Darden Restaurants Reports December Same-Restaurant Sales Results

ORLANDO, Fla., Jan 04, 2007 /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 December 31, 2006. This period is the first month of Darden's fiscal 2007 third quarter.

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

Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster increased approximately 8% for fiscal December, which reflected a 2% to 3% increase in guest counts and a 5% to 6% increase in check average. The check average increase was a result of an approximate 2% to 3% increase in pricing and an approximate 3% increase from menu mix changes. Last year, Red Lobster had an approximate 3% increase in same-restaurant sales.

Same-restaurant sales at Olive Garden increased 0% to 1% for fiscal December, which reflected an approximate 2% decrease 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, Olive Garden had an approximate 6% increase in same-restaurant sales.

Darden estimates that approximately 1.0 percentage point of the growth in same-restaurant sales at both Olive Garden and Red Lobster reflected a favorable holiday impact as Christmas Day fell on Monday in fiscal 2007 versus Sunday in fiscal 2006. Nearly all of Darden's restaurants are closed on Christmas Day.

Darden Restaurants, Inc., headquartered in Orlando, FL, owns and operates over 1,440 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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