Darden Restaurants Reports March Same-Restaurant Sales Results

ORLANDO, Fla., April 5, 2007 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX News Network/ -- Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI) today reported U.S. same-restaurant sales results for the five-week March fiscal month ended April 1, 2007. This period is the first month of Darden's fiscal 2007 fourth quarter.

Same-restaurant sales at Olive Garden increased 3% to 4% for fiscal March, which reflected an approximate 1% increase in guest counts and a 2% to 3% increase in check average. The check average increase was a result of an increase in pricing, with flat menu mix. Last year, Olive Garden had a 3% to 4% increase in same-restaurant sales.

Same-restaurant sales at Red Lobster decreased approximately 3% for fiscal March, which reflected an approximate 5% decrease in guest counts and an approximate 2% increase in check average. The check average increase was a result of a 2% to 3% increase in pricing and a 0% to 1% decrease from menu mix changes. The Company estimates that this year's shift in the start of Lent from fiscal March last year to fiscal February this year, and the resulting shift in the start of Lobsterfest, negatively affected same-restaurant sales results at Red Lobster in fiscal March by approximately 1%. Last year, Red Lobster had a 13% to 14% increase in same-restaurant sales.

Darden Restaurants, Inc., headquartered in Orlando, FL, owns and operates over 1,450 Red Lobster, Olive Garden, Bahama Breeze, Smokey Bones, and Seasons 52(R) 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 continue to improve the financial performance at Bahama Breeze to support new restaurant growth, the continued business weakness at 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.

Analysts, Matthew Stroud, +1-407-245-6458, or Media, Jim DeSimone, +1-407-245-4567, both of Darden Restaurants, Inc.

http://www.darden.com

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