Darden Restaurants Reports December Same-Restaurant Sales Results

ORLANDO, Fla., Jan 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 December fiscal month ended January 1, 2006. This period is the first month of Darden's fiscal 2006 third quarter.

Same-restaurant sales at Olive Garden increased approximately 6% for fiscal December, which reflected an approximate 3% increase in guest counts and an approximate 3% increase in check average. The check average increase was the result of a 2% increase in pricing and a 1% increase in menu mix changes. Last year, Olive Garden had an approximate 14% increase in same-restaurant sales.

Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster increased approximately 3% for fiscal December, which reflected a 1% to 2% decrease in guest counts and a 4% to 5% increase in check average. The check average increase was a result of a 2% increase in pricing and a 2% to 3% increase from menu mix changes. Last year, Red Lobster had an approximate 14% increase in same-restaurant sales.

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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