Darden Restaurants Reports January Same-Restaurant Sales Results

ORLANDO, Fla., Feb 02, 2006 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX News Network/ -- Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI) today reported U.S. same-restaurant sales results for the four-week January fiscal month ended January 29, 2006. This period is the second month of Darden's fiscal 2006 third quarter.

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

Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster increased 11% to 12% for fiscal January, which reflected an 8% to 9% increase in guest counts and a 2% to 3% increase in check average. The check average increase was a result of an approximate 2% increase in pricing and a 0% to 1% increase from menu mix changes. Last year, Red Lobster had an 8% to 9% decrease in same-restaurant sales.

Same-restaurant sales at Olive Garden increased approximately 8% for fiscal January, which reflected a 6% to 7% increase in guest counts and a 1% to 2% increase in check average. The check average increase was primarily due to pricing. Last year, Olive Garden had a 4% to 5% increase in same-restaurant sales.

Fiscal January's sales results at both Olive Garden and Red Lobster were positively affected by approximately 4 percentage points due to favorable weather this fiscal January compared to last year.

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 approximately $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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