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## **OLIVE GARDEN OFFERS FRESH NEW FLAVORS INSPIRED BY ITALY**

**ORLANDO, Fla.** – From appetizers to desserts, Olive Garden is introducing new permanent menu items crafted from fresh, simple ingredients and rooted in Italian culinary tradition. The new dishes include a Pork Milanese entrée, Lasagna Fritta appetizer and Zeppoli dessert, each inspired by the Olive Garden executive chefs' annual trip to Italy. Cheese Ravioli joins the children's menu as a kid-friendly, Garden Fare option. To be included on the Garden Fare menu, less than 30% of the dish's calories come from fat. To top off a meal with something lightly sweet and effervescent, Olive Garden has also added Castello del Poggio Moscato to its extensive list of wines.

At [www.olivegardennewfavorites.com](http://www.olivegardennewfavorites.com), guests can learn more about the new dishes, inspiration behind Olive Garden's menu, and the traditional scaloppini technique of preparing meat. Interviews with Olive Garden's culinary chef team also provide site visitors with a glimpse of the culinary journey from Italy to the restaurant. As part of the Olive Garden ideation process, the culinary team journeys to Italy once a year in search of new tastes, unique preparation methods and innovative ideas to bring back to guests in America.

**Pork Milanese** is a rustic dish prepared with the traditional scaloppini technique used in Italy. A pork loin is pounded until fork tender, then dredged in a blend of panko, herbed breadcrumbs, fresh parsley and parmesan cheese and pan seared until the crust becomes golden brown. Accompanied by asiago-filled tortelloni tossed with fresh spinach in a garlic cream sauce, the dish is finished tableside with a squeeze of lemon as is classically done in Italy. To complement the rich flavors of the dish and enhance the fresh acidity of the lemon, a crisp white wine with citrus overtones and ripe tropical fruit aromas is recommended, such as MandraRossa Fiano from Sicily.

**Zeppoli**, similar to beignets or doughnuts, are airy puffs of fried dough popular throughout Italy, with techniques and ingredients varying by region. The Olive Garden version of Zeppoli is inspired by the pâte à choux yeast dough used in the northern part of the country. Once fried, the pillowy dough balls are gently tossed in superfine, vanilla-infused sugar and served with a decadent milk-dark chocolate dipping sauce.

The Olive Garden chef team first encountered **Lasagna Fritta**, bite-sized portions of fried lasagna, as a street food while touring the Veneto region of Northern Italy. Here it was served as the perfect accompaniment to a glass of wine. Olive Garden's version of the appetizer is parmesan-crust and served over creamy alfredo sauce, topped with marinara sauce and a sprinkling of parmesan cheese. Lasagna Fritta is best accompanied with a bold red wine such as Principato Rosso.

**Children's Cheese Ravioli** is the latest addition to the kids' Garden Fare menu, which also includes Grilled Chicken with Pasta and Broccoli and Spaghetti and Tomato Sauce. The Cheese Ravioli are served with a fresh, light, puréed marinara sauce to accommodate even the pickiest eaters. Also new at Olive Garden are several gluten-free dishes created to fit guests' lifestyle and dietary preferences.

Castello del Poggio **Moscato** is made from the muscat grape and originates from the Piedmont region of Italy. This lightly sparkling wine, which means "Castle on a Hill," is lightly sparkling, with lush notes of apricot and honey. On its own or paired with a dessert, the wine offers a sweet finish to any meal.

Last year's extensive travels to Central and Northern Italy served as inspiration for the new menu items; upon return, the chefs developed each dish taking care to distill the regional recipes they experienced into approachable, flavorful menu offerings created to delight guests seeking fresh, simple, delicious Italian food.

In addition to the chef team trip, every year Olive Garden sends more than 100 restaurant managers to Olive Garden's Culinary Institute of Tuscany to enhance their culinary skills. This experience is designed to bring the genuine Italian dining experience alive for managers, and upon their return, to their restaurant teams and guests. Located in a restored 11<sup>th</sup>-century village in Castellina in Chianti, the Olive Garden Culinary Institute of Tuscany also provides inspiration for Olive Garden's menu.

