



# The Legend of the Pinyon Nuts

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In the beginning, the Araucanian god, Ngueneche (noo-eh-NEH-cheh), created many trees, and among them was the araucaria (ahr-ah-KAHR-yah). This tall South American pine has stretched-out, **whorled** branches and stiff leaves that look like scales. Large cones full of **edible** seeds hang high in the trees every summer. The good Ngueneche covered the southern Andes with these magnificent evergreens.

But the people considered the araucaria sacred, and so they didn't pick up the pinyon nuts that it bore every year.

They gathered under the sacred tree only to pray and to offer meat, blood, and smoke. They also confessed their wrongdoings to the tree and hung gifts from its branches to honor it.

One year, the winter was

longer than ever before. The mountains and valleys, leaves and flowers, all froze, and plants were scarce, and soon everyone gathered together to try to warm themselves. To ease their cold and hunger, the children and old

The Araucanian young men out of the mountains trudged through the snow under heavy shawls draped over their shoulders. Many of them were old. Their cracked cheeks and their fingers tingled and went numb. The storms blanketed the mountains with snow over and over again, hiding even the tops of the nut, and root.

Exhausted and hungry, the Araucanian young men, and the old men, returned home. But a long way the unexpected happened. One day an old man saw a pinyon nut. Hunched and



**Whorled** means arranged in a swirl, with three or more leaves or petals growing out from a single joint on a stem.

**Edible** means fit to be eaten.

