Orange Scented Shortbread Cookies

Makes 2 dozen

1 cup butter (8 oz.) The better the butter, the better the cookies. I particularly like Kerrygold salted.
½ cup granulated sugar
1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
grated zest of ½ an orange (even this is optional - you could also get creative with spices, other citrus peel, dried fruit....)

Preheat the oven to 250° Fahrenheit. In the bowl of a stand mixer (this can be done by hand if you have to, but I prefer to let the mixer do the work), cream the butter and sugar. Add the orange zest, mix well, then add the flour. Mix until completely incorporated.

Turn the dough out onto a floured surface and form a ball. Flatten it out a little with your hands, then roll to ½" thick. This is much thicker than other cookies you may have made. Cut into whatever shape you would like with a metal cookie cutter, or just cut into squares with a knife.

Put on a heavy bottomed parchment (or foil) lined cookie sheet and bake for about 90 minutes, until just turning brown on the bottom. If you wish to add chocolate to your creation, you can sprinkle chopped chocolate over the cookie 5 minutes out of the oven, when they are still warm enough to melt chocolate, but not blazing hot. (I gilded the lily a little more with flakes of gold leaf, or Fleur de Sel.) I also placed one of our solid chocolate hearts in the center of a few of them for an extra special Valentine treat. They are awfully good just as they are though.

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