Darden Restaurants Reports September Same-Restaurant Sales Results

ORLANDO, Fla., Oct 05, 2006 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX News Network/ -- Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI) today reported U.S. same-restaurant sales results for the five-week September fiscal month ended October 1, 2006. This period is the first month of Darden's fiscal 2007 second quarter.

(Logo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20050203/FLTH026LOGO )

Same-restaurant sales at Olive Garden increased 5% to 6% for fiscal September, which reflected a 4% to 5% increase in guest counts and an approximate 1% increase in check average. The check average increase was a result of an approximate 2% increase in pricing and an approximate 1% decrease from menu mix changes. Last year, Olive Garden had a 4% to 5% increase in same-restaurant sales.

Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster increased 2% to 3% for fiscal September, mainly attributed to an increase in check average, with slightly positive traffic. 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, Red Lobster had a 2% to 3% increase in same-restaurant sales.

Darden Restaurants, Inc., headquartered in Orlando, FL, owns and operates over 1,430 Red Lobster, Olive Garden, Bahama Breeze, Smokey Bones, and Seasons 52 restaurants with annual sales of $5.7 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, risks associated with our plans to improve financial performance at Bahama Breeze and Smokey Bones and to reposition Smokey Bones, 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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