Olive Garden is the leading restaurant in the Italian dining segment with 691 restaurants, more than 87,000 employees and \$3.3 billion in annual sales. Olive Garden is a division of Darden Restaurants Inc. (NYSE:DRI), the world's largest company-owned and operated full-service restaurant company. For more information, visit Olive Garden's Web site at [www.olivegarden.com](http://www.olivegarden.com).



## OLIVE GARDEN CULINARY INSTITUTE OF TUSCANY FACT SHEET

- BACKGROUND:** For ten years, Olive Garden has held an unprecedented culinary and cultural partnership with Sergio and Daniela Zingarelli, owners of the Italian winery of Rocca delle Macie, one of Italy's leading producers of Tuscan wines. This partnership consists of two elements: Olive Garden Riserva di Fizzano, a restaurant in Castellina in Chianti, Italy, specializing in Tuscan cuisine; and the Olive Garden Culinary Institute of Tuscany, (CIT) where more than 100 Olive Garden managers and team members gain an even greater appreciation for and knowledge of Italian cooking techniques, food, wine and culture every year. Both serve as the inspiration for many of the flavorful dishes featured on Olive Garden's menu.
- LOCATION:** Both the CIT and the Olive Garden restaurant are located in a restored 11th-century village on the 450-acre Riserva di Fizzano, a property owned by Rocca delle Macie that also includes a 21-room inn.
- CULINARY INSTITUTE OF TUSCANY:** Every year, more than approximately 100 Olive Garden managers and team members travel to Italy to enhance their culinary skills as part of an ongoing education and training program designed to bring the genuine Italian dining experience alive for managers and, upon their return, to their restaurant teams and guests.
- Under the direction of Head Chef Romana Neri and Olive Garden's chefs who travel with each class, attendees learn more about selecting and cooking with only the freshest ingredients, how to properly layer sauces, perfect *al dente* pasta, and pair sauces and pasta to create the most flavorful meals.
- Managers visit the Rocca delle Macie winery and are introduced to Italy's illustrious history of winemaking and enhance their knowledge of food and wine pairings.
- Time is also spent in the al fresco markets of Florence and dining and sightseeing throughout Tuscany and Rome.
- To date, more than 900 managers have trained at Olive Garden's Culinary Institute of Tuscany and enjoyed weeklong immersions in Italian food, wine and culture.



## OLIVE GARDEN CORPORATE FACT SHEET

Olive Garden is committed to its purpose of *Hospitaliano!* – providing 100 percent guest delight through a genuine Italian dining experience. This passion continues to advance Olive Garden’s leadership position in the highly competitive, full-service Italian segment of the casual dining industry. Here are some facts about our family of local restaurants:

**BACKGROUND:** Founded in 1982, Olive Garden is owned by Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE:DRI), the largest casual dining restaurant company in the world. Olive Garden currently operates 691 restaurants in the United States and Canada and employs more than 87,000 people.

**GUEST EXPERIENCE:** Italians have a passion for sharing genuine hospitality with family and friends. So, at Olive Garden, “When you’re here, you’re family,” is more than a tag line. It is the brand promise to delight more than 3.3 million guests every week with fresh, simple delicious Italian food; award-winning wine and beverage choices; service in a comfortable home-like Italian setting; and the experience of being treated like family.

**EMPLOYEE CULTURE:** Olive Garden attributes much of its success to its commitment to educating, training and developing restaurant team members with initiatives, such as weeklong manager visits to Olive Garden’s Culinary Institute of Tuscany in Italy and ongoing food and wine education.

**AWARDS:** Olive Garden’s award-winning culinary, beverage and training teams have garnered national recognition for their innovation, program execution and industry leadership from top trade publications and food service organizations.

**FINANCIALS:** Sales of \$3.3 billion in FY09.  
Average annual sales of \$4.8 million per restaurant.

**LEADERSHIP:**  
Dave Pickens, President  
Valerie Insignares, Executive Vice President of Operations  
John Caron, Executive Vice President of Marketing