

## Disease-resistant GMO chestnut trees could birth 'new agroforestry industry'

Many Americans know the sad tale of how the American chestnut tree was driven almost to extinction in the 20th century .... More important, chestnuts were food. An old rule of thumb was that the nuts from a single big chestnut tree could feed a family of four for a year. Roasted fresh, ground into flour or dried and reconstituted, chestnut was a staple of the Native American diet for millennia, and European newcomers eagerly adopted it.

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The American Chestnut Foundation has been trying to revive the species since 1983 .... [P]lant scientists at the State University of New York's College of Environmental Science & Forestry, in Syracuse, have used genetic engineering to splice a blight-resistance gene into American chestnut DNA. The result—a highly resistant American chestnut with many fewer “foreign” genes than the Chinese-American hybrids ....

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These plants are intended to be released into forests as wild trees, so of course people want them to be as “natural” as possible. But agricultural chestnuts, meant to be grown in orchards, are another matter .... [T]hey .... grow lots of nuts that taste good and make terrific flour. And they may be able to create a new agroforestry industry.

**Read full, original article:** [Let's Farm Chestnuts Again](#) (Behind paywall)