

THE LEGEND OF PUGNALONI

The Pugnaloni are large mosaics of flowers and leaves (2.60 meters wide and 3.60 meters in height) made in honor of the Madonna del Fiore, which is celebrated every year on the third Sunday of May.

This festival is ancient and unique: the origins date back to 1166 when Acquapendente rebelled against the tyranny of Frederick I Barbarossa, destroying the castle symbol of imperial power,

According to legend, a cherry tree that had been fruitless for years suddenly started to blossom again in the countryside of Acquapendente in May 1166. The people, who had planted the lifeless tree as a symbol of imperial power and the tyranny of Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa, interpreted the unexpected blossom as an invitation from the Madonna del Fiore (Madonna of the Flower) to rebel. That was how a mayor rebellion broke out that led to the destruction of the emperor lieutenant's castle and the Acquapendente people's re-conquest of freedom.



Since then the event has been recalled every year with one of Italy's most charming folk-religious festivals - the "Pugnaloni".

Today, more than eight centuries from its origin, the festival is celebrated by representing the victorious freedom of all oppressions.

The name derives from *pungolo*, a tool steel like a spatula stuck on a long stick that acts as a handle, used to clean the plow and the oxen to tease. In ancient times it was the *pungolo* to be carried in procession adorned with branches of broom. Then, over the centuries, were born the modern Pugnaloni carried out by groups of youngsters than in previous days, until late at night, work to create the majestic paintings.

The festival is organized and promoted by the Local Administration and Pro Loco of Acquapendente in collaboration with the Municipality of Acquapendente.

The petals or whole flowers of all species that long experience has shown to be more resistant and suitable are glued to keep the freshness and color. Different techniques in overlapping leaves and flowers lead to the execution of real mosaics, original and charming. *Each pugnalone* is performed by a group of youths in the country; a real competition stimulates research in the surrounding countryside with flowers of every kind and dry leaves.

During the morning the *Pugnaloni* are placed along the historic streets, squares and corners of Acquapendente. The plates remain on display until the early hours of the afternoon, after which they are placed in the Piazza del Duomo where people can enjoy them until the beginning of the parade. Meanwhile, the characteristic sound of the trumpets and drums announced the arrival of the flag and the parade, the traditional show that takes place in the city's main square.

