

BATTAGLIA DELLE ARANCE – ORANGE BATTLE IN IVREA

The Historical Carnival of the town Ivrea is an important festival in February, during which the Ivrea community celebrates its right to decide for itself, commemorating an incident that is said to date back to medieval times, when the starving townspeople were freed from the tyranny of an evil baron. According to legend, around 1200 A.D. the baron was overthrown thanks to the rebellion of a miller's daughter, Violetta, betrothed to Toniotto, when she refused to abide by the "*jus primae noctis*" imposed by the tyrant on all young brides. She went to the castle, beheaded the baron and incited the people to revolt, leading to the destruction of the castle, which was never re-built, and the institution of a free municipality. The Orange Battle re-enacts this rebellion: the people, interpreted by the nine teams of orange-throwers on foot, fight the overlord's army, personified by the throwers on horse-drawn carts wearing protective clothing and masks recalling ancient armour.

Orange-throwing originated around the middle of the 19th century. Before then, in the Middle Ages, the battle was waged using beans.

In the 1800s, along with confetti, sugared almonds, lupin beans and flowers, girls also threw a few oranges from their balconies at the carnival parade. Their idea was to attract the attention of the boys they were smitten by, using this aristocratic, exotic fruit grown on the French Riviera.

From the coaches, for fun, they began to get their own back and, gradually, from being a tribute it turned into a duel, that, in later years, became a real "head to head" fight between the throwers on the balconies and those in the streets.



After the Second World War were formed the first orange-throwing teams and nowadays over 4000 throwers on foot belonging to nine teams (Picche, Morte, Tuchini, Scacchi, Arduini, Pantere, Diavoli, Mercenari and Credendari) take part in the battle, as well as over 50 horse-drawn carts (carts and pairs with 10 throwers aboard and carts and fours with 12 throwers aboard), making a total of about 5000 people involved.

The battle takes place according to an unwritten gentleman's code, followed by all the participants, that guarantees their overall safety (apart from a few inevitable black eyes) and keeps the battle on the lines of a real "sports" competition in which it is those who are the most skilful and throw the oranges hardest that win. At the end, a handshake endorses their re-found friendship.

Along with all the other historical events that are part of carnival, the orange battle constitutes an incredible cultural patrimony. Orange-throwing is also the time with the highest collective participation. Everybody can take part by enrolling in one of the nine teams on foot or by manning the carts.



