

## CERI FESTIVAL OF GUBBIO

Each year in Italy an 800 year old festival takes place in the medieval town of Gubbio in Umbria. The festival is a religious celebration in honor of Bishop Ubaldo Baldassini, the Patron Saint of Gubbio. The day is a series of events and reenactments, which culminates at the end of the day with the Rising of Candles in the main square and the race. The race is a feat of human skill, strength and endurance.



All the city of Gubbio will participate in this feast; young and old will be gathered in the main square. Nearly every man, woman and child in Gubbio is dressed in the traditional color of their saint. Yellow stands for St Ubaldo, the patron of masons and the town, blue for St. George, the saint of craftsmen and merchants and black for St. Antonio, the protector of farm workers. Everyone is united in color by tying a scarf around the waist and neck.



The candles ("Ceri") make this festival unique. The Ceri are three wooden artifacts that resemble hourglasses. The Ceri have very special decorative motifs, and on the top are wooden statues of Saint Ubaldo, Saint George and Saint Antonio. They are incredible; each is over 16 feet tall and weighs more than 640 pounds. Umbria took the image of the three Ceri as symbols of the region itself.

The rising of the Ceri takes place in the Piazza Grande, The operation is particularly delicate: the Ceri are fixed on stretchers in the shape of an H. The "Capodieci" climb the poles of the Ceri, and push forward getting the Ceri vertical. Then the Ceri are hoisted on the ceraioli (runners). After three laps around

the square in a counterclockwise direction, the Ceraioli parade the Ceri through the streets, squares and crowds of Gubbio. The heat coming from the Ceraioli is so intense you can feel it over 100 yards away.

The most exciting event, the Corsa dei Ceri, takes place at sunset. The route covers more than two and one-half miles uphill. It starts at the city center, goes through the city's steep streets and squares and ends with the climbing of Mount Ingino (average gradient of 15%) to St. Ubaldo's church .



Each Ceri is manned by four groups of ten men each who run the route carrying the saints in formation. St. Ubaldo must always be in the lead followed by St. Giorgio and then St. Antonio. Speed and complete physical exertion are expected by the honored men who carry the Ceri. It is not easy to carry vertically those huge objects in the middle of euphoric crowds and to move through the narrow city streets at full speed, with repeated changes in the runners.

The Corsa is not a race but a real religious ceremony made to honor Saint Ubaldo, who must first enter the Basilica dedicated to him. Once he arrives his Ceraioli knock three times on the door which is symbolically opened and welcomes all the Ceri, which here the Ceri will find shelter until the following year.

After a day of frenzy, intensity, passion as well as the insanity, the citizens of Gubbio say the most lively hours of the day begin after the races when the bars, restaurants and piazzas fill up all night with festivity. .

### References

- <http://www.bellaumbria.net/en/events/ceri-festival-of-gubbio/>
- <https://www.chocohotel.it/maggio-festa-dei-ceri/>
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