

ROBERT MILTNER

Comfort Food

During the Depression, my mother's father
always ate meat for dinner, despite the rest

of the family having only potatoes and cabbage.
He was, after all, a man, and he needed to keep

his strength up since he was the one who stood
between the wolf and the door. This was at a time

men stood in line for jobs that weren't there
or for handouts that could not keep them full.

But my mother's father had the good fortune
to have a job working for the Fire Department.

One thing sure his Irish father had taught him:
flood and fire are indifferent to social class or

difficult times. So it was that his plate was full:
a pig's knuckle, a calf's liver, or a hen's neck,

the rule was always true: the strong need meat.
And we, descendants of immigrants, relocated

remnants of displaced peoples, step down from
the ladder and seat ourselves in restaurants where

we pay handsomely for *traditional* peasant fare,
savoring the tastes our ancestors ate—old cows,

slow rabbits, or cocky chickens; snails, nettles, or
leeks—anything to nourish us, give us the strength

to run faster than whatever disaster is coming
down the road this time: wolves, floods, or fires.