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ORLANDO, Fla., July 9 /S Newswire/ -- Red Lobster spearheads this year's crab season with an eight-week Festival of Crab celebration from July 9 to September 2, 2001.

During this limited time, all seafood lovers are invited to celebrate everything crab with Red Lobster's special menu featuring two new appetizers ("Crab Wontons" and "Crab Portobello") and four new entrees ("Crab and Shrimp Cobb Salad," "Portobello Steak and Crab," "Crab with a Twist" and "Crazy for Crab").

"Festival of Crab is our inaugural celebration of crab, featuring fantastic new crab creations, excellent variety and value," says John Altomare, senior vice president of Operations and Menu Development at Red Lobster. "Guests can satisfy their crab craving by cracking, dipping, and enjoying-or, by having one of our chefs' special crab creations."

All of the Festival of Crab dishes contain "Snow Crab," which is renowned and treasured for its sweet, snowy-white, delicate meat. Red Lobster helped introduce Snow Crab to the U.S. market in the mid-1980s. Festival of Crab coincides with the peak American and Canadian harvesting seasons insuring the freshest and highest quality crab for Red Lobster guests.

To compliment both the new Festival of Crab dishes and the restaurant's traditional fare, Red Lobster recently introduced a new wine list and summer drink selection. The enhanced wine list offers between 12 and 17 varietal wines from leading vineyards including Chateau St. Michelle, Kendall-Jackson, Sterling and Rosemount Estate. The wines are arranged in a progressive list from light-bodied to full-bodied and sweet to dry. For those wanting to cool down quickly, Red Lobster's summer tropical drink menu includes favorites like Sunset Passion Colada, a blend of Parrot Bay coconut rum mixed with Red Lobster's own pina colada recipe and topped with a taste of strawberry.

Red Lobster's award-winning Executive Chef, Stephen Anderson, and his team of culinary experts have been working hard all year putting together the ingredients for this summer's Festival of Crab and are proud to finally announce the new menu. "Our specialty menu selections for this particular event focus on celebrating the delicious taste of crab, matched with a variety of previously unexplored tastes," says Anderson. "We wanted to do something unique-something that shows our guests that Red Lobster is the place for fresh seafood."

The Festival of Crab menu features a variety of exclusive crab cuisine at a range of prices (starting at \$6.99) that allow any crab lover to "get crackin'" at the nearest Red Lobster. For starters, guests can choose from Crab Wontons, which are lightly fried and filled with a creamy blend of fresh crab and cheese, served with a sesame ginger dipping sauce; or, Crab Portobello, an equally alluring appetizer composed of seasoned lump crab meat served on marinated Portobello mushrooms and

accompanied by a light honey mustard butter sauce.

Savory new entrees include: Crab and Shrimp Cobb Salad, crisp greens with crabmeat, shrimp, white and yellow cheddar cheese, warm crisp bacon, red bell peppers and ripe tomatoes in a fresh basil blue cheese dressing; Portobello Steak and Crab, grilled top sirloin, finished with a marinated Portobello mushroom and a roasted garlic fennel sauce, then paired with a half-pound of steamed Snow Crab legs; Crab with a Twist, a half-pound of Snow Crab legs served with Red Lobster's own Crab Alfredo sauce; and Crazy for Crab, for those who like to simply crack, dip and enjoy-one pound each of King Crab and Snow Crab legs.

On July 9, Red Lobster will also launch a national television and radio advertising campaign to support the Festival of Crab. The campaign, featuring chefs passionate about crab, will run through the summer on network and cable television stations and national network radio. For more information on Red Lobster and crab recipes, please visit <http://www.redlobster.com>. Recipes can be found under the Culinary Center section.

About Red Lobster

With \$2.2 billion in fiscal 2001 sales, Red Lobster serves more seafood meals than all other casual dining seafood restaurants combined. It is the largest restaurant company owned by Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI), of Orlando. Darden also operates Olive Garden, Bahama Breeze, and Smokey Bones BBQ & Sports Bar restaurants. Red Lobster first opened its doors 33 years ago in Lakeland, Fla.

Source: Red Lobster

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