

## RHONE WINE AND FIG-BRAISED PORK CHOPS



**6 nicely marbled pork chops, about ¾ inch thick, preferably from a heritage-breed pig**  
**Marinade/Sauce Base**

- **1¼ cups Rhône-style red wine, such as Syrah**
- **¼ cup balsamic vinegar**
- **Finely grated zest and juice of 1 large orange**
- **1 large shallot, minced**
- **8 dried figs, stemmed and very finely diced (about 4 ounces)**
- **1/3 teaspoon *each* fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- **2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**

**3 garlic cloves, minced or pushed through a press**  
**2 teaspoons minced fresh rosemary**  
**1 teaspoon all-purpose flour**  
**Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**2 tablespoons olive oil**  
**2 tablespoons cold butter, cut into 4 pieces**

Trim off most of the visible exterior fat from the chops, and reserve it, chilled.

In a large baking dish, combine all the ingredients for the marinade/sauce base. Immerse the chops in the liquid and turn to coat all sides. Cover and refrigerate for 4 to 6 hours, turning over halfway through.

Cut the reserved pork fat into ¼-inch bits and combine in a small food processor (or a mortar and pestle) with the garlic, rosemary, flour, and a pinch each of salt and pepper. Process or pound to a smooth paste.

Lift the chops from the marinade, scraping off all the solids; reserve the marinade. Pat both sides thoroughly dry. Spread a little of the pork fat paste on each side of each chop, spreading it thin, flat, and very smooth.

In a very large skillet (or in two batches), heat the olive oil over medium-high heat until very hot. Sear the chops on both sides until golden brown, about 2½ minutes per side, using a metal spatula to carefully turn the chops in order to preserve the flavor paste. Return the first batch of chops to the skillet if necessary, and add all the reserved marinade. Bring to a simmer, then lower the heat and simmer very gently, half-covered, until the chops are done (firm to the touch, or 142°F), 5 to 6 minutes, turning the chops over once.

Transfer the chops to a platter and keep warm in a low oven. Reduce the chunky marinade over high heat until slightly syrupy. Remove from the heat and swirl in the cold butter until it's emulsified and the sauce is glossy. Spoon a generous amount of the sauce over the top of each chop and serve.