Darden Restaurants Reports July Same-Restaurant Sales Results

ORLANDO, Fla., Aug 04, 2005 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX/ -- Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI) today reported same-restaurant sales results for the four-week July fiscal month ended July 31, 2005. This period is the second month of Darden's fiscal 2006 first quarter.

Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster increased 4% for fiscal July, which reflected a 1% to 2% increase in guest counts and a 2% to 3% increase in check average. 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% decrease in same-restaurant sales.

Same-restaurant sales at Olive Garden increased 3% to 4% for fiscal July, which reflected a 0% to 1% increase in guest counts and a 2% to 3% increase in check average. The check average increase was a result of a 1% to 2% increase in pricing and a 0% to 1% increase from menu mix changes. Last year, Olive Garden had a 6% to 7% increase in same-restaurant sales.

This July's sales results at Red Lobster and Olive Garden were negatively affected by a shift in the Independence Day holiday into fiscal July of 2006. Last year, the holiday was in fiscal June. Darden estimates that the shift negatively affected same-restaurant sales at both companies by approximately one percentage point.

Darden Restaurants, Inc., headquartered in Orlando, FL, owns and operates over 1,380 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, 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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