ORLANDO, Fla., Nov 3, 2003 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX/ -- Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI) today reported same-restaurant sales results for the four-week October fiscal month ended October 26, 2003. This period is the second month of Darden's fiscal 2004 second quarter.

Same-restaurant sales at Olive Garden were up 2% to 3% for fiscal October, which reflected a 3% to 4% increase in check average and a 0% to 1% decline in guest counts. The check average increase was a result of a 2% to 3% increase in pricing and a 0% to 1% increase from menu mix changes. Last year, Olive Garden had a 2% to 3% increase in same-restaurant sales during fiscal October.

Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster were down 4% to 5% for fiscal October, which reflected a 6% to 7% increase in check average and a 10% to 11% decline in guest counts. The check average increase was a result of a 1% to 2% increase in pricing and a 4% to 5% increase from menu mix changes. Last year, Red Lobster had a 2% to 3% decline in same-restaurant sales during fiscal October.

Darden Restaurants, Inc. also announced that it has rescheduled the release of its fiscal 2004 second quarter earnings and fiscal November 2004 same-restaurant sales to Thursday, December 18, 2003, after the market close. Darden Restaurants, Inc., headquartered in Orlando, FL, owns and operates over 1,280 Red Lobster, Olive Garden, Bahama Breeze, Smokey Bones, and Seasons 52 restaurants with annual sales of $4.7 billion.

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.

SOURCE Darden Restaurants, Inc.

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