Darden Restaurants Announces 2008 William B. Darden Distinguished Supplier Award Winners

ORLANDO, Fla., May 19, 2008 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX News Network/ -- Darden Restaurants, Inc. today announced the recipients of its annual William B. Darden Distinguished Supplier Awards. Named for the company's late founder, the awards recognize a select group of Darden's 1,500-plus suppliers from around the globe who go 'above and beyond' to contribute to the success of the company. Selected by Darden's culinary, purchasing, total quality and marketing teams, recipients are recognized at the annual National Restaurant Association's Restaurant & Hotel-Motel Show in Chicago.

(Logo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/200050203/FLTH026LOGO )

"Serving more than 350 million meals annually in 1,700 restaurants across North America requires a tremendous amount of coordination and teamwork," said Barry Moullet, Senior Vice President of Supply Chain for Darden. "These companies have gone beyond the execution level and been true business partners by finding ways to contribute to Darden's success through innovation and collaboration. We are fortunate to have strategic partnerships with companies that are at the forefront of the food service industry."

This year, 10 companies were recognized:

-- King & Prince Seafood - for its development of value-added seafood and shrimp products, which helped reduce cost and simplify operations.

-- Kontos Foods, Inc. - for working with Seasons 52 to design the restaurant's pita wrap, which is used in more than half of all sandwiches, as well as a more cost-effective flatbread with a reduced calorie count.

-- Libbey Inc. - for supporting Red Lobster in the design and rollout of new plateware and flatware to more than 600 restaurants with a shipment error rate of less than one percent and for helping to save operations time and energy with a simple automatic warranty policy for damaged products.

-- Lotito Foods, Inc. - for creating an innovative new cheese product at a lower cost and sponsoring several trips to Italy - as well as bringing Italian chefs to America - allowing Olive Garden's culinary team to work with local chefs to develop new menu item ideas.

-- Monin Gourmet Flavorings, Inc. - for helping Olive Garden by developing innovative flavors that were incorporated into Olive Garden's new beverage menu, including an improved Bellini Tea, Lime/Mint Fresco and Pomegranate Margarita Martini, as well as assisting Darden with research and development.

-- Nestle Professional - for assisting Red Lobster and Olive Garden restaurants by developing a number of new sauces as well as providing support through research and consumer insight.

-- Pilgrim's Pride - for its new product development work with Olive Garden, Bahama Breeze and Seasons 52 as well as other innovative contributions such as a new freight management program.

-- Ragozzino Foods, Inc. - for helping develop Olive Garden's "Rollatini" lasagna product, the restaurant's most successful promotion of the year.

-- Trinchero Family Estates - for helping Red Lobster with the creation of new sangria wine, research and development and ongoing training, all of which is expected to help grow Red Lobster's beverage sales.

-- Tuna Temple, Inc. - for providing multiple Darden brands with top-quality, cost-effective tuna while ensuring the highest levels of food safety.
About Darden Restaurants

Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI) headquartered in Orlando, Fla., is the world's largest full-service restaurant company with almost $6.7 billion in annual sales and approximately 180,000 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.

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