

## **Locally Grown**

*Athena Kildegaard, recitation by Dave Johnson*

For the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Small Towns - June 3, 2008

Apple jelly: my grandmother  
and my great aunt shared a duplex  
where an apple tree, two varieties,  
twined into one trunk, red gladiolas  
along the fence, a double  
glider rocker where I took turns  
holding hands with the old sisters.  
Apple jelly on yeast rolls, a blessing,  
like holding hands with time.

Mead uncorked and cold:  
bees drunk on sunshine.

Walleye: swims  
in cold beer on a long July day,  
friends together in lawn chairs,  
children chasing through a sprinkler,  
the air smelling of repellent and earthworms.

Buckwheat honey: a mucked out  
stall, a horse sweaty from a ride  
across the pasture,  
Whoa, Bessy, there's a girl.

Morels: oak transmogrified,  
often found near graves,  
the descendants of Gorm and  
Grette, the Old, the Lame, the Shy, the Loved.

Murphy's chicken: snow banked  
against the coop, a blizzard wind  
drove cedar smoke over the shingles,  
and indoors, a long game  
of Monopoly by candlelight.

Frozen corn in March: three farm boys  
ruddy-handsome and circumspect  
sat in a blue shade, sold ears  
by the dozen, caught grasshoppers  
in the ditchgrass to bide the time.

Ratatouille: tomatoes, zucchini, eggplant,  
onions from the tidy rows out back  
where Pop stood in a seedcap  
aiming the hose, considering which  
David Mamet to teach come fall. Such  
a fancy name for plain food,  
for a taste of place.

September sweet corn: the brown Buick's trunk  
full of ears, a garbage can for silks  
and husks, we sat in the driveway, sang "This old man,  
he played four, he played knick-knack,"  
until Mom went in to the cool kitchen  
where she cut kernels off cobs  
and shaped ground beef into burgers  
we ate later with the last husked ears,  
with the sun teetering on the horizon.

Gooseberry pie: we bushwhacked  
along a bluff above the Minnesota River,  
found the fruit, bled for it—oh, the spines—  
complained aloud, and ate it  
rejoicing!