



Company Timeline

- 1938** At the age of 19, Bill Darden opens his first restaurant in Waycross, Georgia, called The Green Frog and offering “Service with a Hop”
- 1967** Bill Darden hires Joe Lee as an entry-level employee
- 1968** The first Red Lobster opens in Lakeland, Florida
- 1970** General Mills acquires Red Lobster
- 1975** Joe Lee is named President of Red Lobster
- 1979** General Mills Restaurants, Inc. is formed
- 1981** The first LongHorn Steakhouse opens in Atlanta
- 1982** The first Olive Garden opens in Orlando
- 1988** Red Lobster surpasses \$1 billion in sales
- 1990** The Capital Grille debuts in Providence, R.I.
- 1993** Olive Garden surpasses \$1 billion in sales
- 1995** Darden Restaurants, Inc. is spun off from General Mills as a public company with Joe Lee named Chairman & CEO
- 1996** The first Bahama Breeze opens in Orlando
- 2003** The first Seasons 52 opens in Orlando
- 2004** Joe Lee retires as CEO; Clarence Otis is named CEO and Drew Madsen is named President and COO
- 2005** Joe Lee retires as Chairman of the Board; Clarence Otis is named Chairman
- 2007** Darden acquires RARE Hospitality and its two brands: LongHorn Steakhouse and The Capital Grille
- 2009** Darden moves into new, state-of-the-art, LEED Gold certified Restaurant Support Center campus in Orlando
- 2010** Darden announces Sustainable Restaurant Design Initiative and opens first LEED-certified restaurant – an Olive Garden in Jonesboro, Arkansas
- 2010** Darden announces formal area development agreement with Americana Group to develop and operate a minimum of 60 Red Lobster, Olive Garden and LongHorn Steakhouse locations in the Middle East
- 2011** Darden becomes the first full-service restaurant company to ever be named to FORTUNE’s “100 Best Companies to Work For” list.
- 2011** Darden opens its first “Synergy” restaurant – a Red Lobster and Olive Garden under one roof with a shared kitchen – in Palm Coast, Fla.
- 2011** Darden announces formal area development agreement with CMR to develop and operate a minimum of 37 Red Lobster, Olive Garden and The Capital Grille locations in Mexico