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OLIVE GARDEN UNVEILS TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGES TO REACH NEW GUESTS, INCLUDING FIRST NEW AD CAMPAIGN IN NEARLY A DECADE AND MORE VARIETY AND VALUE ON MENU

Restaurant Leader Introduces Lighter Italian Fare, Porta Vita Signature Wines and 'Dinner Today & Dinner Tomorrow' Promotion

ORLANDO, Fla. (Oct. 5, 2012) – Unveiling several transformational changes to reach new guests, Olive Garden announced its first new national advertising campaign in nearly 10 years and the initial phase of significant menu innovations that include lighter Italian entrées, new Porta Vita signature wines and a unique “Dinner Today & Dinner TomorrowSM” limited-time offer.

Debuting Oct. 7, the new television ads from America’s leading Italian restaurant introduce a “Go Olive Garden” tagline and illustrate how the restaurant provides a place – and many reasons – for families and friends and others to connect. The campaign, developed by Grey New York, highlights the many ways Olive Garden is evolving its food, wine, atmosphere and service to provide greater value, choice and variety.

“It’s important that we continue to innovate to meet the changing needs of our guests, and we believe this new campaign better reflects Olive Garden as a lively Italian gathering place where our guests can enjoy spending time with family and friends,” said Jay Spenchian, executive vice president of marketing for Olive Garden.

Campaign Details

The ads feature contemporary, upbeat music and imagery reflecting Olive Garden as a gathering place for a range of guests and dining occasions. Both 15- and 30-second TV spots depict expected and unexpected reasons to visit the restaurant, like family time, date night or a wine tasting, as well as the restaurant’s fresh, simple, delicious Italian meals from classic pastas to lighter entrées.

The campaign includes four TV spots, including a “Go Olive Garden” brand equity spot that introduces the campaign and positions Olive Garden as the restaurant with something for every guest, mood and occasion. If the voice behind the new ads sounds familiar, that’s because it belongs to Julie Bowen, Emmy® Award-winning actress.

“We’re confident our new campaign will be an effective way to communicate the enhanced value, variety and experience we’re introducing this year, helping us appeal to new guests and giving current guests even more reasons to ‘Go Olive Garden,’” said Spenchian.

Digital Connections

In addition to introducing new advertising creative, Olive Garden also is finding fresh ways to reach and enable connections among its guests in the digital media space. Olive Garden will sponsor a new online video series available on Yahoo! called “Sunday Dinner With ...,” which debuts Oct. 8, and features celebrities enjoying dinner at home with family and friends. In addition, Olive Garden and Skype will offer free Group Video Calling to all Skype and MSN users beginning Oct. 8 and continuing through Oct. 21 and at additional time periods throughout the year.

New Lighter Italian Fare Menu Section

To make it easier for guests to find lighter choices on the menu, Olive Garden is introducing a new “Lighter Italian Fare” section. It features five delicious entrées containing less than 575 calories each. The entrées are prepared with fresh, flavorful ingredients and include a variety of pasta, chicken and seafood choices:

- Lasagna Primavera with Grilled Chicken (new)
- Seafood Brodetto
- Herb-Grilled Salmon
- Linguine alla Marinara
- Venetian Apricot Chicken

“We’re making it easy for guests looking for lighter choices to find a variety of satisfying, full-flavored entrées under 575 calories,” Spenchian said. “The changes we’re making to our menu over time will significantly expand the food choices we provide to our guests, from more indulgent dishes to lighter entrées.”

New Porta Vita Signature Wines

With a history of wine leadership in the casual dining industry – the restaurant offers 35 wines by the glass and has influenced the popularity of new wine categories such as Moscato – Olive Garden this month is offering three varietals of its new signature wine called Porta Vita. The wines were crafted in partnership with the award-winning team at Cavit Winery in Northern Italy and were skillfully blended to be aroma-driven and fruit-forward.

The collection includes three blends, which complement Olive Garden’s fresh, simple, delicious food:

- *Bianco*: Refreshing, aromatic white wine; complements salads, antipasti, seafood, flatbreads and pasta with creamy sauces like Alfredo or Carbonara
- *Rosato*: Fresh berry and melon flavors; complements antipasti, spicy dishes, chicken and classic pasta dishes
- *Rosso*: Medium-bodied, ruby red wine that offers flavors of red berries, cherries and spice; complements hearty filled pasta dishes, pizzas and grilled meats

The wines are available in a quartino for the affordable cost of a glass through Nov. 18 (where legal).

New Dinner Today & Dinner Tomorrow Promotion

Olive Garden’s “Dinner Today & Dinner Tomorrow” promotion (Oct. 8 through Nov. 18), gives busy families a convenient and affordable way to enjoy two meals during the week – maximizing quality time dining together and minimizing time spent preparing meals. Guests choose one of five favorite entrées for dinner today, served with unlimited soup or salad and breadsticks, and take a second entrée home for dinner tomorrow – all for only \$12.95.

“Our new ‘Dinner Today & Dinner Tomorrow’ promotion is one way we’re increasing the value we’re providing to our guests – they can enjoy a dinner today and a dinner tomorrow for the price of one affordable meal,” Spenchian said.

Entrées include:

- Lasagna Rollatini with Meat Sauce
- Mezzaluna Ravioli with Five Cheese Marinara
- Spaghetti with Four Cheese Meat Sauce
- Five Cheese Ziti al Forno
- Fettuccine Alfredo

“Guests want value and variety, and whether they’re looking to connect over a glass of wine and appetizers or they want to share a lingering meal with family and friends, Olive Garden now offers even more choices and ways to enjoy a freshly prepared Italian meal,” said Spenchian.

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ABOUT OLIVE GARDEN:

Olive Garden is the leading restaurant in the Italian dining segment with nearly 800 restaurants, more than 90,000 employees and more than \$3.5 billion in annual sales. Olive Garden is a member of the Darden family of restaurants (NYSE:DRI), the world’s largest full-service restaurant company. In 2012, Darden was named to the FORTUNE “100 Best Companies to Work For” list for the second year in a row and is the only full-service restaurant company to ever appear on the list. Olive Garden is committed to making a difference in the lives of others in the local community. For more information, visit www.olivegarden.com.

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