Kirchtag in Feistritz an der Gail

The annual “Kirchtag”, a church festival, in Feistritz an der Gail takes place on Whit Monday. At this event the well-known traditions of the Kufenstechen and the Lindentanz take place.

The historical roots and origins of the Kufenstechen can be traced back to old knights’ games from the Middle Ages. The exact origin of the Kufenstechen is not known. However, it is believed that it either came from the ancient Roman knight game, Quintana, or arouse at the time of the Turkish invasions of Austria.

The task of young, unmarried men on bareback Noric horses is to smash the wooden barrel with an iron club. Naturally, the men have to ride past several times before the barrel is destroyed. Finally, when it is broken, the winner receives a wreath of flowers which he puts on his wrist.

According to oral tradition, a Turk was tied to the pole instead of the barrel and the horseriders chopped his head off.

Directly afterwards, the dance under the lime tree can begin. The winner of the Kufenstechen begins and the other couples, wearing the traditional Gailtaler folk costumes, join them. The dance is accompanied by very old traditional songs, also in the Slovenian language. © Mag. Maria Jarnig