Darden Restaurants Reports April Same-Restaurant Sales Results

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Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI) today reported same-restaurant sales results for the four-week April fiscal month ended April 27, 2003. This period is the second month of Darden's fiscal 2003 fourth quarter.

Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster were up 0% to 1% for fiscal April, which reflected a 2% to 3% increase in check average and a 2% to 3% decrease in guest counts. The check average increase was a result of a 1% to 2% increase in pricing and a 1% to 2% increase from menu mix changes. Last year, Red Lobster had a 4% to 5% increase in same-restaurant sales during fiscal April.

Same-restaurant sales at Olive Garden were down 0% to 1% for fiscal April, which reflected a 3% to 4% increase in check average and a 4% to 5% 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 9% to 10% increase in same-restaurant sales during fiscal April.

"We expected stronger same-restaurant sales in April," said Linda Dimopoulos, the Company's Chief Financial Officer. "As a result of the April softness, we now anticipate combined same-restaurant sales for the full fiscal year to be between 2% to 3%. This is below our prior expectations and our long-term 3% to 5% goal. We now expect that diluted EPS for the full fiscal year will be between $1.29 and $1.32."

Darden Restaurants, Inc., headquartered in Orlando, FL, owns and operates over 1,250 Red Lobster, Olive Garden, Bahama Breeze and Smokey Bones restaurants with annual sales of $4.4 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.

Red Lobster®, Olive Garden®, Bahama Breeze®, Smokey Bones®

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