Darden Restaurants Announces Smokey Bones Negotiation Period

ORLANDO, Fla., Nov 07, 2007 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX News Network/ -- Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI) today announced it has received several proposals to purchase its 73-restaurant Smokey Bones Barbeque & Grill chain, and has agreed to exclusively negotiate the terms of a purchase agreement with an affiliate of Sun Capital Partners for a 30-day period.

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

To facilitate a quick closing, should a definitive agreement be reached, the affiliate has taken initial steps to meet certain licensing requirements. If a satisfactory definitive agreement is not reached at the end of the 30-day period, Darden may resume discussions with others who have submitted acquisition proposals.

Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI) headquartered in Orlando, Fla., is the world's largest casual dining company with almost $6.7 billion in annual sales and approximately 170,000 employees. The Company owns and operates more than 1,700 restaurants including Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, The Capital Grille, Bahama Breeze and Seasons 52. For more information, please visit www.Darden.com.

Forward-looking statements in this news release are made under the Safe Harbor provisions of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These forward-looking statements could address future economic performance, restaurant openings, various financial parameters, or similar matters. By their nature, forward-looking statements involve risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to materially differ from those anticipated in the statements. The most significant of these uncertainties are described in Darden's Form 10-K, Form 10-Q and Form 8-K reports (including all amendments to those reports). These risks and uncertainties include the impact of intense competition, changing economic or business conditions, the price and availability of food, ingredients and utilities, supply interruptions, 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 through the opening of new restaurants or the development or acquisition of new dining concepts, weather conditions, risks associated with Darden's plans to expand Darden's newer concepts Bahama Breeze and Seasons 52, the closure and disposition of certain Smokey Bones restaurants and the anticipated sale of the remaining Smokey Bones restaurants, our ability to combine and integrate the business of RARE Hospitality International, Inc., risks associated with incurring substantial additional debt and other factors and uncertainties discussed from time to time in reports filed by Darden with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

SOURCE Darden Restaurants, Inc.

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