflected a 1% increase in guest counts and a 3% to 4% increase in check average. The higher check average was attributable to a 2% to 3% increase in pricing and a 1% increase due to menu-mix changes. In fiscal June of this year, Olive Garden featured "Chicken con Broccoli" which began May 27 and ended June 30. In fiscal June of last year, Olive Garden featured "Chicken and Shrimp Limone" and delivered a 4% to 5% same-restaurant sales increase, driven by a 3% to 4% increase in guest counts, a 1% to 2% increase in pricing and a slight increase in check average from menu-mix changes. Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster were up 3% to 4% for June, and reflected a 2% increase in guest counts and a 1% to 2% increase in the check average. The check average growth came from a 2% to 3% increase in pricing and a 0% to 1% decline due to menu mix changes. Red Lobster continued the "Jumbo Shrimp Combo for $12.99," which began in May and ended June 30. In fiscal June of last year, Red Lobster's nationally advertised feature was a "Lobster, Scallops and Shrimp" entree as part of an overall brand strengthening campaign. Last June, Red Lobster had a 4% to 5% same-restaurant sales increase, which reflected a 2% to 3% increase in pricing, a 3% increase in check average because of menu-mix changes and a 1% decline in guest counts. Darden Restaurants, Inc., in Orlando, FL, owns and operates Red Lobster, Olive Garden, Bahama Breeze and Smokey Bones BBQ Sports Bar restaurants. 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.