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As far as I can figure, a root canal is probably the only thing less bearable than doing taxes. Then again, I've never had a root canal. When and if I do, I'll confirm.

It may be last minute but I'm thinking I should be lobbying for a few special deductions and credits for writers. Why, you ask? Well, without writers there'd be no books. And for those of you that don't like to read (shame on you), a lot of your favorite movies are based on books. Like *The Social Network*, *Slumdog Millionaire* and *Forest Gump*.

Then there are the humbler writers, those of us who write for newspapers, magazines and blogs. Without us, dentists' and doctors' waiting rooms would be pretty boring, wouldn't they? Plus our blogs provide an enormous service. We help office workers around the world procrastinate and waste hours of what might be an otherwise productive day. Between bloggers and Facebook, desk jockeys can kiss an entire day goodbye with little if any effort. I'm guessing that Facebook has a whole passel of accountants ferreting out all sorts of deductions and credits.

So here goes.

First and foremost, writers should be allowed to deduct their pajamas and slippers. Bus drivers and postal carriers can deduct their uniforms; even strippers can deduct their g-strings. Why not us? It's the least that Uncle Sam can do. By the way, I don't work in my pajamas every day. Although I was comfortable ensconced yesterday, as I write this I am properly attired in jeans and a turtleneck. Which leads me to wonder, how come the politicians and religious possess only stop by when I'm in my PJs?

But back to business. How about giving us one of those special deductions, a because-you-write-deduction? Teachers get one. If it wasn't for writers, teachers would have a hard time teaching. Or at the very least, the school day would be a lot shorter. Kids would be home by 11:00 in the morning. What would you do with them then? The special deduction for educators is \$250 per year. I'm not greedy, 250 is okay by me.

Speaking of children, writers should get child credits for their work. That could be a big one, \$1,000 a pop. I'd be willing to work on a sliding scale, say \$1,000 for a novel down to 50 or 100 for a short story and maybe 10 bucks for one of those quickie magazine pieces.

Our stories are our babies. We create them and nurture them. Sometimes they drive us to distraction and make us want to pull our hair out. Other times they make us laugh and fill our hearts with pure joy. When our work is done, when we've edited for the umpteenth time, proofread until we can't see straight, dotted the last i and crossed the last t, we send them out into the world. Sounds like childrearing to me.

Let me know if you come with any more. I'm off to sharpen my pencil, sort through piles of receipts and navigate the maze. Good luck to you and me!

Bon appétit!

This post is written for entertainment purposes only and in no way constitutes advice of any kind. For that I suggest you contact a tax lawyer or accountant.

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or just look like one!*

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Death by Chocolate Cake

Since nothing is certain except death and taxes, chase the filing blues away with my Death by Chocolate Cake. Keep the recipe on hand; it's the perfect birthday cake for chocolate lovers. Enjoy!

1 cup hot espresso or strong coffee
3 ounces unsweetened chocolate, chopped
1 stick butter, cut into pieces
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 cups sugar
2 eggs, separated
1/2 cup sour cream
1 7/8 cups all purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
Chocolate Ganache Frosting (recipe follows)

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Butter and flour a 10-inch spring form pan.

Put the chocolate and butter into a large bowl and add the hot espresso. Let stand until the butter and chocolate melts. Stir in the sugar and vanilla. Whisk in the egg yolks, one at a time, blending well after each addition. Whisk the sour cream into the chocolate mixture

Sift the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt together. Add the dry ingredients to the chocolate mixture and combine.

Beat the egg whites until stiff but not dry. Stir a quarter of the egg whites into the batter. Gently fold the remaining egg whites into the batter.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Bake in the middle of the oven for 45-55 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool the cake in the pan for 10 minutes and then turn it out onto a wire rack. Cool completely before frosting.

Chocolate Ganache Frosting

2 tablespoons butter
5 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped
6 tablespoons heavy cream
Pinch salt
About 1 1/4 cups sifted confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 tablespoon coffee liqueur or 1 teaspoon espresso powder



Put the butter, chocolate, cream and salt in a heavy sauce pan and melt over low heat; whisk until smooth. Add the confectioners' sugar; whisk until smooth. Whisk in the vanilla and coffee liqueur.

Spread the warm ganache on the cake.

Chocolate Cake Photo credit:
www.flickr.com/photos/creativekitchen/