Darden Restaurants Reports October Same-Restaurant Sales Results

ORLANDO, Fla., Nov 03, 2005 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX News Network/ -- Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI) today reported same-restaurant sales results for the four-week October fiscal month ended October 30, 2005. This period is the second month of Darden's fiscal 2006 second quarter.

Same-restaurant sales at Olive Garden increased 8% to 9% for fiscal October, which reflected a 6% to 7% increase in guest counts and an approximate 2% increase in check average. The check average increase was primarily the result of a 2% increase in pricing. Last year, Olive Garden had a 6% to 7% increase in same-restaurant sales.

Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster increased 2% to 3% for fiscal October, which reflected a 1% to 2% increase in guest counts and an approximate 1% increase in check average due to pricing. Last year, Red Lobster had a 9% to 10% increase in same-restaurant sales.

The Company estimates that Hurricane Wilma adversely affected October same-restaurant sales at both Red Lobster and Olive Garden by approximately 0.5% and that the total sales impact to Darden was $1.0 to $1.5 million. Additionally, the Company estimates that the shift of Halloween from fiscal October last year to fiscal November this year benefited sales at both Red Lobster and Olive Garden by approximately 1.0%.

"We are pleased with our performance through the first two months of the second quarter," said Clarence Otis, Darden's Chief Executive Officer. "Sales and operating profit are exceeding our initial expectations despite the adverse impact of this year's unprecedented hurricane season."

Darden Restaurants, Inc., headquartered in Orlando, FL, owns and operates over 1,390 Red Lobster, Olive Garden, Bahama Breeze, Smokey Bones, and Seasons 52 restaurants with annual sales of $5.3 billion.

Forward-looking statements in this news release 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 intense competition, changing economic or business conditions, the price and availability of food, ingredients and utilities, labor and insurance costs, increased advertising and marketing costs, higher-than-anticipated costs to open or close restaurants, litigation, unfavorable publicity, a lack of suitable locations, government regulations, a failure to achieve growth objectives, weather 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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