

HELSEL STEPHEN E

Form 4

January 13, 2005

FORM 4**UNITED STATES SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20549**

Check this box
if no longer
subject to
Section 16.
Form 4 or
Form 5
obligations
may continue.
See Instruction
1(b).

**STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP OF
SECURITIES**

Filed pursuant to Section 16(a) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934,
Section 17(a) of the Public Utility Holding Company Act of 1935 or Section
30(h) of the Investment Company Act of 1940

OMB APPROVAL

OMB
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(Print or Type Responses)

1. Name and Address of Reporting Person *
HELSEL STEPHEN E

2. Issuer Name **and** Ticker or Trading
Symbol
DARDEN RESTAURANTS INC
[DRI]

5. Relationship of Reporting Person(s) to
Issuer

(Check all applicable)

(Last) (First) (Middle)

5900 LAKE ELLENOR
DRIVE, P.O. BOX 593330

(Street)

3. Date of Earliest Transaction
(Month/Day/Year)
01/11/2005

____ Director _____ 10% Owner
____ Officer (give title _____ Other (specify
below) below)
SVP and Controller

ORLANDO, FL 32859-3330

(City) (State) (Zip)

4. If Amendment, Date Original
Filed(Month/Day/Year)

6. Individual or Joint/Group Filing(Check
Applicable Line)
X Form filed by One Reporting Person
____ Form filed by More than One Reporting
Person

Table I - Non-Derivative Securities Acquired, Disposed of, or Beneficially Owned

1. Title of Security (Instr. 3)	2. Transaction Date (Month/Day/Year)	2A. Deemed Execution Date, if any (Month/Day/Year)	3. Transaction Code (Instr. 8)	4. Securities Acquired (A) or Disposed of (D) (Instr. 3, 4 and 5)	5. Amount of Securities Beneficially Owned Following Reported Transaction(s) (Instr. 3 and 4)	6. Ownership Form: Direct (D) or Indirect (I) (Instr. 4)	7. Nature of Indirect Beneficial Ownership (Instr. 4)	
			Code	V	Amount	(A) or (D)	Price	
Common Stock	01/11/2005		M		3,593	A	\$ 6.4763	86,645 D
Common Stock	01/11/2005		F		1,732	D	\$ 28.05	84,913 D
Common Stock								2,418.852 ⁽¹⁾ I Savings Plan

Reminder: Report on a separate line for each class of securities beneficially owned directly or indirectly.

**Persons who respond to the collection of
information contained in this form are not
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SEC 1474
(9-02)

displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Table II - Derivative Securities Acquired, Disposed of, or Beneficially Owned
(e.g., puts, calls, warrants, options, convertible securities)

1. Title of Derivative Security (Instr. 3)	2. Conversion or Exercise Price of Derivative Security	3. Transaction Date (Month/Day/Year)	3A. Deemed Execution Date, if any (Month/Day/Year)	4. Transaction Code (Instr. 8)	5. Number of Derivative Securities Acquired (A) or Disposed of (D) (Instr. 3, 4, and 5)	6. Date Exercisable and Expiration Date (Month/Day/Year)	7. Title and Amount of Underlying Securities (Instr. 3 and 4)	8. Date of Transaction (Instr. 3 and 4)
Stock Option (Right to Buy)	\$ 6.4763	01/11/2005		M	3,593	12/12/1999 01/12/2005	Common Stock	3,593

Reporting Owners

Reporting Owner Name / Address	Relationships
HELSEL STEPHEN E 5900 LAKE ELLENOR DRIVE P.O. BOX 593330 ORLANDO, FL 32859-3330	Director 10% Owner Officer Other SVP and Controller

Signatures

Douglas E. Wentz, Attorney-in-fact for HELSEL, STEPHEN E., 5900 Lake Ellenor Drive,
P.O. Box 593330, Orlando, FL 32859-3330, Darden Restaurants, Inc. (DRI) 01/13/2005

Signature of Reporting Person

Date

Explanation of Responses:

* If the form is filed by more than one reporting person, see Instruction 4(b)(v).

** Intentional misstatements or omissions of facts constitute Federal Criminal Violations. See 18 U.S.C. 1001 and 15 U.S.C. 78ff(a).

The number of shares reported is based on a plan statement dated December 31, 2004, and is derived from an undivided interest in a fund
(1) consisting of both Darden common stock and a small cash position that fluctuates from time to time. The number of shares reported may change based on the size of the cash position at the time of reporting.

Note: File three copies of this Form, one of which must be manually signed. If space is insufficient, see Instruction 6 for procedure.

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